

Remarks Prior to Discussions With Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and an Exchange With Reporters

March 3, 1997

President Clinton. Good morning. I'm glad to welcome Chairman Arafat here. This is our sixth meeting, and I'm hopeful that it will be as productive as our previous ones have. You will remember the last time he was here, last fall, we were facing a very difficult situation with regard to Hebron, and because of the efforts that he made in working with the Israelis, an agreement was reached, a timetable was established, and we're moving forward. And I'm hopeful that we can keep doing that. This is also a difficult moment, but I think we can work through it and go forward, and I appreciate his coming to see me.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. Chairman, are the new settlements designed by the Israelis to make the annexation a fait accompli of East Jerusalem?

Chairman Arafat. Not only for Jerusalem but also for Bethlehem, because their target is to squeeze and to isolate Jerusalem but, at the same time, to build the settlements at the entrance of Bethlehem, to replace Har Homa, our capital—in the city of Bethlehem during the 2,000 years of our celebration for our Jesus Christ.

Q. What are you going to do about it?

Chairman Arafat. I am sure that His Excellency will push for—to prevent it.

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about the settlement?

President Clinton. Well, what I think about the settlement is what I think about all these issues. You know, the important thing is for these people on both sides to be building confidence and working together. And so I would prefer the decision not have been made, because I don't think it builds confidence, I think it builds mistrust. And I wish that it had not been made.

Q. Mr. President, the Jerusalem Embassy Act declares that the United States should recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Is Jerusalem Israel's capital, and does Israel have the right to build within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem?

President Clinton. Well, you know, I've been asked that question a lot, and I'm going to give

you the same answer I always give. I do not believe, now that the parties have reached the agreement they reached in 1993 and they have made this the final status issue, that the United States can serve any useful purpose by saying, or especially by doing, anything which seems to prejudice what should be a final status issue between the parties. I think that would be a big mistake.

1996 Campaign Financing

Q. Vice President Gore, did you solicit money in the White House, Mr. Gore, during the campaign?

Vice President Gore. I'll talk with you all later, not during this.

President Clinton. Nice tie, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press].

Q. Thank you. Got that in Arkansas.

Storms in Arkansas

Q. Do you want to say anything about the storms?

Q. Are you going to Arkansas?

President Clinton. I'm going down tomorrow. I'm very concerned about it. I talked over the weekend to—I talked to the Governor twice and the mayor of Little Rock and Representative Malone in Arkadelphia. You know, it's a bad situation. More people were killed in 18 hours than in the 12 years I was Governor, I believe, combined, in the tornadoes.

Q. Did you know anybody that was hurt or killed?

President Clinton. Not to my knowledge, although I did recognize a couple of people on television last night who had lost their homes. One man said—did you see that—where he had given away a couch to the Goodwill Industries, and whoever got the couch had their home destroyed and the couch was blown back into his house. [Laughter]

Q. You're going down—

President Clinton. I recognized three or four people on television. But I'm going down there. I'll see tomorrow.

Chelsea Clinton's Birthday

Q. You had a good birthday celebration?

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President Clinton. Wonderful. Chelsea had a good birthday. New York was good.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks,

he referred to Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas; Mayor Jim Dailey of Little Rock, AR; and State Representative Percy Malone. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Unveiling Ceremony for the Coalition for America's Children Public Service Announcement

March 3, 1997

I want to thank all those who have been a part of this. Alex Kroll, thank you for what you said and for reminding us that we're about the business of helping parents, not disrespecting the difficulties they face. Christine Benero, thank you. Eva Kasten, the executive vice president of the Advertising Council, thank you. I thank the Benton Foundation, the AT&T Foundation, the Packard Foundation. I'd like to thank the people in our administration probably most directly involved in helping our children who are here today, Secretary Riley, Secretary Shalala, and Harris Wofford, the head of the Corporation for National Service.

But most of all, I want to thank Bradley Pine and Lonzo Warren for coming here to share their story. Their relationship is a powerful example of what could be done all over America if we move from vague rhetoric to specific action directed at helping and supporting all of our children. Just think of what would happen in this country if every single child who needed a mentor had one. Think of what would happen if every person out there who is willing to volunteer to help knew where to go and how to do it. The public service message we just saw, that Hillary and I were honored to participate in, is simply designed to remind every American that there are children out there who need our support and to tell every American who wants to serve that there is a way to serve and we will help you do it.

We know that being a parent is the most difficult and important job in the world, and we know that everyone has to help. Hillary has been working on these children's issues since before I met her, a long time ago now, and I think that the book that she wrote did capture the image of the village raising our children. But it should not be allowed to obscure the

fact that what that really means is that each and every one of us has a personal responsibility to do our part. And also, thanks to this effort, it will be easier for people to understand how to exercise that responsibility.

I'm especially fond of the work that we have done in this regard. We've done all we could to encourage citizen service. We now have more than 50,000 young people working in AmeriCorps, earning money to go to college. Many, many of them are helping our children in supportive ways.

Last summer, we launched our America Reads program to try to mobilize one million volunteer tutors in America to make sure that by the year 2000 every single 8-year-old in this country can read independently and will have a chance to make the most of his or her education. Today I am pleased to announce that Scholastic Books is donating one million books to help us reach that goal. We need more companies like Scholastic Books to give more Americans the opportunity to serve.

In January I was proud to stand right here with President Bush and General Colin Powell and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros to announce that we are convening the first-ever Presidents' Summit of Service in April in Philadelphia to bring together business, religious, community leaders committed to support citizen service with resources and volunteers. With their help, I hope we can make the plea we make in this public service announcement a reality for tens of thousands of more people in the United States.

This public service announcement is just what it seems to be. It seeks to help in mobilizing a volunteer force of Americans. It reflects the wisdom that no impersonal bureaucracy can ever replace the magic that we saw here between