

This legislation will end the confusion regarding liability for food recovery and donation operations through uniform definitions in one national law. This will encourage the charitable and well-intentioned donation of food to the needy, while preserving governmental authority to protect health and food safety. For these reasons, I am pleased to sign this bill into law.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,

October 1, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 2428, approved October 1, was assigned Public Law No. 104-210. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 2.

The President's News Conference With Middle Eastern Leaders *October 2, 1996*

The President. Good afternoon. Please be seated. The four of us have agreed that I will speak about our 2 days of meetings and then do my best to faithfully answer questions that you have about it. And of course, the other three leaders will have a chance to be heard after the press conference.

I'd like to begin by thanking King Hussein, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and Chairman Arafat for coming here to Washington at this critical and very difficult moment for the Middle East peace process. Their journey reflects a true commitment to peace and an understanding that there is no alternative to the path of peace their people have traveled so far along in the last few years.

I invited them here with three urgent goals in mind: first, to seek to curb the terrible violence and death that we saw last week; second, to get the Israelis and Palestinians talking again at the highest levels; and third, to help both parties return to the hard work of building peace through negotiations. Today I can report progress on these goals.

First, the Israelis and Palestinians clearly are talking again at the highest levels. I believe the calm, constructive, face-to-face meetings Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat have had here will help to build trust between them and promote progress on the issues that still divide them. The Prime Minister and the Chairman agree that they are partners in peace, understand that it is vital to take into account each other's needs and concerns, and realize the importance of removing the frictions between them.

Second, the Prime Minister and Chairman Arafat have recommitted themselves to a non-violent future, to renouncing violence in the resolution of their disputes.

Third, they are ready to renew and intensify negotiations on implementing the Interim Agreement, with Hebron as the first priority. They are committed to engaging immediately in talks and to achieving tangible progress quickly. To assist them in this effort I am sending Dennis Ross, our Special Middle East Coordinator, to the region now. The very first meeting will take place on Sunday morning at Erez. They want to resolve the problem of Israeli redeployment from Hebron, and they want to achieve this as soon as possible. I might point out that these talks will be occurring continuously, and these will be the first continuous peace talks that have been held since the Prime Minister assumed office with the Palestinians.

Finally, the leaders also understand the need to make arrangements between their security forces so that cooperation is more reliable and the situation on the ground is stabilized. They are prepared to do what is needed to achieve that as well.

All of us should put the meetings we have had over the last 2 days into the proper perspective. The peace process did not start today, and it will not be finished tomorrow. For 3 years now the Israelis and the Palestinians have been moving forward along the path to a lasting peace. Every step is hard. It requires both sides to make difficult decisions and to keep their eyes fixed on the prize of lasting peace. But the progress they have made has proved to the world that progress is possible and peace is pos-

sible. Both sides know there is no turning back. Just as there can be no peace without security, there can be no true security without peace.

I believe Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat understand the choice they face every day. It is the choice between cooperation and conflict, between progress and regression, between hope and fear. The Israeli and Palestinian people have chosen to strive for cooperation, progress, and hope. Now it falls to their leaders to guide them toward those goals, to help them stay true to their choice, and ultimately, to succeed.

In this effort, we are all profoundly privileged to have a partner in King Hussein. He has shown the world equal parts of courage and wisdom, and he has especially shown that here this week. I thank him for being here. I rely on his counsel. The peace process has no better friend.

Most of all, let me again thank Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat, who came here at very difficult times, with tensions high. I am convinced they both want a more peaceful, prosperous future for their people. I am convinced they both want a more secure future for their people. And I believe they are both prepared to do the hard work that is necessary to achieve their goals.

For our part, the United States will always be there to help. We remain committed to our common goal, a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We recognize our special responsibility to protect the peace process at moments of extreme difficulty, to help move it forward. We have embraced this responsibility because those who take risks for peace must be able to count on the United States.

