

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2025

**Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel
and an Exchange With Reporters**

February 4, 2025

President Trump. Thank you very much.

Q. Mr. President, do you expect phase two of the hostage deal to go forward?

President Trump. I'm going to talk to you later. Thank you.

Nobel Peace Prize

Q. Mr. President, you managed to get this deal done. Some say—a lot of people say that the men who managed to do that should get a Nobel Peace Prize. Do you think that you'll be able to get all the hostages back home? And what would happen if you hear from the Israeli side——

President Trump. They will never give me a Nobel Peace Prize. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, several reporters began speaking at once.*]

Q. What needs to happen for normalization, President——

President Trump. It's—it's too bad. I deserve it——

Q. ——Trump?

President Trump. ——but they will never give it to me.

Israel/Saudi Arabia

Q. What needs to happen for normalization to go forward? What needs to happen for normalization with Saudi Arabia?

President Trump. Well, we're going to see, and we're dealing with a lot of people. And we have steps to go yet, as you know, and maybe those steps go forward, and maybe they don't. We're dealing with a very complex group of people—situation and people. But we have the right man. We have the right leader of Israel. He's done a great job, and we've been friends for a long time. And we do a great job also. And I think——

Q. Mr. President, do you support—[*inaudible*]——

President Trump. I think we have a combination that's very unbeatable, actually.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Q. Mr. President, what would happen if you hear—Mr. President——

President Trump. Wait a minute. Wait. Wait, wait.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Q. Elizabeth Tsurkov is held in Iraq.

President Trump. Where is that person——

Q. Yes.

President Trump. Where is that person coming from? Come on. Go. You go.

Cease-Fire and Hostage-Release Deal Between Israel and Hamas

Q. Yes. Mr. President, what would happen if you'll hear from the Israeli side today that they are not willing to go through with the deal to get all the hostages back home and finish the war?

President Trump. We'll see what happens. Whatever happens, we'll be prepared to handle the situation.

Q. What are the plans in terms of——

Q. Are the Saudis demanding a Palestinian state?

Q. ——[inaudible]—getting Iran nuclear deal, Mr. President?

Saudi Arabia

Q. Are the Saudis demanding a Palestinian state?

President Trump. No, they're not. No.

Q. Are they demanding a path towards a Palestinian state or any other recognition of that sort?

President Trump. Everybody is demanding one thing. You know what it is? Peace. We want peace. We want people to stop being killed. But everybody is demanding one thing.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Very simple. Peace. And he wants peace also.

Israel/Saudi Arabia

Q. Mr. President, do you think it's politically possible in Israel to get this deal done until the end?

President Trump. To get the deal done?

Q. Yes.

President Trump. Sure.

U.S. Diplomatic Efforts

Q. I mean, is it politically——

President Trump. Why wouldn't a deal get done?

Q. ——possible in Israel?

President Trump. A deal can get done. We'll see what happens. We're dealing with very complicated people, but a deal can absolutely get done.

Q. Mr. President, there was another——

Iran

Q. Mr. President, do you support——

Q. There was another——

Q. ——another Israeli strike on Iran?

President Trump. We'll see what happens.

Q. President Trump——

Q. Mr. President——

Q. —I have one for Prime Minister Netanyahu. We have heard Joe Biden and Donald Trump take credit for the hostage and cease-fire deal. Who do you think deserves more credit?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I think President Trump added great force and powerful leadership to this effort. I appreciate it. He sent a very good emissary. He's helped it along. And, you know, I'll just tell you: I'm happy that they're here, and I'm sure the President is happy that they're here. And I would think that's about enough—[*inaudible*].

Q. President Trump—

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, what about Elizabeth Tsurkov, the Israeli hostage held in Iraq?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. What about the Israeli press taking a press conference in Israel and not in Washington—[*inaudible*]?

Q. We would love to take a press conference in Israel to interview you, Prime Minister Netanyahu.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

A few more questions. Prime Minister Netanyahu, do you support going forward with this deal and getting all the hostages out?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I support getting all the hostages out and meeting all our war goals, that include—

Q. Can you do that without going back to war?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. —that include destroying Hamas's military and governing capabilities and making sure that Gaza never poses a threat to Israel again.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Q. Are you willing—are you willing—

Prime Minister Netanyahu. All three.

