

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

A STATESMAN'S FORUM WITH
JORDANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER NASSER JUDEH

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PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction and Moderator:

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Featured Speaker:

NASSER JUDEH
Foreign Minister
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

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PROCEEDINGS

MR. INDYK: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to a Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings event.

We're very glad that you could join us on such a frosty morning.

I'm Martin Indyk, the director of the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings and we're deeply honored today to have the opportunity to host a Statesman's Forum for Nasser Judeh, the foreign minister of Jordan.

We are, today, in the presence of many ambassadors from the Arab world who have joined us this morning. I look across -- I hope I won't miss any -- we're happy to host the Moroccan, the Iraqi, the Egyptian, the Lebanese, the Palestinian, and the Arab League ambassadors. We're especially grateful that the Jordanian ambassador has joined us today along with Princess Aisha who is the brigadier general and the military attaché at the Jordanian embassy. Thank you, Your Highness, for joining us.

Nasser Judeh has been on the scene for many years, a distinguished career in the Jordanian government as minister of information, then in the private sector in telecommunications, and finally appointed by His Majesty, King Abdullah as minister of foreign affairs.

I say he's been on the scene for a long time because he is

really a veteran of Middle East politics and a veteran of that thing we've come to call the Middle East peace process, and so we're very honored to have the opportunity to host him today. He comes here at a time of intense interest in how we can move the region forward in terms of trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian and broader Arab-Israeli conflict, at a time of great uncertainty and change across the region from Tunisia to Lebanon, and at a time when the Middle East is being rocked today by the latest form of leaks, the Minister told me he calls it PaliLeaks, the leaks of Palestinian documents relating to the negotiations.

So, we have a lot to talk about and Foreign Minister Judeh, we're very honored to have you here at Brookings. Thank you for joining us.

PRIME MINISTER JUDEH: Thank you very much, Martin, Dr. Indyk, an old friend, and you yourself shouldn't absolve yourself of being a veteran in Middle Eastern politics and what we also refer to as the Middle East peace process. You've been around for a while. It is a true pleasure for me to be here today.

Martin and I have known each other for many years, back in '87 when he was at WINEP, at the Washington Institute, when it was really not so easy for a Jordanian to go and address a lobby that was somehow associated with Israel, but we've come a long way since then, but

unfortunately we still have the main challenge of arriving at a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, at the core, which is the Palestinian. So, it's an honor and a real pleasure to be here today with Her Royal Highness, with Ambassador -- with all the ambassadors, with such distinguished audience, think tanks, officials, former officials, and I can see many familiar faces, old friends here in this gathering and I am humbled that you're all sparing the time to listen to me, but I think we have an important set of topics that we need to address.

I know that the President of the United States is going to be talking about the State of the Union tomorrow and I'm not in any way trying to preempt him by talking about the state of the Middle East today, but there's quite a few interesting challenges that remain and a few new challenges that we have to deal with, but Brookings and the Saban Center, in particular, is an important institution where ideas are floated and initiatives are discussed and taken forward.

And so what is the current state of play regarding the peacemaking efforts in the Middle East and other relevant regional issues?

As you all know, for decades now, my country, Jordan, has been at the forefront of efforts aimed at realizing the two-state solution whereby a sovereign, independent, viable, and territorially contiguous

Palestinian state would be established along the June 4, 1967, alliance, a state that lives side-by-side in peace, security, and harmony with Israel and all the countries of the region and within a regional context that culminates in comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace and ends the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all.

His Majesty King Abdullah II continuously and vigorously exerts every possible effort to place this objective at the top of the global agenda. By the way, I'm going to say a lot of the obvious and perhaps some of the not so obvious, but the reality is that these issues are out there and I know that I am addressing a very well informed audience, but addressing these issues is always important to put them contextually.

His Majesty never spares an effort or nor an opportunity to create and sustain the necessary and needed momentum by the international community to move things forward towards a comprehensive resolution to the chronic and longstanding Arab-Israeli conflict at the heart of which, at the core of which, lies the Palestinian problem.

In this context I must remind that His Majesty played a crucial role and a key supportive role to Saudi Arabia in formulating the Arab Peace Initiative, which I will refer to as the API from now on because I will mention it frequently. This initiative was adopted in the Arab Summit held in Beirut in 2002 and an all-important initiative that by all standards

represents an historic offer that, unfortunately, was not accorded its due regard and importance by successive Israeli governments.

This framework that contains a clear, collective, and unequivocal Arab undertaking -- and let us remember that it's called an initiative, it's not something that was forced on the Arabs by circumstances, it was an initiative that was proposed by the Arabs to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was upheld by all ensuing Arab summits and was endorsed by the Organization of Islamic States, the OIC, which means 22 Arab states and a further 35 Muslim states, totaling 57 states that will have normal relations with Israel.

The API constitutes a clear departure from the zero-sum equation. It is a win-win formula for all the parties concerned whereby Israel will get peace collectively guaranteed, real security, and will be genuinely integrated as part of the region rather than just being in the region.

Not enough emphasis is placed on the security aspect of the Arab Peace Initiative. When the Peace Initiative talks about security collectively guaranteed by all the Arab and Muslim states to Israel, it is something to look at seriously.

Why do I say that the Arab Peace Initiative is a win-win for everybody? It is a win for Israel, it gets peace, it gets civility, and it gets

collective security. For the Palestinians it will achieve statehood. For the Arabs it will achieve the recovery of their occupied lands in Syria and what remains of the Lebanese occupied lands, and live in a stable and peaceful region characterized by peace, cooperation, and prosperity. And the international community at large will benefit from a stable Middle East and a peaceful Middle East because this conflict and its endurance has global ramifications and it is correctly contended, perhaps, that peace in the Middle East is peace of mind for the rest of the world.

The API has been on offer since 2002. It is still on offer to Israel and it is high time for the Israeli government to accept this collective and comprehensive Arab and Islamic peace offering that will guaranty the security of all the countries and peoples of the Middle East and bring about a formal end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Coming on the plane yesterday, long hours, and we get to spend long hours on flights as foreign ministers, I was going through my old files on my iPad and reading Martin Indyk's book, *Innocent Abroad*, just a quick browse, and so many other books that have been written by many of you here on peacemaking efforts in the Middle East. It's become such a fashionable topic for decades, but I think the time has come to put all this -- and translate it into action.