Mr. Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Q. Mr. President, after these marathon negotiations—we're told they went nonstop through the night—was there any narrowing of differences on the fundamental disputes? You mentioned Hebron, as well as the tunnel in East Jerusalem. Or are the problems that exploded last week in violence still festering?

The President. I would say that the problems that exploded last week in violence—that the problems are still there; the differences are still there. But I believe there is a higher level of understanding and a higher level of trust than existed before these talks began. They were not able to resolve their differences here. But to be fair, when we came together, there were

no advance guarantees that there would be large-scale substantive negotiations. We knew we only had about a day and a half to work here. And they got the most out of it. I think that a lot of people on both sides have hardly slept.

And frankly, the agreement that was made here to immediately restart these negotiations and to do them on a full-time basis until agreement is reached on the critical issues, including Hebron, is encouraging to me. And I think that it comes out of the different feeling that they have about dealing with one another—I hope it does—and also a sense of urgency, given what has happened in the region in the last several days.

Yes, sir, in the back.

Q. Mr. President, is there a target date for ending the negotiations on the question of Hebron and also on other outstanding questions between Israel and the Palestinian Authority? Or is it negotiations without a target date?

The President. There was no specific date set, but I think it's important to point out that what they did agree to do was to start immediately on a full-time basis with a priority on speed and a priority on Hebron. This is not—this is the first negotiations that these parties have undertaken since Mr. Netanyahu became Prime Minister that have been on a full-time, in effect, permanent basis. And I am convinced that both sides want as quick as possible resolution.

Yes.

Q. Mr. President, you said one of your goals was to end the cycle of violence in the Middle East. But today Israeli troops shot to death one Palestinian and wounded five others, and the negotiations that will take place are on issues that were supposedly settled a year ago here in Washington. Have you even—you spoke about progress, but it would seem you're back at square one.

The President. Well, I wouldn't say that. There's been a clear commitment not to renegotiate agreements by which both sides are bound but instead to talk about the implementation steps necessary to implement those agreements. And I think that there is a clear distinction there first.

Second, the level of violence at least, thank God, has declined in the last several days, and they are committed to taking it down as close to zero as they can. I believe you will see progress on that as they go back home. When we compare where we are today with where

we were a week ago, are we in better shape? Yes. Are we where I'd like to be? No. But we will get there, I think, if we keep working. Yes.

Q. Mr. President, would you please tell us if Mr. Netanyahu has pledged to remove the tanks and the soldiers inside Palestinian territory which has been liberated, if you will, and it is now the Palestinian Authority, as well? Because the Palestinians are choked to death financially, economically. And if there is quiet now, will you, Mr. Netanyahu, remove, through your offices, these tanks and these soldiers and create a harmonious, self-confidence-building measures to facilitate for the Palestinians to live like the rest of human beings around the world?

The President. Let me say that that and many other issues were discussed. Every issue that you would like to know was discussed, was discussed in the last 2 days. But I believe that anything that was not in my statement, I feel bound to let the leaders speak for themselves on. And I ask you and I ask the people of the Middle East, I ask the Palestinians and others, to give us a few more days to let this thing unfold. Give us a few more days to see whether these negotiations start, whether they're proceeding in good faith, whether progress can be made.

I guess the message I want to send out across the Middle East is, I'm convinced that this process and that these parties are in better shape in their relation to one another than they were 2 days ago. And please, please give us a chance to make this thing work in the days ahead.

Go ahead, Brit [Brit Hume, ABC News].

Q. Mr. President, as Gene [Gene Gibbons, Reuters] mentioned earlier, some of these things were thought to have been agreed upon before. And I'm wondering whether you think it is fair to say not that the process has broken down but that there has been a major setback here from which you have not yet at least fully recovered.

The President. Well, what I think has happened is that we have not made as much progress as I wish we had. But the Israeli Government has made it very clear that they have no intention of renegotiating the Oslo Agreements, the Interim Agreement. Everything that the Government is bound by by previous action they intend to honor. But we are now in a stage which we would have been in anyway, talking about how to implement this. And then

there are the security questions which have been raised, which the parties have agreed to talk about to try to resolve between the two of them as a result of the events of the last several days.