Q. Are you willing to agree—

Q. Can those things—

Q. Are you willing to agree—

Q. —can go together?

Q. Are—are you willing to agree to Trump's vision—

Q. Can you promise to the families that you'll do everything to—

Q. —to bring of all the hostages back home?

Q. —get the hostages out?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I think—I think—

President Trump. Wait, wait, wait.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I think that I should talk to—

President Trump. One at a time.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. —President Trump. Okay?

Q. One at a time. So I'll—I'll ask: Are—do you agree with Trump's vision of getting all the hostages back home, even if it means to end the war?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, I'm not sure that you articulate correctly—[laughter]—what the President's vision is. You can ask—he can speak for himself. He does that very, very well.

I have my own views. Three goals—not one, not two—three goals, and I will meet all three goals. I think the President can help enormously.

Q. Mr. Netanyahu, are you worried about getting arrested?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. He brings fresh thinking.

October 7, 2023, Hamas Attacks on Israel/Russia/Ukraine

Q. Mr. President, any address—

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Fresh thinking.

Q. —in regard to the terrorist who murdered hundreds of people released to their home of the part of the deal?

President Trump. It's a horrible thing. We can't forget it. I'll never forget it, and you can't forget it. And some people want to put it out of their memory, but we're not going to ever let that happen.

It was a horrible day. October 7, that was a horrible—that was a horrible period of time, and a lot of people like to pretend it didn't happen. It happened. It's a big group of people that like to pretend it didn't happen, like the Holocaust didn't happen—same mindset. And no, we're going to—we're going to get this thing wrapped up, and we're going to get it done.

We're also dealing, I think, very successfully, with Russia-Ukraine. We're going to, hopefully, get that one done at some point in the not-too-distant future. That's a complex problem also. But we—we solve problems. We'll—you know, when I left, we had no problem. There was no Ukraine and Russia fighting. There was no October 7. There was nothing. And some very poor leadership led to a lot of problems and a lot of death, and it's a shame, but we'll put it out. We'll put out the fires. We have a lot of fires, but we'll put them out.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Israel/Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Mr. President, do you still support a Palestinian state, like the peace plan you presented in January 2020—in 2020? Is this plan still on the table?

President Trump. Well, a lot of plans change with time, and a lot of death has occurred since I left and now came back. This death occurred not while I was here, but while somebody else was here. It shouldn't have happened. They shouldn't have allowed it to happen. It would have never happened. And that includes Russia-Ukraine would have never happened—not even a little bit, not even a chance.

But now we are faced with a situation that's different—in some ways better and in some ways worse. But we're faced with a very complex and difficult situation, but we'll solve—we'll solve the problem.

[Several reporters spoke at once.]

Gaza, Palestinian Territories/Status of Palestinian Refugees/Mexico/Canada

Q. Mr. President, what countries do you expect to get refugees get—from Gaza, out of Gaza? If not Jordan, Egypt, what other countries you think might accept Palestinians from Gaza?

President Trump. Well, I think Jordan and Egypt will. I know they've spoken about it with you, and they say they're not going to accept. I say they will. But I think other countries will accept also.

I think that Gaza maybe is a demolition site right now. If you look at Gaza, it's all—I mean, there's hardly a building standing, and the ones that are are going to collapse. You can't live in Gaza right now. And I think we need another location. I think it should be a location that's going to make people happy.

You look over the—over the decades, it's all death in Gaza. This has been happening for years. It's all death. If we can get a beautiful area to resettle people permanently in nice homes and where they can be happy and not be shot, not be killed, not be knifed to death, like what's happening in Gaza.

And right now you have, in Gaza, a very dangerous situation in terms of explosives all over the place, in terms of tunnels that nobody knows who's in the tunnel. The whole thing is a mess.

And I think that if we can resettle—and I believe we can do it in areas where the leaders currently say no. I mean, I've been saying that with Mexico, having to do with the border and—and all of the things, and you saw what happened—10,000 soldiers, and they're going to do a good job. I really believe that. And I believe Canada is going to do a good job also. And they said the same thing, and then they did something much different than what you were hearing.

This is a very, very difficult situation, but we're going to get it solved. I don't think people should be going back to Gaza. I think that Gaza has been very unlucky for them. They've lived like hell. They lived like you're living in hell. Gaza is not a place for people to be living.

