
President Mohammad Abbas' Speech at the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit (8 February 2005)

The full text of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas's declaration of a ceasefire with the Israelis at the Sharm al-Sheikh summit.

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.

President Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, His Majesty King Abdullah II, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and gentlemen: I should like first to express thanks and appreciation to President Hosni Mubarak and Egypt for hosting this meeting in continuation of the effective Egyptian role in sponsoring the peace process in our region.

I would also like to thank His Majesty King Abdullah for his efforts and the efforts of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan in this regard. I would like to congratulate his majesty the king and Queen Raniya on their new born, Prince Hashim. I would also like to congratulate the king on his birthday.

We have agreed with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to stop all acts of violence against Israelis and Palestinians, wherever they are.

The calm that our land will experience starting today is the start of a new era, a start for peace and hope. It is the beginning of peace and hope.

What we have announced today not only represents the implementation of the first articles of the roadmap drafted by the Quartet Committee, but is also an important step representing a new chance for the peace process to regain momentum and to get back on track, so that the Palestinian and Israeli peoples might regain hope in the possibility of achieving peace.

I believe we are all aware of our great and joint responsibilities to enhance and develop this chance.

This will be done by rapidly seeking to regain the spirit of partnership in peace and in the future, by entrenching reciprocity and by refraining from unilateral steps.

From now, we must work to protect our announcement by facilitating the appropriate mechanisms that will ensure implementation.

What we have agreed upon today is but a start on bridging the gap and differences between us.

We have differences on several issues, which may include the settlements, prisoner releases, the wall, the closure of Jerusalem institutions and other issues.

We shall not be able to settle all these issues today, but our stand on them remains clear and firm.

Intensifying efforts to fulfil our obligations will lead us to another commitment from the roadmap: Resuming the final status negotiations with the aim of ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, which started in 1967, and settling all the final status issues - Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements, water and other issues postponed until the final status negotiations, in accordance with the aforesaid points of reference outlined in the roadmap.

Mr president, your majesty, Mr prime minister: Less than a month ago, the Palestinian people headed for the ballot boxes to take part in presidential elections held following the death of President Yasser Arafat.

In their memorable, democratic practice, the Palestinian people reiterated through these elections their adherence to the choice of a just peace; a peace that will finally end decades of war, violence and occupation; a peace that will mean the establishment of a Palestinian state or an independent, democratic state of Palestine side-by-side with the state of Israel in accordance with the provisions of the roadmap.

From the city of Sharm al-Sheikh, the city of peace, I reiterate, in the name of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian National Authority, our adherence to the peace process points of reference, the resolutions of international legitimacy, the agreements signed between the PLO and the government of Israel, and the roadmap.

I stress our eagerness to honour and implement all our obligations. We will not spare any possible effort to protect this new chance for peace, which has been made possible by what we announced here today.

We hope that our brothers in Egypt and Jordan will continue their good efforts. We are also expecting the Quartet Committee to perform its tasks to ensure speedy progress along the Palestinian-Israeli track, together with efforts to reinvigorate the peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

It is time for the Palestinian people to regain their freedom and independence. It is time for an end to long decades of suffering and hardship. It is time for our people to enjoy peace and the right to lead a normal life like the rest of the world under the rule of law, under one authority that is the only party allowed to carry weapons, and through political pluralism.

We look forward to seeing this day as soon as possible, for the language of dialogue to replace that of bullets and cannons and for co-existence and good neighbourliness to replace the [Israeli separation] wall. This is in order to offer our children and grandchildren, Palestinians and Israelis, a different, promising tomorrow.

Here is a new chance for peace to be born in the city of peace today. So let us all pledge to protect it until the hope of peace becomes reality, becomes a daily reality in this region.