

Administration of Barack Obama, 2014

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With King Abdullah II of Jordan

December 5, 2014

President Obama. Well, it's a great pleasure once again to welcome my friend, His Majesty King Abdullah, and the delegation from Jordan here to the Oval Office.

Jordan is one of our most effective and capable and steadfast partners in not only the Middle East, but around the world. And my personal friendship with His Majesty is something that I greatly appreciate. I always enjoy talking to him both for his honesty and his good counsel.

We had an extensive discussion about some of the challenge that we face in the region. At the top of the list obviously was our efforts to debilitate and ultimately destroy ISIL both in Iraq and in Syria. Jordan has been a rock-solid partner in that coalition to defeat ISIL. And the Jordanian military has been working side by side with U.S. and other militaries from around the world in making slow, but steady progress, providing assistance to Baghdad, providing assistance to the moderate opposition inside of Syria, and to begin rolling back some of the gains that ISIL has made.

We recognize it's a long-term and extremely complex challenge, but it's one that we feel optimistic we'll be able to succeed at. And I stressed my strong gratitude to His Majesty for all the efforts that his men and women in uniform have made.

We also had a chance to talk about the fact that this is not just a military campaign, this is also diplomatic and a social and political effort, that it's a matter of winning over hearts and minds and isolating the extremists in the region. And I think Jordan is an important leader in that. And His Majesty shared with me some of the ideas about organizing within Islam to make sure that the overwhelming majority of peace-loving Muslims are able to, within their region and within their own communities, step by step isolate and ultimately eradicate this strain that has done so much damage in the region.

We had a chance to discuss some of the other regional issues that are of great importance. We share a concern about continuing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, and Jordan has been a strong partner in working with us to try to broker a genuine two-state solution and peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Obviously, in the aftermath of Gaza and some of the challenges in Jerusalem, the environment has not been conducive for the sort of peace initiatives that we'd like to see, but we are going to continue to share ideas, recognizing that ultimately, what's going to be good for the Israelis and the Palestinians is their capacity to live together side by side in peace and security and for Palestinians to have their own state.

We had a—I briefed His Majesty about our negotiations with Iran and indicated to him that we would prefer no deal to a bad deal, but that we continue to hold out the possibility that we can eliminate the risk of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon and give Iran an opportunity to rejoin the community of nations. Whether Iran seizes that opportunity or not is something that we have not yet been able to determine, but we will keep on trying over the next several months. And we will continue to keep Jordan apprised.

And we had a chance to discuss some of the important security issues that extend beyond Syria and Iraq, including Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, what's happening in North Africa, and how we can more effectively craft the kind of working partnerships and coalitions to counter terror wherever it may appear.

Because Jordan is such an important partner, because they are carrying such an important burden, including accommodating hundreds of thousands of Syrians who've been displaced because of the Syrian civil war, I am very proud of the continued support that we've been able to provide Jordan, a small, resource-poor country, but one that consistently steps up and meets its responsibilities. And as a consequence, I told His Majesty here today that we are going to continue with a memorandum of understanding, but that we are actually going to be increasing the amounts to a billion dollars a year, and that we are going to be providing an additional loan guarantee, all of which is designed to reinforce the sort of political and economic reforms that are taking place inside of Jordan so that not only can the people of Jordan prosper and be self-sufficient, but they can continue to provide an anchor for important efforts that enhance U.S. national security over the long term.

So, Your Majesty, you're a great friend and partner, and we very much appreciate the visit. We wish you and your family well. His Majesty's son is a student here, and I understand just finished classes, so hopefully, he'll be able to enjoy a good holiday season, although I understand exams are actually after the holidays. That's always a bad deal. But—[laughter].

King Abdullah. It is.

President Obama. It means he's got to do a little bit of studying during the break.

But it's wonderful to see you. Good. Thank you.

King Abdullah. Thank you. Well, if you'll allow me, Mr. President, thank you very much on behalf of all of us in Jordan, to thank you, the American people, and Congress for, as you mentioned, the very gracious support to Jordan, the budget support of revenue, which comes at a very difficult time, as you mentioned, of us hosting almost 1.5 million Syrian refugees, 20 percent of our population. And this will have a tremendous impact on Jordanians on all levels. So from all of us, a very gracious thank you to you and your people for this very timely support for our country.

Obviously, Jordanians and Americans have been standing shoulder to shoulder against extremism for many years, but to a new level with this coalition against ISIL. And our troops are very proud to be working together in combating ISIL in Syria as well as in Iraq. We are working together to support our friends in Iraq and the Iraqi Government. And this is something that we will continue to do with great pride.

As the President alluded to, that we have a long-term commitment to bring a comprehensive solution to the Syrian crisis. I believe that the process is moving in the right direction, and we have spent some time on seeing how we can move the process forward.

We'd also like to thank the President very much on his continued efforts to bring the Israelis and Palestinians closer together, because obviously, we need to be able to find a solution between the Israelis and Palestinians as we have moved to now this global challenge of extremism that all of us face—Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus—all of us together against—this fight against evil.

So this is now a generational fight where all of us are fighting extremism all over the world, and we all have to fight together as a united front.

So we're very proud of this relationship with the United States. And as the President alluded to, it's not just—although the priority is against ISIL, it's actually across our region. And I'm very proud of this relationship, very proud of our personal friendship, and of the President's vision to alleviate the suffering of the region and his steadfast commitment to Muslims across the world to fight this extremist threat.

President Obama. Thank you very much.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:10 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II of Jordan, who is a student at Georgetown University. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Jordan, King Abdullah.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Abdullah II, King; Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, Prince.

Subjects: Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Israel : Gaza conflict; Jordan : Economic growth and development; Jordan : King; Jordan : Prince; Jordan : Relations with U.S.; Jordan : Security cooperation with U.S.; Jordan : U.S. assistance; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians : Gaza :: Conflict with Israel; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Terrorism : al-Shabaab terrorist organization; Terrorism : Boko Haram terrorist group.

DCPD Number: DCPD201400903.