

peace. Just as the Jewish people this week celebrate the dawn of a new year, let us all go from this place to celebrate the dawn of a new era, not only for the Middle East but for the entire world.

The sound we heard today, once again, as in ancient Jericho, was of trumpets toppling walls, the walls of anger and suspicion between Israeli and Palestinian, between Arab and Jew. This time, praise God, the trumpets herald not

the destruction of that city but its new beginning.

Now let each of us here today return to our portion of that effort, uplifted by the spirit of the moment, refreshed in our hopes, and guided by the wisdom of the Almighty, who has brought us to this joyous day.

Go in peace. Go as peacemakers.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

## Interview With the Arab News Media on the Middle East Peace Process *September 13, 1993*

*Q.* Mr. President, thank you very much for this chance to speak to the Arab nation and Arabic television through NBC television on this very historic day. What would you like to say to the Arab world at the—

*The President.* I would like to say that I hope all the people in the Arab world will support this agreement. It is the beginning of a new relationship not only between Israel and the PLO and the Palestinians, but I hope it will lead to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. And if that occurs, it would mean a whole range of presently unimaginable opportunities for the nations of the Middle East to work together and for the United States to work with all of them and for us to work together to help people in other parts of the world who are troubled and need our help.

*Q.* You pledged during the signing ceremony your full support for the peace process in the Middle East. How involved are you prepared to stay in this process?

*The President.* Extremely involved. After the ceremony I met for a few moments with Mr. Arafat. And then I came back here and had a quick meal with Prime Minister Rabin. And I told both of them clearly that I wanted to begin immediately to help to implement the peace accord. I think the United States can help them in the practical ways to shore up the political decisions that have to be made. I think that clearly we can assist in raising funds necessary to carry this out. I believe that we can continually reassure the people of Israel about their security. And they must feel more secure

in this in order to go forward. And again, I hope that over the long run we can fulfill the objective of a comprehensive peace.

*Q.* Mr. President, you spoke recently to President Asad of Syria and King Hussein of Jordan. Are you hopeful of any breakthrough on the Jordanian, Syrian tracks?

*The President.* Of course. As a practical matter, I think it's easier now for a breakthrough on the Jordanian track. And I would hope that would come quickly. But I believe we'll have continued and very serious negotiations with Syria coming out of this process. And I believe that over time the parties will come together. We're going to have to focus now on getting this agreement implemented and on making sure that the parties affected by this agreement feel secure in it.

*Q.* Mr. President, any Palestinian entity that might come up as a result of this agreement is going to be pretty expensive to establish and even more expensive to maintain. How far can you help in the establishment of such an entity, and how do you plan to fund it?

*The President.* Well, first of all, there has to be an economic committee established under the agreement. And they will presumably be able to give us all some guidance about exactly how we should channel funds. But I have spoken and my Secretary of State has spoken with many nations. I think if you look at the foreign ministers who came today—the Foreign Minister of Japan came all the way from Tokyo to be here today. The Japanese, the Western Europeans, the Scandinavians, the Gulf states,

all have expressed an interest in supporting this. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia told me in particular that he thought that the cause of peace required his nation to support this effort. And of course, the United States will support it.

*Q.* So you are satisfied with the support you got from leaders?

*The President.* So far, I'm eminently satisfied. But we have to work out the details, you know, how much money do we need when, for what purposes, who's going to give in what order. I mean, all these details still have to be worked out.

*Q.* Talking about King Fahd, how important is the Saudi role in the future of the peace process?

*The President.* Well, I think it's quite critical not only because the Saudis are willing to contribute financially but because they have been friends of the United States. They have been somewhat estranged from the PLO in the aftermath of the Gulf war. I think that their involvement is a part of the overall healing that I see coming out of this and what I hope will be an increasing solidarity among the Arab peoples.

*Q.* During these recent telephone calls with leaders of the Gulf, did you get any guarantees on lifting the embargo on Israel?

*The President.* No. But I didn't ask for them in this conversation. I told them I would be back to them on that. I have discussed it obviously with many of the leaders in the past. I do believe it is a logical step to take in the fairly near future. But I think the first and most important thing was to secure their support for this agreement.

*Q.* Arabs are asking, Mr. President, that the United States has been paying billions of dollars to Israel over the years; will you be willing to divert some of the aid to a new Palestinian entity?

