

lah of Jordan, I am very grateful for their participation. I will have a longer discussion about that this afternoon after my bilateral meetings.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. on the Colonnade at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Yitzhak Ames, Tayla

Ames, Kochava Even Chaim, and Avishai Shindler, Jewish settlers who were killed in Hebron on August 31; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and King Abdullah II of Jordan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Hebrew language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the Middle East Peace Process *September 1, 2010*

Good afternoon, everybody. Upon taking office, I declared that America is a friend of each nation and every person who seeks a future of peace and dignity and that the United States was ready to lead in pursuit of that future. At the beginning of my administration, I stated that it was our policy to actively and aggressively seek a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as a comprehensive peace between Israel and all of its Arab neighbors. And to support my outstanding Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's leadership, I appointed a special envoy and one of our Nation's finest statesmen, former Senator George Mitchell, to guide our efforts.

As I've said many times, our goal is a two-state solution that ends the conflict and ensures the rights and security of both Israelis and Palestinians. And despite the inevitable challenges, we have never wavered in pursuit of this goal. I've met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on numerous occasions. Between them, Secretary Clinton and Senator Mitchell have made countless trips to the region.

Over the past year, both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority have taken important steps to build confidence. And with Senator Mitchell's support, Israelis and Palestinians have engaged in several rounds of proximity talks, even in the face of difficult circumstances. But we've always made it clear that the only path to lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians. Tomorrow, after nearly 2 years, the parties will relaunch those direct talks.

Today I had a series of very productive meetings with key partners in this effort. I urged Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas to recognize this as a moment of opportunity that must be seized. I thanked President Mubarak of Egypt and His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan for their valuable leadership and for the support that will be necessary going forward. And I look forward to hosting these four leaders at a private working dinner at the White House tonight.

I also want to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to many friends and allies, especially our Quartet partners. And former British Prime Minister Tony Blair will be joining us as representing the Quartet at the dinner this evening.

The purpose of these talks is clear. These will be direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. These negotiations are intended to resolve all final status issues. The goal is a settlement, negotiated between the parties, that ends the occupation which began in 1967 and results in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with a Jewish State of Israel and its other neighbors. That's the vision we are pursuing.

Now, I know these talks have been greeted in some quarters with skepticism. We are under no illusions. Passions run deep. Each side has legitimate and enduring interests. Years of mistrust will not disappear overnight. Building confidence will require painstaking diplomacy and trust by the parties. After all, there's a reason that the two-state solution has eluded previous

generations. This is extraordinarily complex and extraordinarily difficult.

But we know that the status quo is unsustainable for Israelis, for Palestinians, for the region, and for the world. It is in the national interests of all involved, including the United States, that this conflict be brought to a peaceful conclusion.

So even as we are clear eyed about the challenges ahead, so too do we see the foundation for progress. The Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority are already cooperating on a daily basis to increase security and reduce violence, to build institutions and improve conditions on the ground.

Among the Israeli and Palestinian publics, there is wide support for a two-state solution, the broad outlines of which are well known to both peoples. And even in the midst of discord, ordinary Israelis and Palestinians—faith leaders, civil society groups, doctors, scientists, businessmen, students—find ways to work together every day. Their heroic efforts at the grassroots show that cooperation and progress is possible and should inspire us all.

In addition, Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas are two leaders who I believe want peace. Both sides have indicated that these negotiations can be completed within 1 year. And as I told each of them today, this moment of opportunity may not soon come again. They cannot afford to let it slip away. Now is the time for leaders of courage and vision to deliver the peace that their people deserve.

The United States will put our full weight behind this effort. We will be an active and sustained participant. We will support those who make difficult choices in pursuit of peace. But let me be very clear: Ultimately, the United States cannot impose a solution, and we cannot want it more than the parties themselves. There are enormous risks involved here for all the parties concerned, but we cannot do it for them. We can create the environment and the atmosphere for negotiations, but ultimately, it's going to require the leadership on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides, as well as those in the region who say they want a Palestinian state.