But I do not expect there to be an effort to undermine the agreements which have been made. The question is, can we get the negotiations on a track so that they can be implemented in a hurry. That is the issue.

Yes, ma'am.

Q. Mr. President, you mention in your statement about the issue of Jerusalem and the tunnel that started the whole situation. Has there been any talk or any agreement that Israel will not do anything to change the status of Jerusalem before the final status negotiations start? Thank you.

The President. Well, there might be a—let me say, first of all, the tunnel was discussed at some length by the parties and all the aspects of it, all the various elements of the controversy, were discussed. No agreement was reached between them about that issue, and that's why it is not in my statement. But I think there were some significant discussions held. And again, the other question you asked me I think is part of the terms of the agreement by which all parties are bound; that is, to not to do anything to upset the balance of issues that have to be part of the final status negotiations.

Yes, Helen [Helen Thomas, United Press International].

Q. Mr. President, you're showing a lot of trust in the word of Israel to keep these commitments in terms of the status of Jerusalem, pulling troops out of Hebron; they were supposed to be done last March. What has restored your trust? And haven't you really struck out in getting any kind of firm commitment on anything?

The President. Well, we never agreed—there was never an agreement when these parties came here to have substantive negotiations. Nothing would make me happier if we had—I wish we had resolved everything in 2 days, but I didn't expect to do it. What I'm trying to do was to get people together and say, "We'll stop the violence. We will immediately begin to talk—immediately—about Hebron and the other issues. We will immediately begin to try to resolve these disputes over the security matters which are preventing more rapid progress."

I am very pleased by the agreement that was reached, actually today before we came out, to

start the negotiations on Sunday morning and to do it on a full-time continuous basis, with a mutual commitment to resolve these things as quickly as possible.

I'm not asking any of you to trust anybody about anything. I'm saying give us some time now to let the thing cool down and to let these full-time negotiations get underway, and look at what results are produced, and make your judgments based on what actually happens. Let's don't overreact now. We're in better shape than we were 2 days ago. We still have a huge amount of work to do, but the parties have to resolve that between themselves, and I think they have committed themselves to a process which makes that possible.

Yes, sir.

Q. Mr. President, you called the parties here because there was a crisis. Do you really feel and assess that this crisis is over and the two parties that came here did the best they could to avoid further bloodshed in the region? Are you satisfied with their effort?

The President. Well, I am satisfied that—I don't know that the crisis is over. What I am satisfied is, is that the level of—I hope the level of violence has been brought lower and can be maintained lower, at a lower level, while all the people in the Middle East watch as these talks unfold.

Keep in mind—keep in mind—let me ask you this. When you try to evaluate whether we did the right thing or not, or whether this has been worth doing, imagine what we would be reading in the press or seeing on the news if Chairman Arafat and King Hussein and Prime Minister Netanyahu had not come here and if everyone had withdrawn sort of to their respective positions and the turbulence that we were seeing in the region kept welling up. Imagine where we would be then. And keep in mind, too, that everybody who is here made a good-faith effort to address every single issue in the interim agreement, all the issues that they are bound to resolve, and to full-time negotiations beginning Sunday morning.

So I'm just saying I think that they worked very hard—and their teams hardly slept at all, and they didn't sleep much—they worked very hard to put all these issues out, to see where they were, to identify the points of difference. I think when they start these full-time negotiations, they'd know a great deal about where they are now. And they should be given a little

bit of time here to see if they can't produce some results. That's the only thing I'm saying. And I think they have all earned the right to that by coming here and proceeding in a good-faith manner.

Yes, Rita [Rita Braver, CBS News].

Q. Mr. President, in the past when you have had the leaders here, just about any leaders from any countries, we have always heard from them in the White House, even if they go off and have their own news conferences later. Why can't we hear from them here today? And doesn't it seem to send a message that things really have broken down, the fact that they're not going to be able to speak within the auspices of the White House?

