Remarks by President Clinton, King Hussein, and Prime Minister Rabin at the Signing Ceremony of the Washington Declaration - 25 July 1994


The signing of the Washington Declaration marked the end of the state of war between Israel and Jordan. This was the third major agreement signed between Israel and the Arabs (all of them at the White House). The first was the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty (26 March 1979), the second the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles (13 September 1993) and the third the Israel-Jordan Declaration. The new mood of optimism was noted in the speeches of the three leaders. Texts:

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Your Majesties, Prime Minister and Mrs. Rabin, distinguished guests: Today we gather to bear witness to history. As this century draws to a close a new era of peace opens before us in ancient lands, as brave men choose reconciliation over conflict. Today our faith is renewed.

As we write a new chapter in the march of hope over despair on these grounds and at this historic table, we remember the courage of Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin, and the leadership of President Carter at Camp David fifteen years ago; the efforts of President Bush to bring Israel and her neighbors together in Madrid two years ago; and that shining September day last year when Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat declared that their two peoples would fight no more.

Today, in that same spirit, King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin will sign the Washington Declaration. After generations of hostility, blood and tears, the leaders of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Israel will solemnly declare, with the world as their witness, that they have ended the state of belligerency between them. From this day forward, they pledge to settle their differences by peaceful means.

Both countries will refrain from actions that may adversely affect the security of the other, and will thwart all those who would use terrorism to threaten either side.

The Washington Declaration is the product of much hard work. Less than a year ago Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan and Foreign Minister Peres of Israel met here publicly for the first time. Together, with the wise counsel and persistent energy of the Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Israel and Jordan have pursued peace. And we are all in their debt.

It takes but a minute or two to cross the River Jordan, but for as long as most of us can remember, the distance has seemed immense. The awful power of ancient arguments and the raw wounds of recent wars have left generations of Israelis, Jordanians and Palestinians unable to imagine, much less build, a life of peace and security. Today, King Hussein and
Prime Minister Rabin give their people a new currency of hope and the chance to prosper in a region of peace.

Under the Washington Declaration, Jordan and Israel have agreed to continue vigorous negotiations to produce a treaty of peace based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin will meet as often as necessary to shepherd and personally direct those negotiations. Their objective is a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israel and all its neighbors; a peace in which each acknowledges and respects the territorial integrity and political independence of all others, and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

In the meantime, Jordan and Israel have decided to take immediate steps to normalize relations and resolve disputes in areas of common concern. They have agreed to survey the international border based on the work of their boundary subcommission. They have resolved that negotiations on water resources should aim to establish the rightful allocation between the two sides of the waters of the Jordan and Yamiouk rivers. They have determined that their police forces will cooperate in combating crime, with a special emphasis on drug smuggling. They have set up as their joint purpose the abolition of all economic boycotts and the establishment of a bilateral economic cooperation.

And as of today, Jordan and Israel have agreed to take the first practical steps to draw their people together and to let the peoples of the world share in the wonders of their lands. They will establish direct telephone links; connect their two nations' electricity grids; open two border crossings between their nations, including one at Aqaba and Eilat, and another in the north; accelerate the negotiations aimed at opening an international air corridor between the two countries; and give free access to third-country tourists travelling between their two nations. These are the building blocks of a modern peace in ancient holy lands.

Your Majesty, after our first meeting, you wrote me a heartfelt letter in which you referred to your revered grandfather, King Abdullah. You told me that his untimely assassination at the entrance to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque had come at a time when he was intent on making peace with Israel. Had he completed his mission, you said to me, your region would have been spared four decades of war. Today, 43 years later, Abdullah's grandson has fulfilled his legacy.

And in the declaration you will sign, your role as guardian of Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites, Al-Aqsa among them, has been preserved. And Israel has agreed to accord a high priority to Jordan's historic role regarding these holy sites in final status negotiations.

Prime Minister, when you first visited me in the White House, you spoke eloquently of your soldier's life, defending and guiding your nation through four bloody decades of struggling to survive. You told me your people had had enough bloodshed, that it was time to make peace. Ten months ago, you stood on this same lawn and shook the hand of Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian people.
Today you stand together with King Hussein, descendant of the Prophet Mohammed, to declare that Jordan and Israel have ended their conflict. In holding out to your people the hope of a normal, secure life, you, Sir, have fulfilled the mission of your life and of all those who have fought by your side for so long.

Now as we go forward, we must guard against illusions. Dark forces of hatred and violence still stalk your lands. We must not let them succeed.

King Hussein, Prime Minister Rabin: As you and your people embark on this journey of peace, we know the road will not be easy. Just as we have supported you in coming this far, the United States will walk the final miles with you. We must all go on until we ensure that the peace you are seeking prevails in the Holy Land and extends to all Israel's Arab neighbors. Our common objective of a comprehensive peace must be achieved.

