

make a model for the future. There is no guarantee of success or failure today, but the challenge of this generation of Palestinians is to wage an historic and heroic struggle for peace.

Again I say this is an historic day. I thank you for coming. I thank you for raising your hands. I thank you for standing up. I thank you for your voices. I thank you for clapping every time I said what you were really doing was reaching deep into the heart of the people of Israel.

Chairman Arafat said he and Mrs. Arafat are taking Hillary and Chelsea and me—we're going to Bethlehem tomorrow. For a Christian family to light the Christmas tree in Bethlehem is a great honor. It is an interesting thing to contemplate that in this small place, the home of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, the embodiment of my faith was born a Jew and is still recognized by Muslims as a prophet. He said a lot of very interesting things, but in the end, He was known as the Prince of Peace. And we celebrate at Christmastime the birth of the Prince of Peace. One reason He is known as the Prince of Peace is He knew something about what it takes to make peace. And one of the wisest things He ever said was, "We will be judged by the same standard by which we judge, but mercy triumphs over judgment."

In this Christmas season, in this Hanukkah season, on the edge of Ramadan, this is a time for mercy and vision and looking at all of our children together. You have reaffirmed the fact that you now intend to share this piece of land, without war, with your neighbors, forever. They have heard you. They have heard you.

Now, you and they must now determine what kind of peace you will have. Will it be grudging and mean-spirited and confining, or will it be generous and open? Will you begin to judge each other in the way you would like to be judged? Will you begin to see each other's children in the way you see your own? Will they feel your pain, and will you understand theirs?

Surely to goodness, after 5 years of this peace process and decades of suffering and after you have come here today and done what you have done, we can say, "Enough of this gnashing of teeth. Let us join hands and proudly go forward together."

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. in the Main Hall at the Shawwa Center. In his remarks, he referred to Speaker Salim Za'anoun of the Palestine National Council; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority, and his wife Shua; and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of Israel.

Statement on the Puerto Rico Status Referendum *December 14, 1998*

I have advocated enabling the people of Puerto Rico to determine their future status among all the options—continuing the current governing arrangement, known as Commonwealth; nationhood, either independent from or in an association with the U.S.; and statehood. This year the House passed a bipartisan bill for this purpose, with my support, but the Senate majority leadership blocked it. In the end, the leadership simply recognized Puerto Ricans' right to choose and promised to review the results.

Yesterday Puerto Ricans voted on these issues under local law. A majority of the vote was not for any of the options. Among the rest, the overwhelming majority supported statehood.

I will, therefore, work with Members of Congress and the people of Puerto Rico and their leaders to enable Puerto Ricans to clarify their choice among the options. I remain committed to implementing a majority choice for Puerto Rico's future status.