

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 p.m. at the Jerusalem Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Netanyahu's wife, Sarah.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza City, Gaza

December 14, 1998

Impeachment

Q. Mr. President, you say you haven't committed perjury. Can you say, sir, that you lied, as some people believe would help?

President Clinton. Sam [Sam Donaldson, ABC News], I've said what I have to say about that. Now, I'm here furthering America's interests, trying to make peace in the Middle East, to keep this peace process on track. I think it's important. I will say what I've said before: I don't believe it's in the interest of the United States or the American people to go through this impeachment process with a trial in the Senate. That's why I have offered to make every effort to make any reasonable compromise with the Congress. I still believe that, and I'm still willing to do that. That's all I know to do. Meanwhile, I'm going to keep working on my job.

Q. Do you think it's appropriate for the Republican leadership to call for your resignation while you are over here, overseas?

Q. President Clinton, how do you feel being in Gaza?

President Clinton. The boundaries of what's appropriate have been changed rather dramatically in the last several months, I think; you know, they'll have to be the judge of their own conduct. I'm just going to do my job as President.

President's Visit to Gaza

Q. President Clinton, how do you feel being in Gaza for the first time? And is there going to be a withdrawal on Friday?

President Clinton. Well, I want to talk to Chairman Arafat about all these issues related to the Wye agreement. But I'm delighted to be in Gaza for the first time. I'm delighted to be the first President to come on Palestinian territory. And I was very pleased to be at the dedication of the airport

today. One of the important achievements of the Wye River agreement was the commitment to get this airport open and going, and I'm very, very pleased. It's quite beautiful. And I was pleased to be there, and I'm very glad to be here in Chairman Arafat's headquarters, with his team. And we'll talk about all the other issues.

Q. And the withdrawal?

President Clinton. I'll have more to say about that later.

Implementation of the Wye Agreement

Q. Mr. President—[inaudible]—to be time—[inaudible]—on the implementation of the Wye agreement, as Israel has said to be asking?

President Clinton. Well, I would hope that we would continue to implement the Wye agreement on both sides. I would hope both sides would continue to implement every part of it. And I think it's important that both sides implement every part of it in good faith.

Keep in mind, Wye is not the end of this process. It's simply a means to an end. We also have to get the final status talks going and then get into them in earnest. But these confidence-building measures, which will enable the Palestinians not only to have an airport but to have more freedom of movement, more land, and more economic opportunity, and enable the Israelis to have a greater assurance of security cooperation, I think they're very important to the success of final status talks. So I'm committed to this agreement, and I hope that it will be implemented in a timely and aggressive manner by both sides.

Chairman Arafat. We consider the visit of President Clinton as a historic event for the Palestinian people and for the people in the Middle East. And we are grateful for his visit, and he honored us with this visit today.

We should never forget that under President Clinton's sponsorship, we signed a number of peace agreements at the White House. And through President Clinton, peace will prevail in the Middle East. And this is something that will not be forgotten by the Palestinian people or the Israeli people or the people in the Middle East. And once again, it is a great honor, and we are really proud

to have President Clinton among us here and among the Palestinian people.

I was hoping that logistically we would have been able to have a motorcade, because people are lined up waiting to greet President Clinton on both sides of the road. And I believe perhaps you took a glimpse of the people, flying in the chopper over Gaza, standing on both sides hoping that the motorcade would come by—from the airport, from the airport. [*Laughter*]

President Clinton. I would like to say just one other thing. There are two historic elements to this day. One is the opportunity that I have been given simply to come here and to have this meeting and to be a part of the airport dedication. The other is the truly historic meeting that the Chairman has convened of the PNC, the PCC, and the other Palestinian groups, and the opportunity that the Palestinian people, through their elected representatives, will have to make it clear and unequivocal that they are choosing the path of peace and partnership with Israel, and that we hope—I think all of us hope—that this will lead to a changing of hearts and minds throughout this region among all parties, so that it will be easier for everyone to implement the difficult commitments they have made at Wye and will have to make to get the final status talks completed.

This is a truly significant thing, and I, for one, very much appreciate it. It was a part of the Wye River agreements; it showed a lot of courage on Chairman Arafat's part; and I was delighted to be invited here. And so I just want to say how much I personally appreciate this and how much I think it will mean over the long run to the prospects for a successful peace agreement.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12 noon in Chairman Arafat's office. In his remarks, the President referred to the Palestine National Council (PNC) and the Palestinian Central Council (PCC). A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Chairman Arafat in Gaza City

December 14, 1998

Chairman Arafat, Mrs. Arafat, distinguished leaders of the Palestinian community, colleagues, and friends: On behalf of my family and our entire delegation, we thank you for your warm and truly memorable welcome.

Mr. Chairman, as I promised you at Wye River, I have come to Gaza to speak about the benefits of peace based on mutual respect. I know that the circumstances you've faced since 1993 and the signing of the peace have remained difficult, but there are reasons for hope. For the first time in the history of the Palestinian movement, the Palestinian people and their elected representatives now have a chance to determine their own destiny on their own land.

I am proud to be the first American President to stand with the Palestinian people here as you shape your future. I want to emphasize that that future is possible because of the commitment you have made to live in peace and mutual respect with your neighbors, side by side.

All this would have been hard to imagine in the darkest years of struggle, when most people expected the Middle East would always be a separate set of armed camps. Sometimes it takes more courage and more strength to make peace than it does to continue war. I thank Chairman Arafat for having the strength, the courage, and the wisdom to make peace and then to persevere on the path of peace.

I thank the Chairman and, indeed, all Palestinians who embrace the idea that Palestinians and Israelis can share the land of their fathers together. I thank you for believing that the land which gave the world Islam and Judaism and Christianity can be the home of all people who love one God and respect every life our one God has created.

America wants you to succeed, and we will help you to create the society you deserve, a society based on respect for human rights,