

Remarks Following a Meeting With King Abdullah II of Jordan
January 17, 2012

President Obama. Good afternoon, everybody. It is a great pleasure for me to once again welcome His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan, as well as his delegation.

We have very few countries around the world that are better friends and better partners than the Jordanians. The fact that they are in such a difficult neighborhood makes the relationship between our two countries that much more important.

And so I want to publicly express my appreciation for His Majesty's leadership not only in forging a strong bilateral relationship, but also all the multilateral efforts that he is engaged in to encourage peace and prosperity during what has been an extraordinary time.

The last time we met, the face of the region was very different. Since that time, you've seen new governments emerging in Egypt, in Libya, transitions taking place and a new government in Tunisia, transitions taking place in Yemen, and now obviously great volatility in Syria. Throughout this period we consult closely with the Jordanians, and we value the advice and the thoughtful leadership that His Majesty provides.

We spent a great deal of time discussing a number of key subjects. We talked about the importance of us continuing to consult closely together to encourage the Palestinians and the Israelis to come back to the table and negotiate in a serious fashion a peaceful way forward. And the Jordanians have taken great leadership on this issue, and we very much appreciate their direction on this issue.

We discussed, as well, the extraordinary efforts that have been made by His Majesty, as well as the Prime Minister, in guiding political reform inside of Jordan. I think His Majesty has been ahead of the curve in trying to respond to the legitimate concerns and aspirations, both politically and economically, of the Jordanian population. And so we have said that we want to be as helpful as we can in encouraging this ongoing reform process that's taking place.

We also talked about a number of regional issues, including Iraq and Iran, but uppermost on our minds right now is the issue of Syria. His Majesty was the first Arab leader to publicly call on President Asad to step down in the face of the terrible brutality we've been seeing inside of Syria. I want to thank him for his willingness to stand up. As a consequence, Jordan has been part of an overall Arab League effort to encourage this sort of peaceful transition inside of Syria that is needed.

Unfortunately, we're continuing to see unacceptable levels of violence inside that country, and so we will continue to consult very closely with Jordan to create the kind of international pressure and environment that encourages the current Syrian regime to step aside so that a more democratic process of transition can take place inside of Syria.

Finally, Jordan, just like the rest of the world, has been grappling with a very difficult economic environment, and we are proud to have been able to provide some timely assistance in areas like food security this week. I think wheat from the United States will be arriving that will help to make sure that there's bread in Jordan.

But there's more work to do. And so through a wide range of bilateral efforts, including the Millennium Challenge grant and other mechanisms, what we're trying to do is encourage

entrepreneurship, market-based reforms, small business and medium-sized businesses developing and prospering inside of Jordan. And we pledge to continue to work in strong partnership with His Majesty to make sure that all the people of Jordan have the kind of opportunity that they deserve.

So generally speaking, our bilateral relationship could not be stronger. And I want to thank, once again, His Majesty for being not only a leader in the region, but also being a great friend of the United States.

Thank you.

King Abdullah II. Mr. President, thank you very much. It's obviously a great honor for me and my delegation to be back here in Washington. We so much appreciate the historical support that we always get from our friends in the United States to Jordan's challenges. And again, our personal friendship, which is very, very strong, has allowed us to look at the challenges that the Israelis and Palestinians face, as you just mentioned.

Although this is still in the very early stages, we have to keep our fingers crossed and hope that we can bring the Israelis and Palestinians out of the impasse that we're facing. We're in coordination on a regular basis with the President, as well as with his administration.

We're very, very grateful to the economic support that you're showing Jordan in this very difficult time. As we move into political reform, obviously the economy and the situation that challenges the livelihood of Jordanians is very, very important as we move forward. But we are very, very optimistic. We had the opportunity to talk about the full impact with the President this afternoon.

So again, sir, wonderful to be back. We will be in close consultation with you on all these issues. And thank you for your kind words and your wonderful support to our country.

President Obama. Good. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Awn Shawkat al-Khasawnah of Jordan.

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