So, again, an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. I had Israeli

officials asking me directly, Israel yearns to see the words “end of conflict” in the Arab Peace Initiative and all I do is take out the Arab Peace Initiative and say, here are the words, read them, end of conflict. So the end of that conflict will usher in economic prosperity, which will unleash the vast potential of the peoples of the Middle East whose overwhelming majority are young. We owe this to our peoples and we have a tremendous responsibility to enable them to live a normal and prosperous life, free from occupation, animosity, degradation, denial of justice and opportunity.

Dear friends, it is the firm belief of Jordan, under His Majesty the King’s leadership, that the only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the negotiated two-state solution. It is equally our conviction that since this conflict is the core and cause of the broader Arab-Israeli conflict that no solution is possible to the latter without achieving a negotiated two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

So, His Majesty and Jordan, were and continue to be fully supportive of the ongoing and committed U.S. efforts which have not produced a solution yet, and of other international efforts exerted to assist the parties to resume direct negotiations swiftly, and without delay, and we must find a workable and effective formula that enables the quick resumption of direct negotiations, and one that guarantees that they are

not interrupted until they culminate in a formal agreement regarding all the core issues of borders, security, Jerusalem, and refugees and water, and within the target time for their conclusion by September 2011.

Once we succeed in resuming negotiations, and maybe we are -- I was saying lightheartedly this morning with a group of friends that at the beginning of each year we say it's a crucial year, and 2011 is no different. At the beginning of this year we said it's a crucial year, but I feel that this window is closing fast and I'll allude to this later on.

Once we succeed in resuming negotiations, they should be approached with commitment, sincerity, and courage. There should be no proactive or unilateral action that hamper or derail the negotiations, especially continued settlement activity. Instead, the parties must work hard to produce results quickly and delivery the two-state solution by September, or at least what we're talking about, a framework agreement on that.

Reaching an initial yet formal agreement on borders and security within a set period of time, by frontloading negotiations pertaining to this issue and giving them priority, could neutralize the constant interrupting effect of the issue of settlements, for reaching an agreement on borders, albeit an initial one, that could identify potential land swap zones would permit Israel to construct, as it wishes, on what is on its side

of the agreed upon border. This will guaranty that the issue of settlements would no longer trigger interruptions or suspensions of negotiations.

We firmly believe that we still have a zone or window for a possible agreement that would bring about this two-state solution. This window, however, is closing gradually due to the constant change in the demography and the geography -- demographic and geographic factors that are being introduced as a result of ongoing settlement activity and other unilateral measures in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. These unilateral measures are not only illegal in the eyes of Jordan, the United States, and the whole world, they are also eroding the edifice of the two-state solution because they are destroying the requisite of territorial contiguity needed for ensuring the viability of the emergent Palestinian state.

There is no best or good alternative to the negotiated two-state solution. The alternatives that we will be faced with in the event of failure range from devastating to disastrous. His Majesty Abdullah II cautioned in his speech at the United Nations last September that, and I quote, "The alternative is more suffering, deeper frustrations, with spreading more vicious warfare, such a catastrophic" -- and I'm still using His Majesty's words -- "such a catastrophic scenario would continue to drag on the whole world, threatening security and stability far beyond the

borders of the Middle East.”

Israel, in particular, will be adversely affected if the curtain falls on the two-state solution as it will have to deal with a one-state reality, extending from the west of the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea, which the demography will present it with very difficult choices that are at odds with preserving its overall strategic security needs and the broad sense of security.

Israel will then have to choose between being a democracy or a state that discriminates.

I must caution here that we must all steer clear of the temptation to reverting to conflict management, these conflict management approaches, as they present no added value whatsoever and can be detrimental at this time. We must continue to embrace wholeheartedly the focused, conflict resolution method. The parameters for and final shape of the two-state solution are rather clear, and the details of this solution have been negotiated repeatedly between the Palestinians and Israel in the past. Serious progress was achieved in the talks between the parties and one will see references to 2000 and 2008 and other junctures, and the progress at that time -- or at those junctures - - put the parties as close as possible to the finish line without crossing it and perhaps we have to ensure, this time around, that they do so with our

collective help.

Distinguished friends, the comprehensive approach, meaning resuming negotiations on other bilateral tracks, namely the Syrian-Israeli, and the Lebanese-Israeli track, is one that can be leveraged to generate movement and tangible results on the Palestinian-Israeli track. This is not to say or imply in any way that it would create competition between tracks, as we had seen in the past, because it should not and cannot. On the contrary, the comprehensive approach can and should bring about the much needed restoration of confidence between the parties and render difficult negotiation tracks, mutually reinforcing rather than competing. Also, the comprehensive approach could be key to meeting other regional challenges.

The absence of the two-state solution and the continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict are the major and elemental sources of tension in the region. The successful realization of the two-state solution and the achievement of comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace will have positive strategic consequences in the region and for the world at large.

While there are various root causes of extremist ideology and terrorism, the legitimate Palestinian grievances, Israel's continued denial of enabling the Palestinians to exercise their legitimate rights, at the forefront of which is their right to statehood, and Israel's continued

occupation of Syrian and Lebanese territories, contribute largely to dangerous propaganda that provides posturing, mobilization, and recruitment tools for proponents of extremist ideology and for terrorists and terrorist organizations. They exploit those circumstances to advance their violent agendas that are in reality completely unrelated to providing satisfaction and justice to the Palestinians and for legitimate Arab grievances.

So, arriving at the two-state solution and securing comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace would undoubtedly deprive such elements and organizations from an effective tool.

We are not naïve, and we certainly don't assume that mischief will end around the world simply because the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved, however, we believe that mischief will be significantly weakened and the appeal of such violent agendas will be immensely eroded. Therefore progress on Middle East peace can assist the global efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, an international effort that we are fully committed to, and firmly committed to, until we achieve our collective objectives in restoring peace and order and defeating extremism there, and consequently ensuring the security and safety of our peoples and our nations.

It will also enable us to focus our energies and streamline

our approaches to deal more effectively with the growing threat of al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups taking place in different parts of our world.