And the only reason they want to go back—and I believe this strongly—is because they have no alternative. What's the alternative? Go where? There's no other alternative. If they had an alternative, they'd much rather not go back to Gaza and live in a beautiful alternative that's safe.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Q. Mr. President, did you get to see the pictures of hostages coming out?

Q. Would Palestinians—

Q. If Egypt and—and—

President Trump. Peter [Peter Doocy, Fox News].

Q. Would Palestinians have—

Q. If Egypt and Jordan—

Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Would Palestinians have the right to return to Gaza if they left while the rebuilding was happening?

President Trump. It would be my hope that we could do something really nice, really good, where they wouldn't want to return. Why would they want to return? The place has been hell. It's been—

Q. Because it's their home, sir.

President Trump. —one of the meanest—one of the meanest, toughest places—

Q. Why would they leave?

President Trump. —on Earth. And right now, it's—it's—I've seen every picture from every angle better than if I were there. And nobody can live there. You can't live there.

Q. And if Egypt and Jordan tell you no——

President Trump. So, if we can build—if we can build them, through massive amounts of money supplied by other people—very rich nations—and they'll be—they're willing to supply it—if we can build something for them, and—one of the countries—and it could be Jordan, and it could be Egypt, it could be other countries—and you could build four or five or six areas. It doesn't have to be one area. But you take certain areas and you build really good-quality housing, like a beautiful town, like someplace where they can live and not die, because Gaza is a guarantee that they're going to end up dying.

The same thing is going to happen again. It's happened over and over again, and it's going to happen again, as sure as you're standing there, Peter.

So I hope that we could do something where they wouldn't want to go back. Who would want to go back? They've experienced nothing but death and destruction.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Egypt/Jordan/Status of Palestinian Refugees

Q. And if—and if Egypt and Jordan——

Q. What will you do if Palestinians refuse?

Q. —if Egypt and Jordan tell you no—if Egypt and Jordan tell you no, what will you do then?

President Trump. Well, I don't think they're going to tell me no.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

I don't think they're going to tell me—I think they're going to Biden no, and I think they're going to tell other people no. I don't think they'll tell me——

Q. So you think it will happen at the end?

President Trump. I think there's a good chance, yes. I'd like to see it happen.

Q. How many people are you—are you thinking about?

President Trump. All of them. I mean, we're talking about——

Q. All of the Gazans?

President Trump. —probably a million seven people—a million seven, maybe a million eight. But I think all of them. I think they'll be resettled in areas where they can live a beautiful life and not be worried about dying every day.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Gaza, Palestinian Territories/Status of Palestinian Refugees

Q. What will you do if the Palestinians refuse? What will you do if the Palestinians refuse?

President Trump. Wait, wait, wait.

Q. What are you hearing from——

Q. What will you do—what will you do——

Q. —the Palestinians?

President Trump. No. No.

Yes.

Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Mr. President, do support building settlements—Jewish—settlements back in Gaza in the next years?

President Trump. Say it?

Q. Building settlements—Jewish settlements back in Gaza in the next year, do you support this idea?

President Trump. I don't see it happening. I—it's too dangerous for people. Nobody can go there. It's too dangerous. Nobody wants to be there. Warriors don't want to be there. Soldiers don't want to be there. How can you have people go back?

You're saying go back into Gaza now? They'll—the same thing is going to happen. It will only be death. The best way to do it is you go out and you get beautiful, open areas with the sunlight coming through, and you build——

Q. No, that's not what I meant.

President Trump. ——something nice——

Q. I meant building Israeli——

President Trump. And they are not going to want to——

Q. ——settlements back in Gaza.

President Trump. They are not going to want to go back to Gaza.

Q. Who—[inaudible]—in Gaza?

Gaza, Palestinian Territories

Q. Prime Minister Netanyahu, what is your message to the families of the hostages that look at this deal, they're worried that this deal is—won't go through? What do you say to them at this moment?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Same message I said from the beginning of the war: We'll get them out. We'll get them back. We got over 70 percent, close to 75 percent of the people who everybody believed will not get out. We got them in successive deals and, most recently, with the help of President Trump.

We're not going to give up on any of them, and we're not going to give up on our other warnings. Hamas is not going to be in Gaza, and we're going to get everyone back.

