

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

**Remarks on the Release of Hostages Held by Hamas in Gaza, Palestinian Territories, and an Exchange With Reporters in Nantucket, Massachusetts**  
*November 26, 2023*

*The President.* Morning, everyone. How are you?

Two days ago—2 days ago—one of our fellow Americans, a little girl named Abigail, turned 4 years old. She spent her birthday—that birthday—and at least 50 days before that held hostage by Hamas.

Today she is free. And Jill and I, together with so many Americans, are praying for the fact that she is going to be all right. You know, she's free, and she's in Israel now.

And so those who are now wrapping Abigail in the love and care and the supportive services she needs—she's been through a terrible trauma. You know, her mom was killed in front of her when her kibbutz was attacked by Hamas terrorists on October the 7th.

Abigail ran to her dad then, who then was gunned down—gunned down as well—while using his body to shield little Abigail.

She then ran to a neighbor for help, where they were all taken hostage—the—that entire house of neighbors were taken hostage by Hamas and held for 50 days. What she endured is unthinkable.

Abigail was among 13 hostages released today from Gaza under the [deal; White House correction] brokered and sustained though [through; White House correction] intensive U.S. diplomacy. She's now safely in Israel, and we continue to press and expect for additional Americans will be released as well. And we will not stop working until every hostage is returned to their loved ones.

As I said when I spoke about this deal on Friday, this has been the product of a lot of hard work and weeks of personal engagement from me and my team. We have been in close contact with the leaders of Qatar, Egypt, and Israel, speaking with each one of them repeatedly over the past few weeks to help secure this deal.

We spoke again yesterday with the Amir of Qatar—I owe a special thanks to—in order to keep the hostage release on track and push for Abigail to be part of this release. And I'll be speaking again shortly with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. And we will continue to remain personally engaged—personally engaged—to see that this deal is fully implemented and work to extend the deal as well.

For weeks, I have been advocating a pause in the fighting for two purposes: to increase the assistance getting in to the Gaza civilians who need help and to facilitate release of hostages.

And we know that innocent children in Gaza are suffering greatly as well because this war that Hamas has unleashed is so—has such consequences. Thousands have been killed.

And from the earliest days of this crisis, I've worked closely with President Sisi of Egypt, the Israeli Government, King Abdullah of Jordan, and leaders throughout the region to expand the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance to help innocent Palestinians in need, who are not part of Hamas.

Under this deal, fighting in Gaza has now been paused for 3 days. Over that time, 58 hostages have been released, including Thai, Filipino, and Russian nationals. Dozens of families have been reunited.

And we worked urgently—urgently—to take advantage of the pause to surge aid into Gaza. We have moved approximately 200 aid trucks into Gaza each day loaded with food, water, medicine, fuel, and cooking gas. More is needed, but this deal is delivering lifesaving results.

Critically needed aid is going in, and hostages are coming out.

And this deal is structured so that it can be extended to keep building on these results. That's my goal—that's our goal: to keep this pause going beyond tomorrow so that we can continue to see more hostages come out and surge more humanitarian relief into those in need in Gaza.

We have seen this is the day-by-day approach—hour-by-hour process. Nothing is guaranteed. And nothing is being taken for granted.

But the proof that this is working and worth pursuing further is in every smile and every grateful tear we see on the faces of those families who are finally getting back together again. The proof is little Abigail.

And more than 20 other children, 18 years and younger, have been released. They've been released through this deal as well. They have endured a terrible ordeal, and they can now begin the long journey toward healing.

And I'm going to continue working with the Amir of Qatar, President Sisi of Egypt, and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel to do everything possible to see the hostages are freed, all the hostages. I'm grateful for the personal partnership as we pursued this deal—from each of those men I just mentioned—and as we have worked together to see the—see all this implemented and now to try to extend it further.

I'll continue working with all our partners to take the hard, but necessary steps to build an integrated and more prosperous and more peaceful future in the region.