The resolution of the conflict would also have positive reverberations in Lebanon as it will end Israeli occupation of the remainder of Lebanese territories that it continues to occupy. This would change the dynamics in Lebanon and enable the Lebanese government to extend its exclusive control on the use of force in Lebanon and I know Lebanon is in the news these days and today is extremely crucial in terms of a juncture with the President consulting different political parties on the naming of the Prime Minister, so we are anticipating what's going to happen in Lebanon, but we firmly support Lebanon and are unequivocal in our call that the Lebanese constitution, democratic institutions and deep-rooted political traditions be fully observed and respected by all political entities in Lebanon. This is the only way to maintain and consolidate political stability, national cohesiveness, and security in a manner that would allow Lebanon to enjoy the full scope of benefits and safeguards accorded to it by the international community, not to mention that it will provide a further layer of protection for sovereignty and territorial integrity and satisfy its international obligations including on the issue of the international tribunal, which was established through a U.N. Security Council Resolution.

Additionally, the successful and comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict would significantly assist the global efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation regime of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, while on the other hand its continuation would significantly increase the proliferation of WMDs to states and sub-state actors. Collective security arrangements would be an integral component of comprehensive peace and the relevance of WMDs as a deterrent would be completely neutralized and nullified with the advent of comprehensive peace, and as the sense of security of the countries of the region increases, progressively, post-peace, we could achieve the objective of rendering the entire Middle East as a WMD-free zone.

Middle East peace would also usher in prosperity to the region. It will boost trans-border cooperation between all the countries of the region. It will enable the implementation of cooperative regional projects that can only be conceived and implemented in the context of peaceful and cooperative relations between countries. It would provide solutions for regional problems and challenges such as the all-important challenge of water shortage in our region. It would also allow the execution of inter-regional mega projects such as the construction of oil and gas pipelines from the Gulf through the countries of the East Mediterranean and towards Europe and the rest of the world. This can

also enable the linkage of gas and electricity networks and grids between the Middle East and Europe. It will also enable the creation of a railway and land transportation network that links the Gulf through the Middle East to Europe.

This is all doable and would indeed ensure an elevated level of energy security and secure the flow of energy resources of the region to the world. Such projects have been at a standstill or, at best, missing the Israeli component in the absence of peace, pending the advent of such a comprehensive peace.

We cannot afford, nor can the peoples of the region, any further delay in implementing these ambitious visions. All of this would in turn significantly improve the economies of the countries of the region and the living conditions of its people. It will inevitably create sufficient and abundant employment opportunities for our peoples and thus limit immigration to other parts of the world. Most importantly, it will deliver to the peoples of the Middle East, Arabs and Israelis, Muslims, Christians, and Jews, the prosperous, hopeful way of life that their peers in other parts of the world enjoy and live, that is, a life free from fear, oppression, animosity, and deprivation, and the life that abounds with hope, opportunity, economic affluence, prosperity, and innovation. It will deliver to the world and for the benefit of the world, the rich reservoir of untapped

talent and full dividends of unleashing the full potential of our region and its peoples.

His Majesty King Abdullah II, and I quote, said, "Every resource spent in this conflict is a resource lost for investing in progress and prosperity. Every day spent is a day lost to forces of violence and extremism that threaten all of us in the region and beyond."

Distinguished friends, we must all work to ensure not to waste any further valuable time above the time that was squandered in futility and to resolve this conflict once and for all. Thank you very much.
(Applause)

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Foreign Minister. We're going to have a little conversation between us for a few minutes and then we'll go to what is a very distinguished audience for questions.

You make a cogent, compelling, attractive case for what peace would do for the region, for the Palestinians and for Israel, and yet today we seem to be farther away than ever from actually getting there. So, I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about what's holding us up and how can we kind of jumpstart the process now in a way that can actually produce the outcome that you've painted so vividly for us?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: I don't know if I will say that there are people or forces holding us up. I think it's a question of

realization that the window is closing fast.

We've heard this before. I mean, when you and I first met in 1987 we were talking about windows of opportunity and these windows continue to be there, but they are closing down and I can mention three important dates that will take place this year, beyond which I think we're in serious trouble. Number one, President Obama stood at the United Nations on the 23rd of September and said, by next year at this time I want to see an independent Palestinian state represented here at the United Nations, a new member. They quote that statement that cushioned the resumption of direct negotiations on the first and second of September referred to a timeframe of one year ending the 2nd of September, 2011. President Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad are building institutions on the ground to create this viability of the Palestinian state that we're talking about, and this plan -- what is famously referred to as the Salam Fayyad Plan -- ends at the end of August.

So, this bottom up approach, if not met with the top down approach, around August/September, will mean that the prospects for peace in the Middle East, the prospects of establishing the Palestinian state, the prospect of a deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians that will result in peace, will be seriously hampered and probably lost for a good number of years.

So, we have work to do. I don't know if we're talking about the commitment, because the commitment is there. I had the privilege of being with His Majesty, the King, here in September when President Obama launched the resumption of negotiations. We were there on the first of September, negotiations were resumed on the second of September.

We also -- Prime Minister Netanyahu in the East Room of the White House, telling the whole world, for the first time as a Likud right wing prime minister, looking at President Abbas and pointing at President Abbas, saying you are my partner for peace.

In the past we would hear things along the line of I am seeking a partner, there is an absence of a partner, where is my partner to be? That time we heard, "You are my partner for peace." Prime Minister Netanyahu said, "I am not here as an interlude between wars, I am here to make history and to make historic decisions." And President Abbas spoke of -- in the same language, that we are here to make historic decisions.

Now, who would have thought, quite honestly -- and I know I'm speaking on the record and -- who would have thought that a process that began on the first and second of September would come to a crashing end at the end of September with so much international support, with so much international backing? And so, I think, the time has come for

serious action.

When we were talking about -- or when the world was talking about the negotiations between the United States and Israel over an extension to the freeze on settlement activity, what we were saying is, let's hope that if this extension is achieved, that in parallel to that there will be some sort of a frontloading of the discussion on borders to that when we come to the 91st day, we're not in the same predicament again over settlement activity and settlement building.

And perhaps the time has come, not just to think about ideas out of the box, but to think of concrete steps for us to meet those deadlines that we have imposed on ourselves and lucky that we did, by the end of this year. I don't think that with the other challenges that we see before us, not just in the Middle East, but beyond, that we can spare any effort in doing that.

