

## Remarks Prior to Discussions With Ambassador Souheil Chammas of the Lebanese Peace Delegation December 17, 1992

*The President.* Welcome, and my respects to people at home. And we're just delighted you're here at the White House. I think it's proper and fitting, and I'm very pleased you're here.

*Q.* Are you happy with the way these talks are going, Mr. President?

*The President.* You can answer, sure.

*Ambassador Chammas.* Maybe we would have wished that the peace talks go ahead at a larger pace. But I take this opportunity to express the deep gratitude and recognition of the Lebanese Government on behalf of my President, the Prime Minister, and the political leadership, as well as the people of Lebanon. We think the initiative of President Bush in holding the Madrid conference and initiating the peace process will in the end be an historic landmark. And time will prove that we're right. Those of us who have accepted to come and join the peace process came knowing in the end, regardless of the difficulties, it would reach ultimately its fruitful conclusions. And this would be good for the area, its people, and all the states there.

*The President.* A very good statement. A very good statement.

*Q.* Do you think the deportation of 400 Palestinians will disrupt the talks?

*Ambassador Chammas.* It will loom largely over the talks. And we expressly hope that President Bush, with his weight in the administration, will do what they think they can in order to have the Israeli Government rescind the decision, because in itself deportation is bad. And under the circumstances it will adversely affect the peace process, I regret to say. And if the news were to be correct that they could be deported to Lebanon, this will further aggravate an already grave situation in Lebanon. And I'm sure I will raise this with the President of the United States if President Bush would be kind enough to listen to me.

*The President.* And I look forward to—*[inaudible]*—having a good discussion. Thank you all very much.

*Note: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.*

## Remarks Prior to Discussions With Ambassador Mowaffak Aloaf of the Syrian Peace Delegation December 17, 1992

*The President.* We're glad you're here and look forward to hearing from you how you feel the peace process is going and all of that. We salute you for staying in the game and being at the negotiations. I want to assure you of our determination to try to bring these as far along as we can while we're here. And I'm confident that our successors will want to see this process actively and vigorously continued.

*Ambassador Aloaf.* Well, we are grateful very much, Mr. President, for receiving us. We consider this, really, as an indication of the great importance you attach to the

peace process, something where our people and our authorities are convinced very deeply of. And they already, I think, have expressed their appreciation for your efforts.

This is your peace initiative. If we are sorry that after 13 months of this peace process we are still without real progress, it is because we know how much effort and how much—especially Secretary Baker—time, I think—has spent a lot of energy and efforts under your leadership in order to make this peace process the hopeful end for