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Statement on the Bombings in Israel

December 1, 2001

I was horrified and saddened to learn of the bombings that took place tonight in Jerusalem. I strongly condemn them as acts of murder that no person of conscience can tolerate and no cause can ever justify. On behalf of the American people, I extend my deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims, to my friend Prime Minister Sharon, and to all the people of Israel. Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority must immediately find and arrest those responsible for these hideous murders. They must also act swiftly and decisively against the organizations that support them. Now more than ever, Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority must demonstrate through their actions, and not merely their words, their commitment to fight terror.

Remarks on Arrival From Camp David, Maryland

December 2, 2001

Bombings in Israel

In a couple of minutes I'll have the honor of receiving the Prime Minister from Israel. We obviously changed our schedule because of the horrific acts of murder that took place in his land.

I will tell him that I strongly condemn the acts of murder that killed innocent people in Israel. I will tell him our Nation grieves for those whose lives have been affected by the murderers.

This is a moment where the advocates for peace in the Middle East must rise up and fight terror. Chairman Arafat must do everything in his power to find those who murdered innocent Israelis and bring them to justice.

Clearly, there are some in the world who do not want us to achieve peace in the Middle East. Clearly, there are some that, every chance they have, they will use violence and terror to disrupt any progress that's being made. We must not allow them to succeed. We must not allow terror to destroy the chance of peace in the Middle East.

Now is the time for leaders throughout the world who urge there to be a peace to do something about the terror that prevents peace from happening in the first place.

May God bless the Israeli citizens who lost their lives, and their families.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. on the South Grounds at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception

December 2, 2001

Well, thank you all very much. Good evening, and welcome to the White House. Laura and I are so pleased to have all of you here for this incredibly happy occasion. We especially welcome the honorees, your families, and your friends.

Every year, the Kennedy Center honors artists like yourselves for lifetime contributions to the American culture. The recipients for 2001 make quite a collection. [*Laughter*] As one newspaper put it in the headline, this year's honorees can carry a tune—and then there's Jack. [*Laughter*] What the writer didn't know is that he actually plays the piano. But of course, that's not why he's here today. You're each here so that America can recognize your great gifts and the ways that you have used them.

Van Cliburn was recently a guest at our ranch in Crawford, Texas, at a dinner for President Vladimir Putin of Russia. He's known many other leaders. In this house on December 1987, he played at a state dinner for the Gorbachevs and had the entire Soviet delegation singing "Moscow Nights." [*Laughter*]

Three decades earlier, Van visited the White House as a guest of President Eisenhower. He was 23 years old and winner of the Gold Medal at the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. As a result, the whole world knew his name.

Texas knew him even before, in a place called Kilgore. Harvey L. Cliburn, Jr., first touched the keys at the age of 3 and was