*The President.* Well, I think that that's not the question. The real question is not whether we should divert from our support for Israel. Keep in mind, all the progress yet to be made depends upon the conviction of the people of Israel that they are secure and that making peace makes them more secure. So I don't think anyone in the Arab world should want me to do anything that makes the Israelis feel less secure. And I have no intention of doing that. But I do intend to support financially the development of an economic infrastructure for the

Palestinians and their self-rule. And I also intend to ask many other nations to contribute. And I think the United States clearly will be taking the initiative on that.

*Q.* There will be even more Israeli security concerns when it comes to a deal with the Syrians, that's if the Israelis decide to withdraw from the Golan Heights. What security guarantees are you prepared to give both sides?

*The President.* Well, first of all, let's get this agreement implemented. Let's start on that. And let's see what the Israelis and the Lebanese and the Syrians decide to do in their continuing discussions. I think we should focus on and savor this moment. I have made it clear to President Asad, Prime Minister Haini, to Prime Minister Rabin, to everyone that I was committed to continuing this process until we achieve comprehensive peace. But I don't think we ought to jump the gun. We are now in this moment, and we ought to focus on it and sort out our responsibilities to implement this agreement.

*Q.* During your meetings with Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin, how genuine did you feel their quest for peace was today?

*The President.* Oh, I felt it was quite genuine. Just before we walked out—you know, they had never spoken before—and they looked at one another and immediately got down to business, no pleasantries. One said, you know, "We have a lot of work to do to make this work," the Prime Minister. And Chairman Arafat said, "I know, and I'm prepared to do my part." I mean, that was the immediate first exchange. And I thought they were both serious.

*Q.* And the famous handshake?

*The President.* I was pleased by it.

*Q.* Mr. President, will Secretary Christopher be back in the region to try to push some progress on the Syrian, Israeli track?

*The President.* Well, I expect Secretary Christopher to be in the region aggressively on a whole range of issues. He's already been there twice, and I expect him to be there quite a lot more.

*Q.* In view of some of the financial programs that you have in your national development programs, how is the U.S. administration going to cope with any extra financial burden that the peace process might bring about?

*The President.* Well, for us, I think, two things will make it possible for us to contribute. First, as a practical matter, we'd been given so many assurances by other nations that they wish to

contribute that ours will probably be a minority contribution to an effort that while it will be sizable, will not be overwhelming and as much as the number of people living in Gaza and in the Jericho area, however it is ultimately defined, will not be so great.

And secondly, I think most Americans expect us to do this. They understand how important to the United States making this peace might be with all of its possible future implications. And I think the American people also understand that this is a genuinely historic opportunity, one that comes along at most once in a century and that we have to seize it.

Q. Mr. President, your Russian aid bill went through some difficulties to pass through the Congress. There are lots of laws that prohibit any American aid to the PLO. Is there any plan of revoking these laws?

*The President.* Well, our dialog has just begun. And presumably that's one of the things we'll be discussing. The Russian aid program I expect to be successfully concluded. But we have, because our budget deficit has gotten so large, we have now very strict laws about how we spend money and how we account for it. So we take great care before we spend any new money. But there's a lot of support for the Russian aid package, and I expect it to pass soon.

Q. How do you see the relationship between the peace process and the spread of fundamentalism in parts of the Middle East?

*The President.* And beyond.

Q. And beyond?

*The President.* I think if we carry through the peace process in good faith and we give the Palestinian people a chance to enjoy a normal life with a sense of place, that it will remove one of the great causes of fundamentalism and political extremism. Doubtless there will be other causes. And a lot of the groups are very well organized and very well financed and are furthering political objectives that have no longer anything to do with the grievances of the Palestinian people. But still, that was at the root of it all in the beginning. I also believe if we can do it, it will show the Islamic peoples of the world that the United States and all of the nations which help us, respect and honor the religious and cultural traditions of the Muslims wherever they are and are prepared to work with and support Islamic nations as long as they are willing to adhere to the international rules

governing human rights and peace and democracy.

Q. Mr. President, in your call with President Asad of Syria, you asked him for some more active role in the peace process. And you are negotiating and taking part in talks with the Syrians. Is it not a bit weird to still have Syria's name on the blacklist of states supporting terrorism?

