

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 10, 1994

Dear Friend:

September 13, 1993, was one of the most memorable days of my Presidency -- a day celebrated around the world. It was a day that few of us dreamt we would ever see, yet one that we prayed would come.

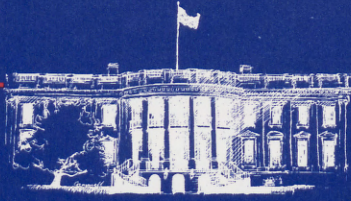
The handshake between age-old adversaries generated the hope in all of us that this was not just an extraordinary moment, but an historic turning point in Arab-Israeli relations. The path ahead will not be easy. As the parties deal with the various issues yet to be resolved, progress may not always be as dramatic as the events we witnessed last September. I am confident that, in the end, the vision of peace celebrated here will be realized for all of the people of that troubled region.

For those who, like you, have worked toward a peaceful, secure Middle East, I'm certain that this day was especially thrilling. I want you to have the enclosed brochure as a token of my appreciation for your work and as a reminder of the great strides we have taken together toward a lasting peace.

Let us continue to work together in the months and years ahead to achieve that noble objective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.



“Go in Peace. Go as Peacemakers”

— PRESIDENT CLINTON



WHITE HOUSE CEREMONY
FOR THE
SIGNING OF THE
ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENT

THE SOUTH LAWN • SEPTEMBER 13, 1993

Israel and the PLO “agree that it is time to put an end to the decades of confrontation and conflict, recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and achieve a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation.”

—TEXT OF ACCORD



“The children of Abraham, the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael, have embarked together on a bold journey, Together, today, with all our hearts and all our souls, we bid them shalom, salaam, peace.”

—PRESIDENT CLINTON

*“Above all, let us dedicate ourselves today
to your region’s next generation”*

THE PRESIDENT

Prime Minister Rabin, Chairman Arafat, Foreign Minister Peres, Mr. Abbas, President Carter, President Bush, distinguished guests.

On behalf of the United States and Russia, cosponsors of the Middle East peace process, welcome to this great occasion of history and hope.

Today, we bear witness to an extraordinary act in one of history’s defining dramas, a drama that began in the time of our ancestors when the word went forth from a sliver of land between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. That hallowed piece of earth, that land of light and revelation is the home to the memories and dreams of Jews, Muslims and Christians throughout the world.

As we all know, devotion to that land has also been the source of conflict and bloodshed for too long. Throughout this century, bitterness between the Palestinian and Jewish people has robbed the entire region of its resources, its potential, and too many of its sons and daughters. The land has been so drenched in warfare and hatred, the conflicting claims of history etched so deeply in the souls of the combatants there, that many believed the past would always have the upper hand.

Then, 14 years ago, the past began to give way when, at this place and upon this desk, three men of great vision signed their names to the Camp David Accords. Today we honor the memories of Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat. And we salute the wise leadership of President Jimmy Carter.

Then, as now, we heard from those who said that conflict would come again soon. But the peace between Egypt and Israel has endured, just so this bold new venture today, this brave gamble that the future can be better than the past must endure.

Two years ago in Madrid, another president took a major step on the road to peace by bringing Israel and all her neighbors together to launch direct negotiations. And today we also express our deep thanks for the skillful leadership of President George Bush.

Ever since Harry Truman first recognized Israel, every American President—Democrat and Republican—has worked for peace between Israel and her neighbors. Now the efforts of all who have labored before us bring us to this moment—a moment when we dare to pledge what for so long seemed difficult even to imagine: that the security of the Israeli people will be reconciled with the hopes of the Palestinian people and there will be more security and more hope for all.

Today, the leadership of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization will sign a declaration of principles on interim Palestinian self-government. It charts a course toward reconciliation between two peoples who have both known the bitterness of exile. Now both pledge to put old sorrows and antagonisms behind them and to work for a shared future, shaped by the values of the Torah, the Koran, and the Bible.

Let us salute, also, today the government of Norway for its remarkable role in nurturing this agreement. But above all, let us today pay tribute to the leaders who had the courage to lead their people toward peace, away from the scars of battle, the wounds and the losses of the past toward a brighter tomorrow. The world today thanks Prime Minister Rabin, Foreign Minister Peres and Chairman Arafat.

Their tenacity and vision has given us the promise of a new beginning. What these leaders have done now must be done by others. Their achievement must be a catalyst for progress in all aspects of the peace process. And those of us who support them must be there to help in all aspects. For the peace must render the people who make it more secure. A "peace of the brave" is within our reach. Throughout the Middle East, there is a great yearning for the quiet miracle of a normal life.

