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# THE WHITE HOUSE CEREMONY

## Remarks at the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles, Washington, D.C., 13 September 1993.

*[The following is the text of remarks by U.S. President Bill Clinton, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, PLO Executive Committee member Mahmud 'Abbas, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat at the White House ceremony at which the Israeli-Palestinian agreement was signed (see JPS 89, Special Document G). A transcript of the speech was obtained from the White House Office of the Press Secretary.]*

### A. President Clinton:

Prime Minister Rabin, Chairman Arafat, Foreign Minister Peres, Mr. 'Abbas, President Carter, President Bush, distinguished guests.

On behalf of the United States and Russia, cosponsors of the Middle East peace process, welcome to this great occasion of history and hope.

Today, we bear witness to an extraordinary act in one of history's defining dramas, a drama that began in the time of our ancestors when the word went forth from a sliver of land between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. That hallowed piece of earth, that land of light and revelation is the home to the memories and dreams of Jews, Muslims and Christians throughout the world.

As we all know, devotion to that land has also been the source of conflict and bloodshed for too long. Throughout this century, bitterness between the Palestinian and Jewish people has robbed the entire region of its resources, its potential, and too many of its sons and daughters. The land has been so drenched in warfare and hatred, the conflict-

ing claims of history etched so deeply in the souls of the combatants there, that many believe the past would always have the upper hand.

Then, 14 years ago, the past began to give way when, at this place and upon this desk, three men of great vision signed their names to the Camp David Accords. Today we honor the memories of Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat. And we salute the wise leadership of President Jimmy Carter.

Then, as now, we heard from those who said that conflict would come again soon. But the peace between Egypt and Israel has endured, just so this bold new venture today, this brave gamble that the future can be better than the past must endure.

Two years ago in Madrid, another president took a major step on the road to peace by bringing Israel and all her neighbors together to launch direct negotiations. And today we also express our deep thanks for the skillful leadership of President George Bush.

Ever since Harry Truman first recognized Israel, every American President—Democrat and Republican—has worked for peace be-

tween Israel and her neighbors. Now the efforts of all who have labored before us bring us to this moment—a moment when we dare to pledge what for so long seemed difficult even to imagine: that the security of the Israeli people will be reconciled with the hopes of the Palestinian people and there will be more security and more hope for all.

Today, the leadership of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization will sign a declaration of principles on interim Palestinian self-government. It charts a course toward reconciliation between two peoples who have both known the bitterness of exile. Now both pledge to put old sorrows and antagonisms behind them and to work for a shared future, shaped by the values of the Torah, the Koran, and the Bible.

Let us salute, also, today the government of Norway for its remarkable role in nurturing this agreement. But of all—above all, let us today pay tribute to the leaders who had the courage to lead their people toward peace, away from the scars of battle, the wounds and the losses of the past toward a brighter tomorrow. The world today thanks Prime Minister Rabin, Foreign Minister Peres and Chairman Arafat.

Their tenacity and vision has given us the promise of a new beginning. What these leaders have done now must be done by others. Their achievement must be a catalyst for progress in all aspects of the peace process. And those of us who support them must be there to help in all aspects. For the peace must render the people who make it more secure. A peace of the brave is within our reach. Throughout the Middle East, there is a great yearning for the quiet miracle of a normal life.

We know a difficult road lies ahead. Every peace has its enemies—those who still prefer the easy habits of hatred to the hard labors of reconciliation. But Prime Minister Rabin has reminded us that you do not have to make peace with your friends. And the Koran teaches that if the enemy inclines toward peace, do thou also incline toward peace.

Therefore, let us resolve that this new mutual recognition will be a continuing process in which the parties transform the very way they see and understand each other. Let the skeptics of this peace recall what once existed among these people. There was a time when the traffic of ideas in commerce and pilgrims flowed uninterrupted among the cities of the Fertile Crescent. In Spain and the Middle East, Muslims and Jews once worked together to write brilliant chapters in the history of

literature and science. All this can come to pass again.

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Chairman: I pledge the active support of the United States of America to the difficult work that lies ahead.

The United States is committed to ensuring that the people who are affected by this agreement will be made more secure by it and to leading the world in marshalling the resources necessary to implement the difficult details that will make real the principles to which you commit yourselves today.

Together let us imagine what can be accomplished if all the energy and ability the Israelis and the Palestinians have invested into your struggle can now be channeled into cultivating the land and freshening the waters, into ending the boycotts and creating new industry, into building a land as bountiful and peaceful as it is holy. Above all, let us dedicate ourselves today to your region's next generation. In this entire assembly, no one is more important than the group of Israeli and Arab children who are seated here with us today.