*The President.* Well, the countries that get on that list are put on the list under American laws based on factual inquiries and evidence in certain particular cases. That is an issue which has to be resolved in the course of our common negotiations. I think the important thing is that as an American President I have had several exchanges of letters with President Asad, and the Secretary of State has been to see him. I had a very good, long conversation with him on the telephone. And we are talking. And that is important.

Q. Mr. President, in your interview yesterday with the New York Times and today in the Washington Post, there were some implications that you were blaming the Palestinians for throwing stones at the Israelis. We have the whole Arab world watching us now that would say, is it not at least a two-way street? Why don't you blame the Israelis for also punishing the Palestinians?

*The President.* Well, the context of the Washington Post story this morning was quite different. It was with reference to the specific incidents. You know, yesterday, we had Israeli soldiers killed, we had one driver killed, we had the attempted destruction of the bus.

Q. And three Palestinians.

*The President.* And so—that's right—but what I was asked about were those incidents, those particular instances. So I expect both sides to keep the commitments they made in this peace agreement. But one of the things that Mr. Arafat did, to his credit, was to renounce terrorism and to recognize the existence of the state of Israel and to say that he would take responsibility within the areas of self-governance for promoting the law. And that's all I said, was I thought he ought to do that.

Q. Isn't there a difference, Mr. President, between terrorism and freedom fighting? I mean, someone, a terrorist in someone's eyes might be a freedom fighter in the other's. What is the defined line that divides between these two?

*The President.* Well, I suppose it's like beauty,

it may be in the eyes of the beholder. But from the point of view of the United States, there are clear definitions of terrorism, and one of them clearly is the willful killing of innocent civilians who themselves are not in any way involved in military combat. That is what we seek to prevent.

*Q.* Mr. President, today has been an historical day with the signing of the agreement, with the very first interview by an American President on an Arabic television. Once again, we

thank you very much for this interview and for this time, and we say congratulations on the agreement that's been signed today.

*The President.* I hope there will be more of these.

*NOTE:* The interview began at 3:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

## Interview With the Israeli News Media on the Middle East Peace Process September 13, 1993

*Q.* Mr. President, thank you for granting this interview to the Israeli television. I wanted to ask you first, with your permission, after having Mr. Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin shake, reluctantly, sort of, each other's hand, did you manage to get them to talk to each other?

*The President.* Yes, indeed. They talked a little bit before they came out and before they had shaken hands. I understand the many decades of events which have divided them and the awkwardness of this moment for both of them. And I understand, I think, why this is different from the agreement reached by Israel and Egypt at Camp David. This was an agreement that will require not just the concurrence of two governments but tens of thousands of people who will literally be living in close proximity to one another. So it was a very challenging moment.

But before we came out, Mr. Rabin and Mr. Arafat were alone in the Blue Room upstairs with me, and we walked down together when everyone else had left. And they had not spoken during the time of the reception. But they looked at each other really clearly, in the eye, for the first time, and the Prime Minister said, "You know we're going to have to work very hard to make this work." And Arafat said, "I know, and I am prepared to do my part." And they immediately exchanged about three sentences, right to business, no pleasantries but went right to business. But I thought they were both quite serious.

And you saw what happened on the stage. They did shake hands. A lot of people thought that would never happen. And I thought the

fact that they did it and that they said what they did, each trying to speak to the people represented by the other, was an important gesture.

*Q.* How involved, Mr. President, do you plan to get in getting this accord off the ground?

*The President.* Very involved. I spent about 10 minutes with Mr. Arafat today after the occasion and made it clear to him that I was prepared to take a the lead in trying to organize the finances necessary to carry this through and to try to build the political support for it but that it was imperative that he honor the commitments made to Israel's security, to denouncing terrorism, to assuming responsibility within the areas of self-government for maintaining law and order.

And then I came over here to the Oval Office and went into my dining room and had lunch with the Prime Minister. And we had a good, long talk about what the next steps are. And I reaffirmed to him my determination to use the influence and the power of the United States and the resources of the United States to make sure that the people of Israel feel more secure, not less secure, by this agreement. And we talked a little about that, and we agreed that we would move immediately to begin to implement it.

*Q.* Were you disappointed with the contents of Mr. Arafat's speech, if I may ask, since many Israelis feel that he did not repeat those commitments that he was undertaking in writing. That is, to publicly denounce terrorism, say "no more violence," repeat what the late President