We know a difficult road lies ahead. Every peace has its enemies—those who still prefer the easy habits of hatred to the hard labors of reconciliation. But Prime Minister Rabin has reminded us that you do not have to make peace with your friends. And the Koran teaches that "if the enemy inclines toward peace, do thou also incline toward peace."

Therefore, let us resolve that this new mutual recognition will be a continuing process in which the parties transform the very way they see and understand each other. Let the skeptics of this peace recall what once existed among these people. There was a time when the traffic of ideas, commerce, and pilgrims flowed uninterrupted among the cities of the fertile crescent. In Spain and the Middle East, Muslims and Jews once worked together to write brilliant chapters in the history of literature and science. All this can come to pass again.

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Chairman: I pledge the active support of the United States of America to the difficult work that lies ahead.

The United States is committed to ensuring that the people who are affected by this agreement will be made more secure by it and to leading the world in marshalling the sources necessary to implement the difficult details that will make real the principles to which you commit yourselves today.

Together let us imagine what can be accomplished if all the energy and ability the Israelis and the Palestinians have invested in your struggle can now be channeled into cultivating the land and freshening the waters, into ending the boycotts and creating new industry, into building a land as bountiful and peaceful as it is holy.

Above all, let us dedicate ourselves today to your region's next generation. In this entire assembly, no one is more important than the group of Israeli and Arab children who are seated here with us today.

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Chairman: this day belongs to you. And because of what you have done, tomorrow belongs to them.

We must not leave them prey to the politics of extremism and despair, to those who would derail this process because they cannot overcome the fears and hatreds of the past. We must not betray their future. For too long, the young of the Middle East have been caught in a web of hatred, not of their own making.

For too long they have been taught from the chronicles of war. Now, we can give them the chance to know the season of peace. For them we must realize the prophecy of Isaiah, that the "cry of violence shall no more be heard in your land, nor wrack nor ruin within your borders."

The children of Abraham, the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael, have embarked together on a bold journey. Together, today, with all our hearts and all our souls, we bid them shalom, salaam, peace.

*“we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice:
enough of blood and tears. Enough.”*

PRIME MINISTER RABIN

President Clinton, the President of the United States; your excellencies; ladies and gentlemen.

This signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principle here today, it's not so easy—neither for myself, as a soldier in Israel's war, nor for the people of Israel, not to the Jewish people in the diaspora, who are watching us now with great hope mixed with apprehension. It is certainly not easy for the families of the victims of the wars, violence, terror whose pain will never heal, for the many thousands who defended our lives in their own, and have even sacrificed their lives for our own. For them, this ceremony has come too late. Today, on the eve of an opportunity—opportunity for peace—and perhaps end of violence and wars, we remember each and every one of them with everlasting love.

We have come from Jerusalem, the ancient and eternal capital of the Jewish people; we have come from an anguished and grieving land; we have come from a people, a home, a family, that does not know a single year—not a single month—in which mothers have not wept for their sons. We have come to try and put an end to the hostilities so that our children, our children's children, will no longer experience the painful cost of war, violence and terror. We have come to secure their lives and to ease the soul and the painful memories of the past, to hope and pray for peace.

Let me say to you, the Palestinians, we are destined to live together on the same soil, in the same land. We, the soldiers who have returned from battles stained with blood, we who have seen our relatives and friends killed before our eyes, we who have attended their funerals and cannot look into the eyes of their parents, we who have come from a land where parents bury their children, we who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice: enough of blood and tears. Enough.

We have no desire for revenge. We harbor no hatred towards you. We, like you, are people. People who want to build a home, to plant a tree, to love, live side by side with you in dignity, in empathy, as human beings, as free men, we are today giving peace a chance and saying again to you: Enough. Let us pray that a day will come when we all will say farewell to the arms. We wish to open a new chapter in the sad book of our lives together, a chapter of mutual recognition, of good neighborliness, of mutual respect, of understanding. We hope to embark on a new era in the history of the Middle East.

Today here in Washington, at the White House, we will begin a new reckoning in the relations between peoples, between parents tired of war, between children who will not know war. President of the United States, ladies and gentlemen, our inner strength, our higher moral values, have been derived for thousands of years from the Book of the Books, in one of which correlate, we read: To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under Heaven; a time to be born and a time to die; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to weep and a time to love; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time of peace. Ladies and gentlemen, the time for peace has come.