The President. They're certainly free to speak. It was my understanding that they thought it would be better if I spoke and answered the questions, and I'll tell you why. Keep in mind—consider the commitment they have made. They have come here after a period of days when the entire peace process could have been wrecked; when many, many people, innocent people, died; when there was no communications. And they have agreed to restore the peace, to commit themselves to a nonviolent future and a way of resolving their differences and to begin immediate talks on a full-time basis to deal with these issues. That's what they've agreed to do.

Now, think of all the questions you're asking me here today about all the things we didn't do. We didn't do them. Think of the questions you asked—all the things we didn't agree to. Then you can ask them all the things we didn't do. And if one of us talks instead of four, the chances that we will say something that will make our work harder Sunday morning are less than if all four of us answer all these hard questions about what hasn't been done yet. Let's don't kid around. What we're trying to do is to avoid saying anything that will make our progress more difficult. We want to enhance the chances that we'll actually get something done.

Yes.

Q. Mr. President, are you satisfied with the level of good faith on both sides, and there are any American assurances to both sides about the involvement of the United States and the good faith of the other side?

The President. I can only tell you how I feel, first of all. All these things are matters of feeling

and trust, which is why you shouldn't minimize the hours that these leaders have spent with each other. I personally feel that the prospects for progress are more likely than I did 2 days ago. And I have told both parties that the United States will do whatever we can to support the peace process and to support the parties, and to make it a profitable thing to move forward in a constructive way, and to minimize the risks of peace. This is a risky business. And so, yes, I think I've made that clear, and I'll do my best to be there every step of the way.

Yes, Wolf [Wolf Blitzer, CNN]. Last question.

Q. Mr. President, with all due respect, can I follow up on Rita Braver's question? When we see the three leaders sitting here behind you, you say you want to urge everyone in the Middle East to be reassured, to calm down, to take this process seriously, but this news conference is being seen in the Middle East, all over the world, and when we don't hear your guests describe their feelings, we can only assume that they so disagree on these fundamental issues that these 2 days of negotiations have been a failure.

The President. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do—

Q. So why not let them speak?

The President. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm telling you, the only reason that they asked me to do this is because you've asked me some very interesting and difficult questions, some of which would be even more difficult for them to answer than for me. So they wanted me to answer it so we wouldn't, any of us, say anything that would wreck what we're trying to do Sunday morning. But if they would like to come up—and since I've answered my last question, if they would—if any of them would like to come up and make a brief statement, or all of them would, I would be happy to have them make a brief statement.

Your Majesty, would you like to start? Anybody want to go?

So, now this is a miracle. [Laughter] I didn't part the waters, but I have silenced the voices. [Laughter]

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 129th news conference began at 2:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. Present at the news conference were King Hussein I of Jordan, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel, and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Statement on Signing the Antarctic Science, Tourism, and Conservation Act of 1996

October 2, 1996

I have today signed into law H.R. 3060, the "Antarctic Science, Tourism, and Conservation Act of 1996."

Almost 40 years ago, the United States proposed a treaty among the nations carrying out scientific research in Antarctica. The resulting Antarctic Treaty establishes this fascinating and remote region of our planet as a zone of peace, reserved exclusively for peaceful uses, and guarantees freedom of scientific research there.

The Antarctic Treaty has proven a uniquely successful agreement and has spawned an innovative system of supplementary agreements to protect the Antarctic environment and conserve its living resources. For these reasons, it gives me particular pleasure to sign into law legislation that will provide authority for the United

States to ratify the most recent extension of that system: the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. The Protocol sets forth mandatory rules for the protection of the environment of Antarctica and the promotion of scientific research there.

The bill that I have signed today implements the provisions of the Environmental Protocol. The Senate has already given its advice and consent to ratification of the Protocol.

Enactment of this legislation reaffirms United States leadership in Antarctic affairs. Our leadership is expressed in our world class research program on the ice, which is helping to answer basic questions about the earth. The United States has also provided leadership in the innovative diplomacy that has made Antarctica a