

provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Burma in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,

May 16, 2008.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 17. The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Remarks Following a Meeting With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and an Exchange With Reporters in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt May 17, 2008

*President Bush.* Mr. President, good to see you. Thanks. President Karzai and I have had a lot of meetings together, and this was a very upbeat meeting. And I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate your courage. Appreciate you taking on a very tough assignment, which is helping your young democracy survive amidst the threats from the radicals and extremists.

I really appreciate the briefing you gave me on how you're going to approach the Paris donors' meeting. This is a great opportunity for the world to help Afghanistan grow and prosper. His strategy is a smart strategy. And part of his strategy is to—is for the world to help Afghanistan's agricultural community grow and prosper, so that they can not only become self-sufficient in food but become net exporters of crops that people need in order to be able to eat and survive.

And so I thought it was a smart approach. I hope the world rallies to your behalf. We'll certainly help. I appreciate you being here.

*President Karzai.* Thank you very much.

*President Bush.* Yes, sir.

*President Karzai.* Thank you very much. Well, Mr. President, thank you very much for this very good meeting once again. We have always had very good meetings with you in the past. This one was one more of such meetings. And thank you very much once again, Mr. President, for the help that

you have given us in the past 6 years—6½ years in Afghanistan.

I told you about a story earlier, that we, for the first time after 30 years, were able to give diplomas to the graduates of Afghanistan's universities, the medical colleges, economics, law, and all that. That would have not been possible without your help and the help of the rest of the world.

And thank you very much for the support on Paris. We'll be going to Paris to ask for more help for Afghanistan's agriculture, so that Afghanistan can become self-sufficient in agriculture and also be an exporter to the rest of the world. And we'll be asking for help on energy resources in Afghanistan and the—better irrigation and hydro projects.

Afghanistan once again thanks the people of the United States. Mr. President, thank you very much, and please convey that gratitude to the American people. And please do visit us very, very soon. The Afghan people want to be there to greet you and to express their gratitude for your leadership and help.

*President Bush.* Thank you, sir. Thank you. I'll take two questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

### *Middle East Peace Process*

*Q.* Mr. President, Egypt's state-owned media says that you have tilted too far toward Israel. One of them, the newspaper,

says that you aim to do nothing but appeasing Israel. Did you encounter that attitude today, and what do you say to this?

*President Bush.* Actually, in my meeting with the President of Egypt, he wanted to make sure that my approach toward the Middle Eastern peace is firm, and that we work hard to get the Palestinian state defined. And in my speech tomorrow, I'll make it clear that I believe we can get a state defined by the end of my Presidency, and we'll work hard to achieve that objective. I had conversations with Prime Minister Olmert and others in his Government to that effect. I will have conversations with President Abbas and people in his Government tonight.

Every one of these meetings helps advance the process. Every one of these meetings helps us inch toward the goal of getting a state defined with borders and the refugee issue as well as security concerns defined by the end of my Presidency. And I believe we can do that, and I know it's going to be important for the peace in the Middle East.

John [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal], yes.

#### *Saudi Arabia/Oil Production*

Q. Mr. President, can you talk a little bit more about your meetings with officials in Saudi Arabia? And are you satisfied with the response that they gave you on oil?

*President Bush.* Look, my—with—His Majesty is—he kindly called in the Energy Minister, who, I think, was in Korea. And the man flew back to talk with us. I said very plainly, I said, you've got to be concerned about the effects of high oil prices on some of the biggest customers in the world. And not only that, of course, high

energy prices is going to cause countries like mine to accelerate our move toward alternative energy.

And as the Minister said yesterday, that Saudi Arabia, this year, has increased the number of barrels of oil per day by 300,000 a day, and they're increasing refining capacity, which is not enough. It's something, but it doesn't solve our problem. Our problem in America gets solved when we aggressively go for domestic exploration. Our problem in America gets solved if we expand our refining capacity, promote nuclear energy, and continue our strategy for the advancement of alternative energies as well as conservation.

And one of the interesting things about American politics these days is, those who are screaming the loudest for increased production from Saudi Arabia are the very same people who are fighting the fiercest against domestic exploration, against the development of nuclear power, and against expanding refining capacity. And so I was pleased that they had increased production by 300,000. But I'm also realistic to say to the American people, we've got to do more at home, and we need a Congress who will be responsive to those requests.

Thank you all very much for your interest.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:14 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh. In his remarks, he referred to President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud and Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Ibrahim al-Naimi of Saudi Arabia.

## The President's Radio Address May 17, 2008

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from the Middle East, where Laura and I are on a trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

When Air Force One touched down at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, I was greeted by Israel's President and Prime Minister. I joined them in celebrating an historic milestone: Israel's 60th anniversary as an independent nation. And I assured them that Israel could count on America as a strong and steady ally long into the future.

During our visit, I had conversation with Israel's leaders about their efforts to forge peace with the Palestinians and our shared belief that a peace agreement is possible this year. I also had the opportunity to address members of the Knesset, Israel's elected legislature. I reminded these democratic leaders that America was the first nation in the world to recognize Israel's independence. I told them that 60 years later, America is proud to be Israel's best friend in the world. I reaffirmed the principles that make our alliance strong: a love of liberty, a devotion to justice, and a respect for human dignity. And I said that standing firm on these ideals is the surest way to defeat the extremists and build a future of peace for people throughout the Middle East.

For Laura and me, this visit to Israel was an especially moving experience. We toured the Bible Lands Museum, saw the Dead Sea Scrolls, and visited Masada, an inspiring shrine to Jewish courage and sacrifice in the first century. From the window of our hotel room, we had a magnificent view of the Old City of Jerusalem, home to some of the holiest sites in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And on our final morning in the city, we met some of Israel's young people, talented and hopeful citizens who gave me confidence in Israel's future.

On Friday, we visited another of America's friends in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia. I had a series of productive meetings with King Abdallah at his farm. We celebrated the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia. We reaffirmed our shared objectives of peace in the Holy Land, a secure and united Iraq, and a sovereign, independent Lebanon that is free of outside interference. We talked about oil production and gasoline prices. We discussed the King's efforts to diversify his nation's economy and the importance of political reform. And I thanked him for Saudi Arabia's strong commitment to fighting terror.

Our final stop is Egypt, where we are visiting the beautiful resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh. I am meeting with a number of key leaders from the region, including President Mubarak of Egypt, President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, King Abdullah of Jordan, President Karzai of Afghanistan, Prime Minister Gilani of Pakistan, and several senior officials from Iraq's democracy.

I will also address the World Economic Forum in the Middle East. I will stress the importance of building dynamic and diverse economies that unleash the creativity and enterprise of citizens throughout the region, especially women and young people. I will make clear that the only way to ensure true prosperity is to expand political and economic freedom. And I will urge leaders across the region to reject spoilers such as the regimes in Iran and Syria, move past old grievances, and embrace the changes necessary for a day when societies across the Middle East are based on justice, tolerance, and freedom.

Reaching that day will not be easy. But with continued leadership from America and our friends in the region, I am confident that it can happen. And when that