So, the long answer to your short question is, time is running out. Time is running out, and the alternatives and the reality on the ground, geography and demography, are working against us.

MR. INDYK: There's some danger -- I wonder how you rate it -- that would this build up to September that you describe so vividly, that if a Palestinian state is not achieved by then, and let's face it, that's eight months off, that there will be great disappointment and that those, like

Hamas and Hezbollah and Iran, who argued that the negotiations are just a façade and that negotiations can't produce anything and violence and terrorism is the only way to liberate Palestine, will be strengthened at that point. So, aren't you in effect by invoking this deadline and placing such emphasis on it, creating a circumstance which could, in the end, backfire on the parties that want peace?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: I am not invoking deadlines, that's why I chose my words very carefully. I said, we have three important dates to look at, and we've had dates in the past, and we've had deadlines in the past. Certainly, I hope that I am clear, I am not setting any deadlines, but there are dates that were discussed, there are timeframes that were agreed upon, and I am saying -- and I repeat what I said -- I am saying that if we go beyond these dates, then we're in trouble simply because, you're absolutely right, the more opportunities we waste, the more the argument flies back at us that, you know, your way doesn't work. And there are alternatives. But I think -- what is our way at the end of the day? Our way is to establish an independent, viable, contiguous Palestinian state that lives side-by-side with a secure Israel in the context of a regional peace. I'm very proud of my way, and I'm very, very proud that this is what we're seeking and let us pool our efforts together so that we achieve our way, and certainly if our argument is lost, it's not just about

which side wins, it's about a people that will be deprived of statehood and dignity and opportunities, and the region that will be deprived of stability.

MR. INDYK: Right. You, I thought, made a strong point in outlining the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative and the contribution that I can make. And the Arab Peace Initiative is very important in terms of declaration of intent that the Arab states will, as you said, end the conflict with Israel once the issue has been resolved between the Israelis and Palestinians and Israel and Syria and so on, but the Arab Peace Initiative does not have a mechanism for implementing it and I wonder whether, given the dismal state of the peace process at the moment, is there a role for the Arab states under the umbrella of the Arab Peace Initiative to somehow take the initiative in a way that might jumpstart the negotiations? Is there a role for the Arab states now?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: The Arab Peace Initiative is a set of guidelines or principles or a vision, if you want, as to what the future looks like and certainly, yes, we have discussed in the past, amongst ourselves and even in terms of brainstorming on how we can operationalize the Arab Peace Initiative. We have an expert on that sitting right here, Dr. (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Would you like to answer the question?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Can I turn it over to you?

SPEAKER: (inaudible)

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: That's right, thanks to you. And, yes, the Arab Peace Initiative can be operationalized, but the Arab Peace Initiative is not about negotiations, it's about, you know, the end result and what will happen, and I think that it's the parties themselves that have to negotiate with the support of the Arabs. And if the negotiations are going well, there are vast opportunities for the Arab Peace Initiative to operationalize itself. And what is the Arab Peace Initiative talking about? Normal relations between 57 Arab and Muslim states and Israel. That's not going to happen before a solution happens and therefore let's head towards the solution and let's get near the solution and let's ensure that the parties cross the finish line this time.

So many times in the past -- and I recognize my good friend (inaudible) -- we spoke last time when we were -- when I was here about what needs to be done here, what needs to be done in the region, what needs to be done on the Palestinian side, on the American side, on the -- the whole world is united.

I've just come back with a visit to Europe with His Majesty and in Europe you have 27 countries, and talking to Lady Ashton, 27 countries that have maintained a very cohesive position in the last 24 months as to what is required, and there are people who are wanting, you

know, more visible contribution from Europe and Europe certainly wants to complement rather than contradict the U.S. role. The U.S. role is a leading role in this context. It can certainly chip in and tell the parties what needs to be done, and again, the crucial words of President Obama and the Administration, as of early 2009, is that the United States is a full partner in this, that this is U.S. national interest. Arab-Israeli peace is U.S. national interest. In fact, President Obama recently raised it one notch and said, "vital U.S. national interest," and so when it is your national interest, then you are a stakeholder, and we in Jordan are a stakeholder. This is not just about supporting a process, this is being part of the process. And when it comes to final status issues -- borders, refugees, Jerusalem, water, security -- we are stakeholders. Every one of these issues affects Jordan and affects Jordan's national interests, so we are all in this together.

MR. INDYK: What should the U.S. do at this point?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: I think we all have to think out of the box and I think to perhaps do away with approaches that have not produced results, approaches that have failed, and just bear in mind that the end of 2011 is a time that was agreed upon by everybody, last year, for the Palestinian state to take shape and for comprehensive peace to start looking like it is happening.

So, I think that a set of ideas from the United States is required. I mean, last year we were talking about a plan. This year we're talking about a blueprint. At the end of the day -- at the end of the day, Martin, and I'm talking to such a distinguished audience -- it is not the United States that will bring about peace, it is not the Arab states, it is all of us together. It is the negotiating partners themselves who will reach a conclusion. The United States can present ideas. Jordan and Egypt are supporting this process and present their own ideas, the context of the Arab Peace Initiative Committee, in the context of the Arab Foreign Ministers, Europe -- everybody's presenting ideas. At the end of the day it's the parties themselves that will get to an agreement and we all have to support whatever they arrive at.

MR. INDYK: This morning there's a furor going on across the Arab world because of these leaked cables, over 1,000 -- not cables, excuse me -- transcripts of conversations --

SPEAKER: You're one track minded, you're thinking WikiLeaks.

MR. INDYK: That's right. These leaks are about transcripts of negotiations that took place between the Palestinians and the Israeli officials in 2008. And the charges that are going around this morning is that, you know, somehow the Palestinians gave away, made huge

concessions, and got nothing for it.

What's your perspective on these documents? How should we -- give us a context for how to understand what these documents show.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Ambassador of Palestine, would you like to -- Palestinian representative?

First of all, I mean, I really -- I don't usually volunteer answers to issues that I'm not totally aware of because there are still -- there's still information that's coming out, so, I mean, I want to look at the whole picture before I'll answer.

But I'll answer in general and say, if I understood correctly, a lot of these documents were internal Palestinian discussions rather than Palestinian-Israeli discussions, but be that as it may, they certainly did not produce an agreement.