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Chairman: this day belongs to you. And because of what you have done, tomorrow belongs to them. We must not leave them prey to the politics of extremism and despair, to those who would derail this process because they cannot overcome the fears and hatreds of the past. We must not betray their future. For too long, the young of the Middle East have been caught in a web of hatred, not of their own making. For too long they have been taught from the chronicles of war. Now, we can give them the chance to know the season of peace. For them we must realize the prophecy of Isaiah, that the cry of violence shall no more be heard in your land, nor rack nor ruin within your borders. The children of Abraham, the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael, have embarked together on a bold journey. Together, today, with all our hearts and all our souls, we bid them shalom, salaam, peace.

## B. Foreign Minister Peres:

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Mr. President, I would like to thank you and the great American people for peace and support. Indeed, I would like to thank all those who have made this day possible. What we are doing today is more than signing an agreement, it is a revolution. Yesterday a dream, today a commitment. The Israeli and Palestinian people who fought each other for almost a century have agreed to

move decisively on the path of dialogue, understanding, and cooperation.

As we have promised, we shall negotiate with you a permanent settlement, and with all our neighbors a comprehensive peace—peace for all. We shall support the agreement with an economic structure. We shall convert the bitter triangle of Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis into a triangle of political triumph and economic prosperity. We shall lower our barriers and widen our roads so goods and guests will be able to move freely all over the places, holy and other places.

This should be another genesis. We have to build a new commonwealth on our old soil—a Middle East of the people and a Middle East for the children. For their sake, we must put an end to the waste of arms race and invest our resources in education.

Ladies and gentlemen, two parallel tragedies have unfolded. Let us become a civic community. Let us bid once and for all farewell to wars, to threats, to human misery. Let us bid farewell to enmity, and may there be no more victims on either side.

Let us build a Middle East of hope, where today's food is produced and tomorrow's prosperity is guaranteed—a region with a common market, a Near East with a long-range agenda. We owe it to our fallen soldiers, to the memories of the victims of the Holocaust.

Our hearts today grieve for the lost life of young and innocent people yesterday in our own country. Let their memory be our foundation we are establishing today a memory of peace on fresh and old pomp. Suffering is, first of all, human. We also feel for the innocent loss of Palestinian life. We begin a new day. The day may be long and the challenges enormous. Our calendar must meet an intensive schedule. Mr. President, historically, you are presiding over a most promising day in a very long history of our region, of our people.

I thank all of you, ladies and gentlemen, and let's pray together. Let's add hope to determination as all of us since Abraham believe in freedom, in peace, in the blessing of our great land and great spirit. [Jewish prayer offered in Hebrew.]

From the eternal city of Jerusalem, from this green, promising lawn of the White House, let's say together in the language of our Bible: peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near sayth the Lord, and I will heal him. Thank you.

### C. PLO Executive Committee member 'Abbas:

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, in these historic moments, with feelings of joy that are mixed with a maximum sense of responsibility regarding events that are affecting our entire region, I greet you and I greet this distinguished gathering. I hope that this meeting in Washington will prove to be the onset of a positive and constructive change that will serve the interests of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

We have come to this point because we believe that peaceful coexistence and cooperation are the only means for reaching understanding and for realizing the hopes of the Palestinians and the Israelis. The agreement we will sign reflects the decision we made in the Palestine Liberation Organization to turn a new page in our relationship with Israel.

We know quite well that this is merely the beginning of a journey that is surrounded by numerous dangers and difficulties. And yet, our mutual determination to overcome everything that stands in the way of the cause of peace—our common belief that peace is the only means to security and stability, and our mutual aspiration for a secure peace characterized by cooperation—all this will enable us to overcome all obstacles with the support of the international community. And here, I would like to mention in particular the United States government, which will shoulder the responsibility of continuing to play an effective and a distinct role in the next stage, so that this great achievement may be completed.

In this regard, it is important to me to affirm that we are looking forward with a great deal of hope and optimism to a date that is two years from today when negotiations over the final status of our country are set to begin. We will settle the remaining fundamental issues, especially those of Jerusalem, the refugees and the settlements. At that time, we will be laying the last brick in the edifice of peace whose foundation has been established today.

Economic development is the principal challenge facing the Palestinian people after years of struggle during which our national infrastructure and institutions were overburdened and drained. We are looking to the world for its support and encouragement in our struggle for growth and development which begins today.

I thank the government of the United States of America and the government of the Russian Federation for the part they played

and for their efforts and their sponsorship of the peace process. I also appreciate the role played by the government of Norway in bringing about this agreement, and I look forward to seeing positive results soon on the remaining Arab-Israeli track[s] so we can proceed together with our Arab brothers on this comprehensive quest for peace. Thank you.

#### D. Secretary of State Christopher:

Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, Chairman Arafat, members of Congress, distinguished visitors, guests, friends and colleagues, I'm honored to have witnessed the signing of this agreement on behalf of the United States.

