

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Muhammad Shia' al-Sudani of Iraq**

*April 15, 2024*

*President Biden.* Well, Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. Welcome to the White House. Welcome to the Oval Office.

The—before I begin, I want to discuss some of the events that took place in the Middle East the past weekend. As you know, Iran launched an unprecedented aerial attack against Israel, and we mounted an unprecedented military effort to defend Israel. And together with our partners, we defeated that attack.

The United States is committed to Israel's security. We're committed to a cease-fire that will bring the hostages home and prevent any conflict from spreading beyond what it already has.

We're also committed to the security of our personnel and partners in the region, including Iraq. The partnership between Iraq and the United States is critical. We've seen over the last decade as our troops have served side by side to help defeat ISIS, and we've seen this in our strategic framework agreement as well.

And I want to personally thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your focus on strengthening Iraq's economy and energy independence. That's a goal we share today with you, and we're going to discuss that later today.

Mr. Prime Minister, thank you again for being here. Thank you for making the effort to be here. Simply put, our partnership is pivotal for our nations, for the Middle East, and, I believe, for the world.

Again, welcome, and the floor is yours.

*Prime Minister Sudani.* Thank you, Mr. President, in the name of God. Thank you, Mr. President, for this invitation that comes at a sensitive time. Despite your domestic engagement in the light of the developments on the international stage, this shows the importance of this visit and meeting.

This visit and meeting are significant in the history of the bilateral relations between our two countries. The relationship between Iraq and the United States is at an important juncture.

We aim to discuss the sustainable foundations for a 360-degree strategic partnership, ensuring a smooth and systematic transition to—from a military, security-based relationship to a comprehensive economic, political, environmental, educational, and security partnership according to the strategic framework agreement.

The war against ISIS/Daesh formed the foundation of our relations over the course of the past decade. Mr. President, we have fought together, and we have achieved victory together. And we have achieved a remarkable victory thanks to the sacrifices of the Iraqi people and the unity of all the components and the support of the international community and the global coalition.

Iraq today is recovering, witnessing service projects, infrastructure repairs. And we are going to discuss today our sustainable partnership according to the strategic framework agreement. We have laid down the transition methodology, according to the HMC, High Military Committee, the HMC that is tasked to assess the level of a threat operation on environmental requirements and the capability of the ISF, Iraqi Security Forces. And we will be committed to the outcomes of this committee.

And we also have a Joint Security Cooperation Dialogue that will lay the foundation for a sustainable bilateral relationship between the two partners in the security and military fields.

Most importantly, the HCC, the High Coordination Committee, is actually—have met today and discussed many things. My government is very serious about activating the strategic framework agreement. There are many benefits that are going—coming out of this for the two friendly countries of us.

Mr. President, I came today and carrying the concerns of my people, who aspire for services, for prosperity. And—but that does not mean that we forget about our humanitarian responsibility, about what's happening in the region.

And in the spirit of partnership, we may—our views may be divergent about what's happening there in the region, but we agree certainly about the international law, the international humanitarian law, and the responsibility to protect under the law of war. And we reject any aggression against the civilians, especially women and children. And we encourage the commitment not to—about respecting international norms and diplomatic missions.

We—as humanity, we need a system that respect these laws. And we think if we kept silent about what's happening, that we will establish a precedent that will be followed, whether it is bad or good precedent.

We're actually very eager about stopping this war, which claimed the life of thousands of civilians—women and children. And we encourage all the efforts about stopping the expansion of the area of conflict, especially the latest development. And we encourage all—for restraints and to protect the safety and security of the region.

Thank you, Mr. President.

*President Biden.* Thank you.

*Q.* President Biden, President Biden——

*Q.* President Biden, should Israel take this as a hint and not retaliate? Should Israel not retaliate?

*Q.* You told Iran, "Don't," and they did it anyway. So what now?

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:19 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization, also known as Daesh. Prime Minister Sudani spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

*Categories:* Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Iraq, Prime Minister Sudani.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Sudani, Muhammad Shia' al-.

*Subjects:* Gaza, conflict with Israel; Iran, missile and drone attack against Israel; Iraq, economic growth and development; Iraq, Prime Minister; Iraq, security cooperation with U.S.; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; Israel, Iranian missile and drone attack; Israel, military operations in Gaza; Israel, security cooperation with U.S.

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