
Remarks With Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

The Treaty Room

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QUESTION: Yes. Prince Saud, I'm having a quote from you at the various (inaudible) of this dialogue. You said there is what I would call a misunderstanding about Saudi Arabia among the U.S. public and there is misunderstanding about the United States among the Saudi public and you both trying to influence this. How better you are today? And Secretary Rice, there is a quote from Prince -- for Prince Saud he said about Hamas that, shutting off aid to the Palestinian Government and isolation, its new Hamas leader will radicalize the population over there and set back the course of peace with Israel. You want to try to read your thought on this.

SECRETARY RICE: ...

As to the Middle East peace process, we are both committed to the roadmap and to a peaceful resolution, based on a two-state solution. That is the underpinning of the Arab initiative that Crown Prince Abdullah launched a few years ago. It is certainly the underpinning of President Bush's belief that a two-state solution is the only way that Israelis and Palestinians will be able to meet their aspirations. And we have a practical problem which is that out of an election that was clearly a legitimate election, one that we support, one of the parties now does not recognize the existence of one of Israel. The party also has not renounced violence. And so the goal has to be to get back on the roadmap and it's very difficult to do that, when one of the parties doesn't accept the existence of the other party. And so we will continue to press for that.

I just want to note that we have been very insistent that we do not want the Palestinian people to suffer without their essential needs met. We have, indeed, made major efforts to have humanitarian assistance get to the Palestinian people. We are working with our partners in the Quartet to have an international mechanism that would help to meet some of the essential needs of the Palestinian people. So I just wanted to be very clear that there are prohibitions that we will not cross in dealing with a terrorist group like Hamas. But the Palestinian people deserve our support. We also are partners with Abu Mazen who is the elected President of the Palestinian Authority and we're going to continue to pursue efforts at peace. We believe there is no other way that Israelis and Palestinians can meet their aspirations.

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QUESTION: ...

And Madame Secretary, can you talk back on the Palestinian issue? We now have a situation where there are two different security forces on the streets in the Gaza and the West Bank. Can you tell us what your view is of that and whether you've made any calls about that?

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SECRETARY RICE: As to the situation in the Palestinian territories, yes, it is a very tense situation and one that we hope will be resolved. We obviously believe that President Abbas who we believe has the confidence of the Palestinian people should be able to exercise his responsibilities as president of the country. And all Palestinian parties ought to respect the need of the Palestinian people to have a secure environment and not to have a situation in which there is violence in the streets. Now, this goes back a ways and the Palestinian President has talked about the need for there to be one authority and one gun. And I have to say that I can't think of any stable environment, especially any stable democratic environment, in which you have multiple militias and multiple security forces. That is the meaning of one authority and one gun. And by the way, that is also anticipated in the roadmap that there should be a Palestinian security force that is unified and that is committed to peace and stability.

So yes, it's a very dangerous situation and it's also the case that a lot of innocent Palestinians are being caught in the violence and criminality that continues to be a problem in the Palestinian territories. And the Palestinian leadership has every obligation to get control of it.

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