Millions of people have dreamed of this moment—this moment for this very region. The Israelis and the Palestinians have taken a dramatic step toward a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that can lift the lives of the people of the Middle East. They overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles in framing the Declaration of Principles and the terms for a mutual recognition. They've broken through the barriers of hatred and fear. Throughout the process, they've demonstrated extraordinary courage and statesmanship. This gives genuine hope that they will complete the journey that has been begun today.

This achievement was the product of a sustained effort, international in scope, and thoroughly bipartisan here in the United States. The foundation for the breakthrough, as the President said, was laid at the Madrid Conference of October 1991, which overcame the impediments to direct Arab-Israeli talks and launched a real peace process. The Madrid success, in turn, could not have been realized without its own foundation, the 1978 Camp David Accords, and the 1974 and [19]75 disengagement agreements involving Israel, Egypt and Syria.

I also salute and congratulate those who have helped at particular times. In particular, I express appreciation to Foreign Minister Holst and his Norwegian colleagues who worked under very difficult circumstances—and made it possible to facilitate the negotiation of the Declaration of Principles. We also owe a debt of gratitude to Foreign Minister Moussa and his Egyptian colleagues, and many, many others who gave unstinting help to the peace process.

We are all proud of their remarkable achievement. But we also understand that much more remains to be done if this newly planted tree is to bear fruit.

The United States is committed to a comprehensive peace between Israel and all of its Arab neighbors. We hope and believe that this agreement will spur progress in the talks between Israel and Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. The United States is prepared to do its part in the negotiations that lie ahead. We will spare no effort in helping the parties turn the agreements at the table into realities on the ground. We will remain a full partner in the search for peace.

But, certainly, we are not the sole partner. We need the entire international community to join us in this work and to oppose any effort to subvert the peace. This Israeli-Palestinian agreement cannot be permitted to fail. Many, many problems remain to be solved. Today's historic agreement demonstrates that the Middle East does not need to be a cauldron of hostility, it can instead be a cradle of hope. Thank you.

#### E. Foreign Minister Kozyrev:

Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, the Chairman: On behalf of President Yeltsin, I would like to congratulate you and other colleagues and friends here who made possible, through their committed effort and goodwill, this major step on the long road to comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

I think it's really time to rejoice, but no time for euphoria. Unfortunately, this is only the first step—major, but first step—on the long, long road. And I would like to assure you that Russia is one of the cosponsors, not only witnesses, but cosponsors. So the peace process will spare no effort together with the United States, with the United Nations and other interested parties to go on, on this road and not let this major event fail. It is—it is only ironic that in time when Middle Eastern peace process seems to be on track—and I'm sure it will move towards lasting peace—there are other forces which threaten security in the region.

Three days ago I was in Kabul, Afghanistan and on the Tajik-Afghan border. And even there we can see those forces of subversion, terrorism and extremism—religious, and not only religious, political extremism—doing their destructive job. I know that in other parts of this region, there are also signs of this new danger, and I hope that we will not limit our joint effort only to the peace between Israel and its neighbors, not only for the cause of Palestinians to gain their legitimate rights, but also to see for stability in the whole region. And in this, Russia will be also [a] true and determined cosponsor.

Once again, thank you for the effort done by all of the distinguished presidents, foreign ministers, actual and former. And I hope that further generations of politicians will be not so much doing with the peace, but rather with a peace dividend in the Middle East. It's high time for that. Thank you.

#### F. Prime Minister Rabin:

President Clinton, the President of the United States; your excellencies; ladies and gentlemen.

This signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principle[s] here today, it's not so easy—neither for myself, as a soldier in Israel's war, nor for the people of Israel, not to the Jewish people in the diaspora, who are watching us now with great hope mixed with apprehension. It is certainly not easy for the families of the victims of the wars, violence, terror whose pain will never heal, for the many thousands who defended our lives in their own, and have even sacrificed their lives for our own. For them, this ceremony has come too late. Today, on the eve of an opportunity—opportunity for peace—and perhaps end of violence and wars, we remember each and every one of them with everlasting love.

We have come from Jerusalem, the ancient and eternal capital of the Jewish people; we have come from an anguished and grieving land; we have come from a people, a home, a family, that does not know a single year—not a single month—in which mothers have not wept for their sons. We have come to try and put an end to the hostilities so that our children, our children's children, will no longer experience the painful cost of war, violence and terror. We have come to secure their lives and to ease the soul and the painful memories of the past, to hope and pray for peace.

Let us say to you, the Palestinians, we are destined to live together on the same soil, in the same land. We, the soldiers who have returned from battles stained with blood, we who have seen our relatives and friends killed before our eyes, we who have attended their funerals and cannot look into the eyes of their parents, we who have come from a land where parents bury their children, we who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice: enough of blood and tears. Enough.