The parameters that we look at as a launching pad for a possible agreement in the future are well know -- international legitimacy, United Nations Security Council resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative. At the end of the day, what we are seeking -- our position in Jordan is an independent, viable, Palestinian state on 67 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital. That does not change. And I know that this is the position of President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority, which we support.

So, I don't want to pass judgment or comment on these leaks. These are leaks, WikiLeaks were leaks, in the past we were talking about the details of the negotiations between Arafat and Barak. You certainly are aware of a lot on this. We were talking about the details of -- the leaked details of negotiation between Olmert and Abbas in 2008. None of this has produced agreements, whether they were good discussions or bad discussions, whatever way you want to describe them, at the end of the day the discussions that we are now concentrated on are discussions that should end in the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, security for Israel, and we in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, have a stake in all these final status issues and we have a historic Hashemite role in the Holy City and in preserving and maintaining the holy sites in Jerusalem.

So, our position does not change on that at all.

MR. INDYK: Tunisia there's a revolution going on there it seems. The President has left the country. What's your view of this from a Jordanian perspective? What's happening here? How should we understand the potential impact in the Arab world of this dramatic development?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: That's quite a landmine of a question. From a Jordanian perspective I think our position -- our formal,

official position -- was very clear. This is the choice of the Tunisian people. And we want Tunis to -- Tunisia, in Arabic we say Tunis -- to enjoy political stability and calm and order in the future. It's a very important Arab country. And, again, this is the will and the choice of the Tunisian people.

Now, there's a lot of reporting on rippling effect or similar scenarios, I think from our perspective in the Arab world, we, in Jordan, think that there's serious economic hardships, not just in the Arab world, but around the world. This is a global reality, not just a regional reality. In Jordan we have economic hardships, in Egypt they have economic hardships, in morocco, everywhere.

MR. INDYK: How about the United States?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: In the United States they have economic hardships. In England, the UK, they have economic hardships, and I think that expression -- public expression -- is important in that regard. I mean, we've seen that, but at the end of the day I think each country has a certain set of givens and specifics and I think generalizing and applying models and scenarios across the board is futile.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Let's go to the audience. I'd ask you please to wait for the microphone after I've called on you, to identify yourself so the prime minister knows who you are, and to ask a question

rather than make a statement.

Barbara please.

MS. SLAVIN: Barbara Slavin from the Atlantic Council. Mr. Minister, very nice to see you here.

It was your King who spoke of a Shia crescent back in 2003 when the U.S. overthrew Saddam Hussein. Now we hear rhetoric about a so-called northern alliance of Iran and Syria and Hezbollah and Hamas. How do you see Iran's role in the region now? Are you very concerned that it has become even stronger or do you see aspects in which Iran has weakened? Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Ma'am, we've had recent contacts with the Iranians and our position remains the same. Our foreign policy in Jordan, historically, is based on the cornerstone principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and this is something that is applied by us since contemporary Jordan was founded in 1921. We do not interfere in the internal affairs of others and we expect that others will not interfere in our internal affairs and our call is always for the Middle East, the Arab world, to sort its own problems out. By not being able to sort our problems out we are inviting others to interfere and my discussions with the former Iranian Foreign Minister, I saw him for half an hour in Bahrain recently, and, you know, we are very clear. What we say

in private is what we say in public and visa versa, and very, very clear.

We are seeking a peaceful settlement, a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict -- the Arab-Israeli conflict, in its comprehensive sense, at the core of which is the Palestinian. Our efforts, something that we are very proud of that will result hopefully in the establishment of an independent Palestinian state where Palestinian dreams of statehood become a reality, where East Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine, where Syrian occupied territory goes back to Syria, where what's left of Lebanese occupied territory goes back to Lebanon. I can't see anybody, from within the region or outside the region, who cannot be happy about this.

So, we can -- I mean, I avoid, again, descriptions and northern alliance or whatever it is. At the end of the day -- at the end of the day, it is our position in Jordan that the Arab-Israeli conflict is the root cause of many other problems around the world and resolving that conflict is what will bring about peace and security and stability for the region and enhance the region's ability to deal with its own problems on its own.

MR. INDYK: Oda Abadin.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Always a pleasure to see Oda smiling.

MR. ABADIN: Welcome to Washington.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Thank you, sir.

MR. ABADIN: As Martin has indicated, you were very persuasive in your outlining the benefits for peace and you also talked about the dates that are coming up in September. But there is one more important date and that is the holy season of American presidential politics which begins --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: That's why I said, beyond that.

MR. ABADIN: -- which begins in October, so we have nine months. And historically speaking, without the engagement of the U.S. President -- without the active engagement of the U.S. President, peace between Egypt and Israel would not have come into fruition.

So, my question to you, what concrete steps should President Obama take? And what --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: What countries? Sorry?

MR. ABADIN: What concrete steps? And what's the advice of Jordan to President Obama to take advantage of this narrow window?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Thank you for the question. His Majesty and Jordan always say that we should steer clear of public diplomacy or diplomacy across the airwaves, so if we have modest advice for President Obama, I'm not going to give it to him on television and there

is regular contact between the U.S. Administration and us at His Majesty's level, at our level, and our views are well known, but I think I alluded to that earlier by saying that the time has come for not just thinking out of the box, but thinking in terms of the concrete steps that you referred to. And you are right, I'm in Washington, so I can't be too undiplomatic when it comes to domestic U.S. politics, and that's why I said we have three dates beyond which -- beyond which we are in trouble because we might lose the focus due to realities here domestically, and we will have regional dynamics that are pulling in different directions and could, you know, take us to more sinister scenarios.

So, there are steps that are needed. We know what doesn't work thus far, and perhaps we should start looking at what does work or what has the potential to work.

MR. INDYK: Well, in terms of what works and what doesn't work, just to follow up on this, there are some in this town who have been arguing for some time that the thing to do is for the President to put down a plan, detailed parameters for what the solution should look like, and essentially present it to the parties, have the international community back it, and impose it on them, force -- the two sides, because it will involve difficult compromises by both, to accept this. Do you have a view on whether that would work?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: I remember 2009 with a very clear early engagement of President Obama, and you're an old hand at this, no reflection on your age, but --

MR. INDYK: Thanks.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: We usually have this kind of immediate engagement sort of later on in the game, but this time around when President Obama took office, he engaged from the first day, the next morning, phone calls to regional leaders and the appointment of Senator Mitchell and the deployment of Mitchell immediately to the region and everybody was encouraged, and it's been two years and there's a lot of skeptics and pessimists out there and there is a lot of reason for people to be skeptical and pessimistic.