Now as we witness the signing of this declaration and applaud the bravery of these men, let us remember that peace is - much more than a pledge to abide by words on a page. It is a bold attempt to write a new history. Guided by the blessing of God, let us now go forward and give life to this declaration. For if we follow its course, we will truly achieve a peace of the generations. Thank you very much.

(The declaration is signed.)

KING HUSSEIN: President Clinton, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, ladies and gentlemen: And so it is that on this day, at this house of the great American people, we have been able to take an historic step which we hope and pray will be to the benefit of our peoples within our entire region - Jordanians, Israelis, and others.

This is the moment of commitment and of a vision. Not all of what is possible is within the document we have just ratified, but a modest, determined beginning to bring to our region and our peoples the security from fear, which I must admit has prevailed over all the years of our lives; the uncertainty of every day as to know how it might end; the suspicion, the bitterness, the lack of human contact. We are on our way now, truly, towards what is normal in relations between our peoples and ourselves, and what is worthy.

We will meet as often as we are able to and is required, with pleasure, to shepherd this process on in the times ahead.

At this moment, I would like to share with you all the pride I have in my people, the people of Jordan - in their maturity, in their courage, and what I have been blessed with, their trust and confidence, and I believe the commitment of the overwhelming majority to the cause of peace.

The term used in international documents as have affected us so far is "the state of belligerency" and the "end of the state of belligerency." I think both in Arabic and in Hebrew, our people do not have such a term. What we have accomplished and what we are committed to is the end of the state of war between Jordan and Israel.
Thank-you so very much, indeed, Mr. President, for all your kindness. Thank you, Prime Minister. Thank you, all our dear friends. A warm thanks to the American people, our partners in the past, in the present and in the future. And bless you and bless our march for the future and towards the future of peace in our region.

PRIME MINISTER RABIN: The President of the United States, His Majesty King Hussein of the Kingdom of Jordan, friends, ladies and gentlemen: I start with the Hebrew word, shalom.

A million eyes all over the world are watching us now with great relief and great joy. Yet another nightmare of war may be over. At the same time a million eyes in the Middle East are looking at us now with great heartfelt hope that our children and grandchildren will know no more war.

Ladies and gentlemen, today we submit to our respective people a wonderful present. The declaration we have signed just now here in Washington is the closest thing to a treaty of peace. We have gone here a long way towards a full treaty of peace, and even though our work has not yet ended, it is my hope and belief that not long from today we shall return to signing a final and a permanent treaty of peace.

Mr. President, Your Majesty, it is dusk at our homes in the Middle East. Soon, darkness will prevail. But the citizens of Israel and Jordan will see a great light. We have today taken a major step on the road to peace. We and Jordan have chosen to speak to each other rather than to continue the state of war. From here, at a distance of thousands of miles from home, I would like to congratulate today the inhabitants of Israel and of Jordan, to remember the fallen in the wars on both sides, and to tell children on both sides of the border, we hope and pray that your life will be different than ours.

I believe that we are a small country with a big heart. We are aware of world agonies and suffering of human beings everywhere. At this hour, when we are celebrating here in Washington, Israeli defense soldiers and medical units are trying to save the lives of thousands, if not more, of people on the verge of death in Rwanda. But at the very same time, Israeli soldiers, a rescue team in Buenos Aires, at the invitation of the Argentinian government, are endeavoring to rescue the lives or find the bodies of those who were attacked, killed and disappeared - bodies of their own brothers, as well as of the other human beings from buildings destroyed by vicious terrorists. This terrible crime was committed against Jews just because they were Jews.

The Israeli rescue soldiers in Rwanda, as well as those in Argentina, together with their comrades in arms defending us at home, are the same side of the same coin.

Mr. President, Your Majesty, there is much more in the Washington Declaration than what the parties were planning when they decided to prepare this declaration 10 days ago. It bears witness to our ability in Israel and Jordan to accelerate our efforts towards peace, to overcome obstacles, to achieve a breakthrough and to put an end to 46 years of hostility.
Mr. President, thank you - thank you for all you have done for us and for what you will do. We embark on a road which must still be completed. And I am appealing to the United States, the leader of peace efforts in the Middle East, to assist those countries, those peoples who demonstrate courage and who take risks - risks for peace -because it is a worthwhile goal.

The political achievements presented today to the public here in Washington are part of a whole agenda that must still be clarified in serious deliberation ahead of us - from the difficult subjects of boundaries and water, to trade and economic relations on which peace in our region will be based, and of course, security and diplomatic relations. Our duty, starting today, is to turn the articles written on the paper into a living reality.

This fine job could not have been completed without your leadership and determination in the Middle East peacemaking. You have already established your place in our history, an honorable place. And thank you.

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