We have no desire for revenge. We harbor no hatred towards you. We, like you, are people. People who want to build a home, to plant a tree, to love, live side by side with you in dignity, in empathy, as human beings, as

free men, we are today giving peace a chance and saying to you—and saying again to you: Enough. Let us pray that a day will come when we all will say farewell to the arms. We wish to open a new chapter in the sad book of our lives together, a chapter of mutual recognition, of good neighborliness, of mutual respect, of understanding. We hope to embark on a new era in the history of the Middle East.

Today here in Washington, at the White House, we will begin a new reckoning in the relations between peoples, between parents tired of war, between children who will not know war. President of the United States, ladies and gentlemen, our inner strength, our higher moral values, have been derived for thousands of years from the Book of the Books, in one of which, Koheleth [Ecclesiastes], we read: To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under Heaven; a time to be born and a time to die; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to weep and a time to love; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time of peace. Ladies and gentlemen, the time for peace has come.

In the Jewish tradition it is customary to conclude our prayers with the word Amen—as you said, Amen, different pronunciation. With your permission, men of peace, I shall conclude with words taken from the prayer recited by Jews daily and whoever of you volunteer, I would ask the entire audience to join me in saying Amen. [Jewish prayer offered in Hebrew].

#### G. Chairman Arafat:

In the name of God, the most merciful, the compassionate. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express our tremendous appreciation to President Clinton and to his administration for sponsoring this historic event which the entire world has been waiting for. Mr. President, I am taking this opportunity to assure you and to assure the great American people that we share your values for freedom, justice and human rights—values for which my people have been striving. My people are hoping that this agreement, which we are signing today, marks the beginning of the end of a chapter of pain and suffering which has lasted throughout this century. My people are hoping that this agreement which we are signing today will usher in an age of peace, coexistence and equal rights. We are relying on your role, Mr. President, and on the role of all the countries which believe that, without peace in the Middle East, peace in the world

will not be complete.

Enforcing the agreement and moving toward the final settlement after two years to implement all aspects of UN Resolutions 242 and 338 in all of their aspects and resolve all the issues of Jerusalem, the settlement, the refugees and the boundaries will be a Palestinian and an Israeli responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the international community in its entirety to help the parties overcome the tremendous difficulties which are still standing in the way of reaching a final and comprehensive settlement.

Now as we stand on the threshold of this new historic era, let me address the people of Israel and their leaders with whom we are meeting today for the first time. And let me assure them that the difficult decision we reached together was one that required great and exceptional courage.

We will need more courage and determination to continue the course of building coexistence and peace between us. This is possible. And it will happen with mutual determination and with the effort that will be made with all parties on all the tracks to establish the foundations of a just and comprehensive peace. Our people do not consider that exercising the right to self-determination could violate the rights of their neighbors or infringe on their security. Rather, putting an end to their feelings of being wronged and of having suffered an historic injustice is the strongest guarantee to achieve coexistence and openness between our two peoples and future generations.

Our two peoples are awaiting today this historic hope, and they want to give peace a real chance. Such a shift will give us an opportunity to embark upon the process of economic and social and cultural growth and development, and we hope that international participation in that process will be as extensive as it can be. This shift will also provide an opportunity for all forms of cooperation on a broad scale and in all fields.

I thank you, Mr. President. We hope that our meeting will be a new beginning for fruitful and effective relations between the American people and the Palestinian people.

I wish to thank the Russian Federation and President Boris Yeltsin. Our thanks also go to Secretary Christopher and Foreign Minister Kozyrev, to the government of Norway, and to the Foreign Minister of Norway for the positive part they played in bringing about this major achievement.

I extend greeting to all the Arab leaders, our brothers, and to all the world leaders who contributed to this achievement. Ladies and gentlemen, the battle for peace is the most difficult battle of our lives. It deserves our utmost efforts, because the land of peace, the land of peace years for a just and comprehensive peace. Thank you.

Mr. President, thank you, thank you, thank you.

#### **H. President Clinton (concluding remarks):**

We have been granted the great privilege of witnessing this victory for peace. Just as the Jewish people this week celebrate the dawn of a new year, let us all go from this place to celebrate the dawn of a new era not only for the Middle East, but for the entire world.

The sound we heard today, once again, as in ancient Jericho, was the trumpets toppling walls. The walls of anger and suspicion between Israeli and Palestinian, between Arab and Jew. This time, praise God, the trumpets herald not the destruction of that city, but its new beginning.

Now let each of us here today return to our portion of that effort, uplifted by the spirit of the moment, refreshed in our hopes and guided by the wisdom of the Almighty, who has brought us to this joyous day.

Go in peace. Go as peacemakers.