A two-state solution is the only way to guarantee the long-term security of both Israelis and Palestinian people, to make sure Israel and Palestinians alike live in equal measure of freedom and dignity.

We will not give up on working toward that goal.

So thank you very much.

But thank God she's home, the little child—[laughter]—I just can't imagine the enjoyment in the—I just—I wish I was there to hold her.

#### *U.S. Citizens Among the Hostages Held by Hamas in Gaza*

*Q.* Mr. President, do you have an update on the other Americans who are being held and any sense as to when they would be released?

*The President.* We are hopeful, but I don't have anything firmly to tell you at this moment.

#### *Terms of the Hostage Release Agreement/International Diplomatic Efforts*

*Q.* Sir, do you expect that if you are able to use this momentum to extend the pause, have you extracted any guarantees about proof of life for other hostages? Or do you have an expectation of how much longer you can push this pause?

*The President.* Well, look, you know, the deal calls for—for every 10 hostages released to extend another day. So I'm hopeful this is not the end, that it's going to continue. But we don't know.

And—but I get a sense that all the players in the region, even the neighbors who aren't—and have been directly involved now, are looking for a way to end this so the hostages are all released and Hamas is completely—how can I say it?—no longer in control of any portion of Gaza.

#### *Remaining Hostages Held in Gaza*

*Q.* And do they have control of all of the hostages? Are there still other militant groups that you have to deal with?

*The President.* We think there are probably other militant groups, but we're not certain.

#### *Condition of Released Hostages/Release Process*

*Q.* Mr. President—Mr. President, how is Abigail doing? What's her physical condition? Do you have any information on—

*The President.* Well, I haven't gotten that information. I just wanted to let you know immediately.

They were going across into Egypt, as you recall. That was the route. But an older, non-American, elderly—elderly woman is very sick and was in need of immediate medical help, so they arranged to cross directly into Israel to be able to take her to a hospital.

All I know is that she was being held. [*Laughter*] I don't know. I haven't seen a photograph. I've just been in communication with my team. But she is safely ensconced in Israel. But there's a lot more work to be done.

#### *Humanitarian Pause in the Fighting in Gaza*

*Q.* How many days would you like to see the pause go on for?

*The President.* I would like to see us move to a point where we were able to—well, let me put it this way: I'd like to see the pause go on as long as prisoners kept coming out.

All right. Thank you all so very much. I know——

*Q.* Thank you, sir.

*White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* —you know, we have to call you—I know you say, "Why is he calling me with only 10 minutes or so notice?" [*Laughter*] I said, "That's the notice I get." Because we didn't know—I didn't want to be having this press conference if they weren't physically—even when they were in the Red Cross ambulance, I didn't want to do it because they were not out. They weren't—they were still in Gaza.

So I don't thank you enough, but thanks for your patience. And I—I know——

*Q.* You can call us anytime.

*Q.* Anytime, sir.

*Q.* We're here anytime, sir.

*White House aide.* Thanks, everybody.

*The President.* [*Laughter*] All right.

*Press Secretary Jean-Pierre.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*The President.* Jill and I thank——

*Q.* Happy holidays.

*The President.* Okay, happy holidays to you guys.

*Q.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*Q.* Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. at the White Elephant Nantucket hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Abigail Mor Edan, an Israeli-American citizen who was abducted during the Hamas attacks against Israel on October 7; and Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Release of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza, Palestinian Territories, remarks in Nantucket, MA; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, Nantucket, MA.

*Locations:* Nantucket, MA.

*Names:* Abdullah II, King; Biden, Jill T.; Edan, Abigail Mor; Elsis, Abdelfattah Said; Jean-Pierre, Karine; Netanyahu, Benjamin; Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir.

*Subjects:* Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Egypt, President; Gaza, conflict with Israel; Gaza, hostages held by Hamas; Gaza, humanitarian situation; Gaza, international assistance; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Israel, Prime Minister; Jordan, King; News media, Presidential interviews; Qatar, Amir; U.S. diplomatic efforts, expansion; White House Press Secretary.

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