I always say that the definition of a pessimist is a well-informed optimist, and we are all well-informed but we don't want to be pessimistic, and let's, again, stay away from descriptive -- descriptions and adjectives.

President Sarkozy spoke of imposing a solution. There are a lot of people who say, you know, just present them with a set of ideas and tell them, you know, this is it, take it or leave it. At the end of the day, Martin, if the parties don't want to sign an agreement or the parties are not happy about the parameters that they're going to negotiations under, it's

not going to happen. At the end of the day we can help them by ensuring that we are shepherding the process in a strong and committed and willful way and as His Majesty says, you will never find the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict that leaves everybody equally happy. You are not going to do that. What you are seeking is a solution that will leave everybody equally unhappy, because sacrifices have to be made, compromises have to be made, but the courage and boldness that is needed to arrive at peace is what's required at this stage.

MR. INDYK: So, let's look at the other option that people in this town advocate for the United States which is to basically adopt the old --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Perhaps -- I mean, I'll just finish off by saying, instead of imposing a solution, you can impose the need for a solution.

MR. INDYK: Okay, so there are others who would argue the opposite of that and say, no, it's much better for the United States, at this point, to walk away and let the parties stew in their own juices, that we can't want it more than they want it. And so the best thing for the United States to do is to kind of step back, or in terms of Baker's famous words, you know, "Here's the White House phone number. Give us a call when you're serious." What do you think about that option?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Does that fall in line with a very clear position from the United States that this is vital U.S. national interest?

MR. INDYK: No. I think there was a question here.

MR. TERRET: Thank you very much, Dear Foreign Minister Judeh. Welcome to Washington. John Terret from Al Jazeera Television.

As you know we've been broadcasting over the last couple of days a series of revelations --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Oh, I missed that. Really?
(Laughter)

MR. TERRET: -- just to repeat from today --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: It hit me when I landed.

MR. TERRET: Just to repeat from today the main point seems to be that we see what appears to be a weak and desperate Palestinian leadership cow toying a lot to the Israelis, preparing to give large chunks of East Jerusalem and the West Bank to the Israelis, and also being creative over the Temple Mound.

Now, today, Abu Mazen has been defending himself and the Palestinian authority --

MR. INDYK: That's Al Jazeera's editorializing --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Yes.

MR. INDYK: -- on the substance of these things. Right?

MR. TERRET: Well, today --

MR. INDYK: Just to be clear, that's your editorializing of it.

MR. TERRET: Well, today --

MR. INDYK: Not the actual fact.

MR. TERRET: Mahmoud Abbas defending himself

vigorously, saying that all this --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Who is defending himself?

Sorry?

MR. TERRET: Mahmoud Abbas, defending himself and the PA vigorously, saying that all this is designed to discredit the Palestinian Authority, and he said that at all times throughout all of this process, we have kept our friends fully informed about what's going on.

Now, have you learned anything in what I've just said that you didn't already know? Have they been keeping you fully informed?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: We are always fully informed. I'm not so sure that we're fully informed about the editorial line that you're talking. Our position is clear, and I think I've stated it very clearly and I'll repeat it again, the independent, viable, territorially contiguous Palestinian state has to be established on -- according to the lines of '67, June 4, '67, and with East Jerusalem as its capital. If you're

insinuating in any way that we or others were informed about these concessions, as described by Al Jazeera, by the way, because I still have to look at the documents and see what the documents themselves say, then that's not the case at all.

Our position is our position and it remains the same, '67 alliance, independent, viable, territorial, contiguous Palestinian state. Territorial swaps according to what they agree on and, again, I remind if the Jordanian Hashemite role in the Holy City. That's even a very clear paragraph in the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, sir.

MR. TERRET: Martin, may I ask one follow up? It is new and it will be interesting.

MR. INDYK: Quick one, please.

MR. TERRET: The follow up is that today we're learning that Tzipi Livni and her team proposed swapping Israeli-Arab villages for land elsewhere to make Israel larger effectively selling the citizenship of some of these Israeli-Arabs, and the Palestinian leadership, in these negotiations, well aware that most of the refugees will not return, Saeb Erekat talks about telling the Palestinians that they need to know 5 million will never go back. These people are not going home, are they? What do you think about that? Do you have a comment on that?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: I can't comment on

something that is not credible yet. You're talking about, as Martin said, an editorial view of what these documents refer to.

Our position, the Arab Peace Initiative, again, is very clear on the language -- a solution to the refugee problem that is agreed upon according to UN General Assembly Resolution 194. That is our position, which includes the right of return and compensation. I can't speak on behalf of the Palestinians or the Israelis. What Tzipi Livni said, I mean, I think you have to ask her about and what details are in the leaked Palestinian documents, you have to ask the Palestinian side about.

But I am telling you that our position, in talking to the Palestinians, in talking to the Israelis, in talking to everybody, in Jordan, our position is very clear and has never changed. Arab Peace Initiative, international legitimacy, all the Security Council resolutions that are relevant, and an independent Palestinian state on 67 lines with East Jerusalem as its capital and whatever territory swaps they agree upon in a regional peace context, sir.

I'm not going to comment on hypothetical and what Tzipi Livni said or what Saeb said or whatever.

MR. INDYK: You did say though that the Arab Peace Initiative has the word "agreed" --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Agreed upon.

MR. INDYK: -- in it when it comes to the refugee issue.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Yup.

MR. INDYK: And I will simply assert as an editorial that Israel will not agree to 5 million Palestinians becoming citizens of --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Well, the parties have to agree on this.

MR. INDYK: -- of the Jewish state. So, if anybody's shocked at that position on the part of Israel, or that the Palestinians might actually have to accept that that is a reality, then I think that they will have been fooled by the way that Al Jazeera is portraying this rather than understanding -- which I think they do understand after so many years of negotiations what the reality is, which is that some Palestinians will be absorbed into Israel, but the Palestinian solution for the refugee problem will be through the establishment of a Palestinian state rather than doing away with the Jewish state.

Question here.