President Trump. And you would not have——

Q. Prime Minister—Prime Minister, how—how optimistic are you about reaching—about reaching phase two of the cease-fire? How optimistic are you about that happening?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Well, we're going to try. That's one of the reasons—one of the things we're going to talk about here. And if we——

Q. Is it possible to reach a second phase?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. If we—you know, when Israel and the United States work together, and President Trump and I work together, you know, the chances go up a lot. It's when——

Q. Is it possible to reach——

Prime Minister Netanyahu. ——when we don't work together——

Q. ——a second phase when you've promised the—[inaudible]——

Prime Minister Netanyahu. ——Israel and the United States don't work together, that creates problems. When the other side sees daylight between us—and occasionally, in the last few years, to put it mildly——

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

——they saw daylight.

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

Then it's more difficult.

Q. Now that Iran is so weak——

Prime Minister Netanyahu. When we—we cooperate——

Q. Now that Iran is so weak, isn't it the right time——

Prime Minister Netanyahu. ——chances are good.

Q. ——to hit once and for all?

President Trump. Say it?

Iran

Q. Now that Iran is so weak, isn't it the right time to hit their nuclear facilities, once and for all?

President Trump. So you say Iran is so weak. I appreciate you saying that. [*Laughter*] They're not weak. They're very strong right now, and we're not—we're not going to allow them to have a nuclear weapon. It's very simple.

You know, I signed a very strong proclamation. Iran was in big trouble when I left. They were broke. They didn't have money for Hamas. They didn't have any money for Hizballah. You had no problem. October 7 could have never happened. When I left, October 7 could have never happened. And frankly, Russia and Ukraine, as I said, could never have happened.

They became very strong very fast. They sold massive amounts of oil to China and everybody else, who would not buy the oil when I was President—because we said, "Don't buy the oil." And they became very rich very quickly. But they're not weak. They're not weak.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Trump. They're strong.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Trump. Doesn't mean they won't be weak. But you know what? We just don't want them to have a nuclear weapon. They can't have a nuclear weapon.

Q. The Prime Minister—sorry, sir. Sorry, Mr. President.

Q. And, sir, when you're talking about five or six areas——

Q. The Prime Minister wants you to strike Iran. That's what he wants. That's the idea.

President Trump. You don't know what he wants. What do you—what do you know about anything? [*Laughter*]

Go ahead.

Q. But is—that option is on the table?

[*Several reporters spoke at once.*]

President Trump. Yes, please.

Q. President Trump, is that option on the table?

Status of Palestinian Refugees

Q. When you talk about five or six areas for Gazans, you're not just talking about Jordan and Egypt, are you? So what—

President Trump. No, could be other places too.

Q. So—and the goal is where?

President Trump. There are many people that have reached out—many countries, many leaders of countries that have reached out that would like to participate in that. Doesn't have to be Jordan and Egypt, but I think it would be also them.

Q. Mr. President, your—Mr. President, your relationship—

Q. What about the Palestinian Authority? Should—

Q. Your relationship—

Q. —shouldn't it rule Gaza anymore?

Q. —with Mr. Netanyahu knew ups and downs. How would you describe it right now?

President Trump. No, I think it's mostly ups.

Palestinian Authority

Q. Mr. President, what about the Palestinian Authority? It shouldn't rule Gaza, because Gaza will be emptied?

President Trump. What?

Q. The Palestinian Authority, can it rule Gaza? What do you think?

President Trump. Well, it's had a pretty hard time, wouldn't you say? I'd say it's had a pretty bad time of it.

Go ahead.

Qatar

Q. —Mr. President, Qatar has—you've criticized them in the past as a funder of terrorism. So has the Prime Minister. Do you think they're part of the solution or part of a problem moving forward?

President Trump. I think they're trying to help. Qatar?

Q. Yes.

President Trump. Is absolutely trying to help. I know them very well, and they're doing everything they can. Very tough situation, but they're absolutely trying to help.

Q. Will you visit Israel?

President Trump. Okay. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:33 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Prime Minister Netanyahu referred to U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steven C. Witkoff. A reporter referred to Elizabeth Tsurkov, an Israeli-Russian researcher, who was abducted in Baghdad, Iraq, in March 2023. The transcript was released by the Office of the Communications on February 5.

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