In two days, the Jewish people will celebrate the beginning of a new year. I believe, I hope, I pray that the new year will bring a message of redemption for all peoples; a good year for you, for all of you; a good year for Israelis and Palestinians; a good year for all the peoples of the Middle East; a good year for our American friends who so want peace and are helping to achieve it. For presidents and members of previous administrations, especially for you, President Clinton, and your staff, for all citizens of the world, may peace come to all your homes.

In the Jewish tradition it is customary to conclude our prayers with the word Amen—as you said, Amen. With your permission, men of peace, I shall conclude with words taken from the prayer recited by Jews daily and whoever of you volunteer, I would ask the entire audience to join me in saying Amen. (JEWISH PRAYER OFFERED.)



“we share your values for freedom, justice and human rights—values for which my people have been striving”

CHAIRMAN ARAFAT

In the name of God, the most merciful, the passionate, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to express our tremendous appreciation to President Clinton and to his administration for sponsoring this historic event which the entire world has been waiting for. Mr. President, I am taking this opportunity to assure you and to assure the great American people that we share your values for freedom, justice and human rights—values for which my people have been striving.

My people are hoping that this agreement, which we are signing today, marks the beginning of the end of a chapter of pain and suffering which has lasted throughout this century. My people are hoping that this agreement which we are signing today will usher in an age of peace, coexistence and equal rights. We are relying on your role, Mr. President, and on the role of all the countries which believe that, without peace in the Middle East, peace in the world will not be complete.

Enforcing the agreement and moving toward the final settlement after two years to implement all aspects of U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 in all of their aspects and resolve all the issues of Jerusalem, the settlement, the refugees and the boundaries will be a Palestinian and an Israeli responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the international community in its entirety to help the parties overcome the tremendous difficulties which are still standing in the way of reaching a final and comprehensive settlement.

Now as we stand on the threshold of this new historic era, let me address the people of Israel and their leaders with whom we are meeting today for the first time. And let me assure them that the difficult decision we reached together was one that required great and exceptional courage.

We will need more courage and determination to continue the course of building coexistence and peace between us. This is possible. And it will happen with mutual determination and with the effort that will be made with all parties on all the tracks to establish the foundations of a just and comprehensive peace. Our people do not consider that exercising the right to self-determination could violate the rights of their neighbors or infringe on their security. Rather, putting an end to their feelings of being wronged and of having suffered an historic injustice is the strongest guarantee to achieve coexistence and openness between our two peoples and future generations.

Our two peoples are awaiting today this historic hope, and they want to give peace a real chance. Such a shift will give us an opportunity to embark upon the process of economic, social and cultural growth and development, and we hope that international participation in that process will be as extensive as it can be. This shift will also provide an opportunity for all forms of cooperation on a broad scale and in all fields.

I thank you, Mr. President. We hope that our meeting will be a new beginning for fruitful and effective relations between the American people and the Palestinian people.

I wish to thank the Russian Federation and President Boris Yeltsin. Our thanks also go to Secretary Christopher and Foreign Minister Kozyrev, to the government of Norway, and to the Foreign Minister of Norway for the positive part they played in bringing about this major achievement.

I extend greetings to all the Arab leaders, our brothers, and to all the world leaders who contributed to this achievement. Ladies and gentlemen, the battle for peace is the most difficult battle of our lives. It deserves our utmost efforts, because the land of peace, the land of peace yearns for a just and comprehensive peace. Thank you.

Mr. President, thank you, thank you, thank you.



PRESIDENT CLINTON

We have been granted the great privilege of witnessing this victory for peace. Just as the Jewish people this week celebrate the dawn of a new year, let us all go from this place to celebrate the dawn of a new era not only for the Middle East, but for the entire world.

The sound we heard today, once again, as in ancient Jericho, was of trumpets toppling walls: The walls of anger and suspicion between Israeli and Palestinian, between Arab and Jew. This time, praise God, the trumpets herald not the destruction of that city, but its new beginning.

Now let each of us here today return to our portion of that effort, uplifted by the spirit of the moment, refreshed in our hopes and guided by the wisdom of the Almighty, who has brought us to this joyous day.

Go in peace. Go as peacemakers.





“To every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven...the time for peace has come”

–PRIME MINISTER RABIN



“Ladies and Gentlemen, the battle for peace is the most difficult battle of our lives. It deserves our utmost efforts.”

–CHAIRMAN ARAFAT