MR. RAYBURN: Sir, I'm Lieutenant Colonel Joel Rayburn from the National Defense University and I'd ask Foreign Minister if I could ask you a question looking east from Jordan instead of west for a moment. Given that Jordan has hosted large numbers of Iraqi refugees since 2003 and given King Abdullah's longstanding concern about a Shia Crescent,

how do you view Iraq's political prospects and their implications for Jordan, especially in light of such things as the return to the government of the Sadr movement, which has been closely associated with Iran in the past?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: We were the -- I think the first Prime Minister who visited Iraq after the formation of the cabinet and its endorsement of parliament. Ahead of that, Minister Aboul Gheit from Egypt visited and we are extremely optimistic that this government will see Iraq through the challenges of the next phase. We were extremely heartened by the fact that in talking to the Iraqi leadership when we visited them two or three weeks ago, that they are, although, very, very aware of the security needs on the ground and the political challenges that remain, but they are now talking about rebuilding and reconstruction and moving Iraq forward.

So, I think we saw that commitment very, very clearly, and in seeing someone I can't again presume to speak on behalf of Prime Minister al-Maliki or the Iraqi leadership, but all I can say is, we're seeing many references by Iraqis to the fact that they don't like to be thrown in this camp or that camp, that they're not happy with that kind of discourse, so if you do this, you're lumped with the Iranian camp, if you do that, you're lumped with the western camp. They want to do what is good for

Iraq and I think that their policies in the future are going to be Iraqi centric rather than gravitational politics.

So, we were encouraged by what we saw and I think they're heading in the right direction. Yes, we are affected because we have a large number of Iraqis. We don't call them refugees because they don't have refugee status and I don't think they're happy about being referred to as refugees. Their ultimate objective is to go back to Iraq once the security and political and economic situation allows them to, and in Jordan they are not only welcome, but we share with them what little we have, and we do have little, and it has its toll on our infrastructure, on our abilities, which are meager, but all that is in anticipation of their voluntary return to a safe and stable and prosperous Iraq.

MR. INDYK: Let's take one down the back, please. The lady right at the back there? Yes?

MS. ALFA: Thanks, Nadine Alfa, Reuters. Basically just a question about Lebanon and Hezbollah's coalition has just received the 65 votes to get the majority to lead a new government. Habibi has said --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Is that hot off the press?

MR. INDYK: Breaking news.

MS. ALFA: Yes. Yes. Habibi's coalition has said that they will not participate in the new government, they're calling it a coup, and

they're basically calling for a day of anger tomorrow. Your reaction?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: I wish I could tell you what I told the Ambassador in the car on the way over but --

MR. INDYK: Go ahead.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: We are very worried about Lebanon. We certainly -- I mean, in being worried we're hoping that prudence and calm and order and the constitutionality is all a package that represents the order of the day. Lebanon has seen too much violence and too many bad days and just when you think that they're heading in the right direction, something happens and takes them back.

What I want to say is, I'm not aware of the latest details. I mean, I was looking at the facts and figures this morning and there are three scenarios that were being put on the table is either a continuation of the old set up, which will probably bring about another day of anger, and the scenario that you just described and hopefully the day of anger will just be an expressive day of anger and not clashes, because we don't want violence in Lebanon, or a third scenario, where a dark horse candidate comes in. I mean, these were the scenarios that we were reading in the press and in the reports of observers and people who are interested.

So, whatever happens -- whatever happens, it's the constitution and it's Lebanon's sovereignty and continuity that matters to

us. I mean, let's just wait and see. I don't want to preempt anything.

MR. INDYK: Judith Kipper.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Ah, there you are.

MS. KIPPER: Nasser, good to have you here. This little exchange with what Al Jazeera has been producing seems to be an opportunity for the Arab world to tell the truth to the -- to its own people.

Instead of being defensive, as Abu Mazen is and everybody else in the Arab world all know, it's to discredit everybody, it's not true, we'll never give up, blah, blah, blah, blah. Almost everybody in the world except maybe the Arab street, understands very well that concessions have been made, that French Hill and the cities that have emerged in East Jerusalem, are not being given back, that East -- what's left of East Jerusalem is vital to any settlement, there is no settlement without East Jerusalem.

So, wouldn't it be better in the context of really getting toward peace and to disarm the Israeli resistance to accept these concessions, to tell the truth of what has been achieved instead of always referring back to 1948 and U.N. resolution, this and this and this? I don't think there's anybody in the Arab world that believes that 5 million refugees are going back. They're going to go to Palestine if they wish to, and, you know, because this can create another hullabaloo for years to

come that will create impressions among the 60, 70 percent of Arabs that are under the age of 30 who will not be able to accept the concessions when they finally become public.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Thank you, Judy. I mean, this is -- I don't know who you're talking about. I'm sure you have -- but I'm not being defensive at all. I mean, I hope I didn't come across as being defensive. On the contrary, I have very clear positions that I talk about on behalf of Jordan and we're not defensive in any way, and our position, as I stated it, is very clear on the outcome of negotiations.

Now, the details of these negotiations -- now, let me just point one thing out. Jordan, although a main stakeholder, and although the largest host of Palestinian refugees in the world, and although a country that is a stakeholder when it comes to the security arrangements in the future, and a stakeholder when it comes to the water arrangements, and when it comes to the borders, because our borders are with the Israeli state and with the future Palestinian state, so we're a stakeholder, although all of that is true, we do not negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. Everybody knows that, the Palestinians know that. We play a supportive role and at the end of the day we have our rights and we have our opinion, particularly on the matters that involve Jordan and Jordanian interests, and we don't compromise on those whatsoever, and

we don't hide anything from the streets.

I mean, you know, we're -- you know Jordan, I don't need to tell you about Jordan -- she's smiling by the way, in case anybody can't see it -- you know Jordan and I don't need to tell you about Jordan, but we're very, very open and even -- I mean, for example, last Friday and the Friday before that we had marches and demonstrations in Jordan, and perhaps this is a healthy thing. At least, you know, in Jordan we know when demonstrations begin and we know when they end and people are suffering. There are harsh economic realities.

