

---

**Beginning of the Meeting with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, Saud Al-Faisal**

July 25, 2006  
The Kremlin, Moscow

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN: Your Highness!

Dear colleagues!

We are always glad to see our Saudi friends in Russia and here in Moscow, our capital. We are glad that over the past few years our relations have developed ever more rapidly, and I am referring to both our economic and political relations.

Unfortunately, our meeting today is taking place against the backdrop of a sharp aggravation of the situation in the Middle East. Just recently we were chagrined to see what was happening in the Palestinian territories and now the events in Lebanon are the centre of everyone's attention.

You know our position. We think that none of these issues, independently of how complex they are, can be resolved by resorting to terrorism. The state of Israel has the right to and should live in security. Along with this, the fact that many fundamental issues in the Middle East remain unresolved certainly generate again and again problems such as those we are facing today.

We welcome your mission. I know that you recently visited Washington, are spending today in Moscow, and are preparing to go to Beijing. We hope that your mission and our joint efforts will help us find a mutually acceptable solution to the troubled situation that has developed today in Lebanon and Palestine.

SAUDI ARABIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD AL-FAISAL: Thank you, your Excellency, for providing us with this excellent opportunity to exchange opinions.

Unfortunately, it often happens in diplomatic circles that such meetings take place against the backdrop of a crisis situation. Certainly, we would like to have the opportunity to visit this wonderful capital, this fine city and to meet with your Excellency in more favourable conditions.

I came here with the order from His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia to transmit his greetings and very best wishes, and to express his great appreciation of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation, especially with regards to current events. He also asked me to remind you of your promise to visit the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We hope that that visit will act as an excellent opportunity to develop joint projects for Russian companies, including on Saudi territory.

Your Excellency, we are following the position of the Russian Federation concerning the conflict in Palestine and in Lebanon with satisfaction, and we see the affinities between our positions, more so – their concurrence.

We consider the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains unresolved to be at the basis of the current conflict in Lebanon. The fact that this conflict remains unresolved and that Israel continues to exert pressure on Palestinians, the occupation of additional Palestinian territories, and the exile of an even greater number of refugees all have a direct influence on the situation in other regions, and especially in Lebanon.

This unresolved conflict has created a kind of political vacuum in Lebanon and made the Lebanese authorities unable to ensure stability and security in their country and, to a certain extent, a loss of sovereignty for the Lebanese state.

We consider that the problem consists not so much in the capture of two Israeli soldiers, in ensuring Israel's security or in adventurous acts by armed groups in Lebanon, but in maintaining Lebanon's real sovereignty, something to which we all aspire. In the Arab world we have adopted a clear and courageous position with respect to the behaviour of both sides in this conflict.