

with the human potential. Someday, no telling what Yadira's going to be in life, but one thing is for certain: It's going to be a productive citizen, and America will be better for it. And so we're glad you're here. Thank you for your spirit. Tell your parents thank you.

And so let me close with what happened at Nationals stadium with His Holy Father. He—when he celebrated Mass there, one of the objects he blessed at the end of the Mass was the new cornerstone of the Pope John Paul the Great High School in Arlington, Virginia. Isn't that interesting? I mean, I'm sure there was a lot of demands on His Holy Father, but he took time to bless the cornerstone of a school.

And my hope is, is that we're laying cornerstones for new schools here or revived schools; that we take the spirit of the Holy Father and extend it throughout the country and work for excellence for every child,

to set high standards, and when we find centers of excellence, not let them go away, but to think of policy that will enable them to not only exist, not only survive, but to thrive. It's in our Nation's interests. It's an important summit for America.

I thank you for bringing your talents, your energies, and your efforts. I thank you for caring deeply about our young. And I thank you for being a part of what I believe is a necessary strategy to make sure America continues to be a hopeful place for all.

God bless you. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. In his remarks, he referred to Aysia Mayo-Gray, student, St. Ann's Academy, Washington, DC; Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, DC; and Pope Benedict XVI.

Remarks Following a Discussion With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

April 24, 2008

President Bush. Thanks for coming, Mr. President. I appreciate your chance to talk about peace. I assured the President that a Palestinian state's a high priority for me and my administration—a viable state, a state that doesn't look like Swiss cheese, a state that provides hope. It's in—I believe it's in Israel's interest and the Palestinian people's interest to have leaders willing to work toward the achievement of that state.

People that can deliver that state, that vision, to the Palestinian people were sitting right here in the Oval Office, led by the President. The President is a man of peace. He's a man of vision. He rejects the idea of using violence to achieve objectives, which distinguishes him from other people in the region. I'm confident we can achieve

the definition of a state. I'm also confident it's going to require hard work.

To that end, I'm going back to the Middle East. I'm looking forward to meeting you, sir. And thank you for making time. I consider you a friend. I also consider you a courageous person. And I'm also will consider—believe strongly that when history looks back at this moment and a state is defined, that the Palestinian people will thank you for your leadership.

There are a lot of issues we discussed, issues of importance: the security of the Palestinian people and the Israeli people, the economic advancement of the Palestinian people. The thing that I'm focused on, and you are: how to define a state

that is acceptable to both sides. I'm confident it can get done. I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate your time.

President Abbas. Thank you. Mr. President, thank you very much for receiving us here at the White House these days. And I also would like to thank you very much for the initiative that was launched during the Annapolis conference.

We believe that you actually are truly seeking a true, genuine, and lasting peace in the Middle East. And I am certain that you would like to see an agreement and settlement before the end of your term. And at the same time, we are doing everything we can in order to seriously negotiate and reach a peace that will be satisfactory to both the Palestinian side and the Israeli side, a peace that would be promoted around the world.

There are many parties also that are working very hard to support our efforts and to help us reach that peace. When I talk about your initiative, Mr. President, I also have to praise the Arab peace initiative that simply states that peace will be achieved after the Israeli withdrawal from

the occupied Arab and Palestinian Territories. As a result of that, I believe strongly that more than 57 Arab and Islamic countries will normalize their relations with Israel. I believe very strongly that time is of the essence. We are working very hard and hope not to waste any time and continue these efforts to achieve peace.

Mr. President, your efforts, the efforts of your administration, the various visits—your previous one and your upcoming visit to Sharm el-Sheikh and to the region—all of this is a strong indication that you are very keen to continue to work very hard and to achieve your vision.

I cannot say that the road to peace is paved with flowers; it is paved with obstacles. But together we will work very hard in order to eliminate those obstacles and achieve peace.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you all. *Shukran jazeeelan.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks to Participants of the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride April 24, 2008

Thanks for coming. Doocy, thanks for the introduction. This has got to be one of the most inspiring athletic events in our Nation's history. At least it is for me, and I hope it is for you.

I was going to ride with the guys today, but Laura told me I probably wouldn't be able to keep up. [*Laughter*] I'm—there is no doubt in my mind the people behind me are some of the most bravest people in our country's history. I admire their courage; I admire their determination. We're honored to have you here.

I'm also joined by the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. Thank you for coming,

Madam Secretary. Secretary Jim Peake of the Department of Veterans Affairs is with us. Deputy Secretary Gordon England is with us. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, are here—other members of my administration and Members of Congress. The reason they're there is the same reason I'm here: We love and respect our military. And I thank you for coming.

I want to thank Granger Smith and the band for joining us today. Thanks for being here.

I appreciate those who wear the uniform who have joined us. I'm proud of you. Thanks for serving. I want to thank the