A lot of times I hear from those who insist that this is a top priority and yet do very little to actually support efforts that could bring about a Palestinian state.

So only Israelis and Palestinians can make the difficult choices and build the consensus at home for progress. Only Israelis and Palestinians can prove to each other their readiness to end this conflict and make the compromises upon which lasting peace deserves. What the rest of us can do, including the United States, is to support those conversations, support those talks, support those efforts, not try to undermine them.

So the hard work is only beginning. Neither success nor failure is inevitable. But this much we know: If we do not make the attempt, then failure is guaranteed. If both sides do not commit to these talks in earnest, then the longstanding conflict will only continue to fester and consume another generation, and this we simply cannot allow.

We know that there will be moments that test our resolve. We know that extremists and enemies of peace will do everything in their power to destroy this effort, as we saw in the heinous attacks near Hebron, which we have strongly condemned. But we also know this: Too much blood has already been shed, too many lives have already been lost, too many hearts have already been broken.

And despite what the cynics say, history teaches us that there is a different path. It is the path of resolve and determination, where compromise is possible and old conflicts, at long last, can end. It is the path traveled by those who brought peace to their countries, from Northern Ireland—where Senator Mitchell was so deeply involved—to the Balkans, to Africa, Asia, to those who forged peace between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Jordan.

This path is open to Israelis and Palestinians. If all sides persevere in good faith and with a sense of purpose and possibility, we can build a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:27 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy for Middle

East Peace George J. Mitchell. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Arabic and Hebrew language transcripts of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Dinner With President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, King Abdullah II of Jordan, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority *September 1, 2010*

President Obama. Good evening, everyone. Tomorrow, after nearly 2 years, Israelis and Palestinians will resume direct talks in pursuit of a goal that we all share: two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. Tonight I am pleased to welcome to the White House key partners in this effort, along with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the representative of our Quartet partners, former Prime Minister Tony Blair.

President Abbas, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Your Majesty King Abdullah, and President Mubarak, we are but five men. Our dinner this evening will be a small gathering around a single table. Yet when we come together, we will not be alone. We'll be joined by the generations, those who have gone before and those who will follow.

Each of you are the heirs of peacemakers who dared greatly: Begin and Sadat, Rabin and King Hussein, statesmen who saw the world as it was, but also imagined the world as it should be. It is the shoulders of our predecessors upon which we stand. It is their work that we carry on. Now, like each of them, we must ask, do we have the wisdom and the courage to walk the path of peace?

Now, all of us are leaders of our people, who, no matter the language they speak or the faith they practice, all basically seek the same things: to live in security, free from fear; to live in dignity, free from want; to provide for their families and to realize a better tomorrow. Tonight they look to us, and each of us must decide, will we work diligently to fulfill their aspirations?

And though each of us holds a title of honor—President, Prime Minister, King—we are bound by the one title we share: We are fathers, blessed with sons and daughters. So we must

ask ourselves, what kind of world do we want to bequeath to our children and our grandchildren?

Tonight and in the days and months ahead, these are the questions that we must answer. And this is a fitting moment to do so.

For Muslims, this is Ramadan. For Jews, this is Elul. It is rare for those two months to coincide. But this year, tonight, they do. Different faiths, different rituals, but a shared period of devotion and contemplation: a time to reflect on right and wrong; a time to ponder one's place in the world; a time when the people of two great religions remind the world of a truth that is both simple and profound, that each of us, all of us, in our hearts and in our lives, are capable of great and lasting change.

In this spirit, I welcome my partners. And I invite each to say a few words before we begin our meal, beginning with President Mubarak, on to His Majesty King Abdullah, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and President Abbas.

President Mubarak.

[*At this point, President Mubarak's remarks were joined in progress.*]

President Mubarak. —in relaunching direct peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. Like you and the millions of Palestinians, Israelis, Arabs, and the rest of the world—and the people of the Middle East and the world—look forward to have these negotiations as a final and decisive negotiations and that it will lead to a peace between the two parties within 1 year.

Our meeting today would not have taken place without the considerable effort exerted by the U.S. President and his administration under