It was interesting, Jordan -- and perhaps I'm digressing, but it's all relevant -- on the same day that Jordanians were protesting high prices, high consumer good prices, high fuel prices, on the same day all of Jordan was celebrating a victory of our football team and chanting slogans in support of His Majesty the King. So, I mean, let's separate economic hardship from political stability which, thank God, we enjoy in Jordan, let's separate freedom of expression, which we have in Jordan, from -- I'm on the record but I'll say it anyway -- from freedom after expression somewhere else.

So, it's -- what we know is what we tell our people and as I said, whether it's on the peace process or anything else, we are extremely confident that at the end of the day -- at the end of the day, the world will

push the parties towards a solution that guarantees realizing the aspirations of the Palestinian people and it's the Palestinians who will decide what their aspirations are and what is good enough for them, and guarantees the security of Israel and its Israel that will decide what is good enough for it in terms of guaranteeing its security. And for the region, and for Jordan in particular, what we want is to see a region that is stable and a conflict that is ended once and for all, not to leave bits and pieces that might fly at us in the future again.

MR. INDYK: Yes, there's a woman here in the middle.

MS. McFARLAND: Thank you. Maria McFarland from Human Rights Watch. I'm pleased to hear you mention --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: I thought I'd get away without Human Rights Watch.

MS. McFARLAND: I was very pleased to hear you talk about the importance of public expression in relation to the events in Tunisia and of course you have had a lot of --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: I didn't say in relation to Tunisia. I spoke about Jordan.

MS. McFARLAND: -- well, in relation to those events and their possible ripple effect in the region, and of course Jordan has had demonstrations recently, and Jordan does have --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: We always have -- historically we've had demonstrations in Jordan.

MS. McFARLAND: -- some restrictions on freedom of speech and on freedom of assembly and on NGOs' operations. Don't you think it's time, perhaps, to increase public freedoms in Jordan as well?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: You didn't hear my last answer? Do you read the Jordanian websites?

MS. McFARLAND: You -- you're very clear that you have in your penal code provisions that limit the freedom of speech that are used against government critics.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Ma'am, seriously, do you read the Jordanian websites. Read what they say about me sometimes. My goodness.

MS. McFARLAND: That may happen, but --

MR. INDYK: Okay, thank you. We've got the question. Why don't you respond?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: We do have freedom of expression in Jordan and I'm not just saying that. I think just go into the -- first of all, this is not about freedom of speech in Jordan, but I'm glad you asked the question. We do have freedom of speech, we have freedom of the press. We're pursuing a very ambitious political and economic reform

program that in the context of global financial hardship and realities, does not come without social cost, and so, you know, we are pursuing it, we're committed, His Majesty's political reform program is unwavering, and the government is implementing that, but you can't deny the economic hardship that the entire world is facing, and when it comes to a country like Jordan where we import 96, 97 percent of our energy sources, and you know that when the price of oil goes up internationally, all our sectors are affected, from the price of bread to the price of fuel.

So, there are hardships, and you mentioned demonstrations and marches in Jordan, Jordanians demonstrate by nature, but they demonstrate in an orderly way. Did you see the demonstrations last Friday with the police handing out water and juice and, you know, in fact some people were joking yesterday when I left in the morning. Somebody told me, look, we're planning to go on a little demonstration next week so we can get sandwiches this time.

It's a healthy thing. It's a healthy thing when demonstrations are against policies, economic policies, or against economic realities, or to express frustration and anger over unemployment, which we do have in Jordan, over higher prices, which we have to given the fact that we import everything. So, people demonstrate and there's interaction and this is freedom of expression, but at the end of the day or political and economic

reform continues, and at the end of the day I'm sure there are lots of things to fix, whether it's items in a penal code or otherwise. But please recognize the good that we have as opposed to some of the things that need fixing, and in every country there are things that need fixing.

MR. INDYK: Let's take the last question from --

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: But the one thing the Jordanians are united on is the political stability and the security that we have in Jordan. That's a blessing and I hope it stays, God bless His Majesty.

MR. INDYK: Sorry. Let's take a last question from Garrett Mitchell here.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Minister Judeh. I'm Garrett Mitchell from The Mitchell Report. And I want to come back to an interesting phrase you used earlier in your remarks which was thinking outside the box. And typically speaking in politics thinking outside the box means you're about to land on the third rail or you're about to end your career -- one's career, I don't refer to you.

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Thank you.

MR. MITCHELL: So, it's an interesting phrase. It seems to me on a gut level it's the way a lot of people feel, but I wonder if we could get some definition. What would be some examples of thinking outside

the box that have some chance of A, getting publically stated or even in diplomatic terms, and B, having some effect on results? So, for example, the United States could stand up tomorrow and say that unless and until the Arabs and the Palestinians reach an agreement, we'll no longer supply foreign aid. The Arab League could stand up and say, well, we originally said, first there's got to be a deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians before there's full recognition, but we're going to reverse the process and do full recognition first in the hope that the Arabs and the -- the Israelis and the Palestinians can reach an agreement.

Are those the kinds of things that think -- thinking outside the box that we should be talking about?

FOREIGN MINISTER JUDEH: Thank you. That's an interesting way to put it. What I meant by -- is it thinking outside the box or out of the box? Outside, I think yours is more correct. What I meant by that is, to learn from the tracks that did not produce results or that have failed, and so in other words, not to go conventional. I realize that what you're saying is much more substantive than what I said, but what I want to say is, we've tried, okay, that approach, and it didn't work and this approach, and it didn't work, and yet another approach that produced, you know, half result, so what I'm saying is, let's try something completely out of the box, in other words, instead of talking about parameters, let's talk

about a blueprint or a plan or a timeline or benchmarks. Let's, for example, put a deadline on a discussion over borders rather than saying, okay, settlement freeze and up for grabs.

We've had too much process and not enough peace. There are distinguished people here, yourself not excluded, who will tell you that we've seen process after process after process after process, some of them produced some results. Let's build on that. Let's take them into -- in context. Some failed completely. Let's ignore them and stop thinking about revisiting them. Some of them actually resulted in war and violence. Forget that. So, thinking out of the box as far as I'm concerned is trying a fresh new approach that will not be open-ended. We cannot have yet another open-ended process in the Middle East peacemaking efforts. That's what I meant.

But your -- the ideas that you presented certainly can come into thinking outside the box.

MR. INDYK: Okay. Unfortunately we're going to have to close it off now. I want to take the opportunity to thank you very much, Nasser, for your engagement here. (Applause)

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