The Middle East:

Administration Condemns Israeli Settlement Construction

Treasury Department Press Release, October 14, 2009[1]

The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) today targeted the senior leadership of the Kongra-Gel, designating as significant foreign narcotics traffickers, Murat Karayilan, the head of the Kongra-Gel, and high-ranking members Ali Riza Altun and Zubayir Aydar. Formally known as the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Kongra-Gel was named by the President as a significant foreign narcotics trafficker under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) on May 30, 2008. The State Department designated the Kongra-Gel as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in 2001 pursuant to Executive Order 13224 and as a Foreign Terrorist Organization in 1997. Pursuant to the Kingpin Act, today's designation freezes any assets the three designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction and prohibits U.S. persons from conducting financial or commercial transactions with these individuals.

"We will continue to aggressively track and expose the Kongra-Gel's financial network to disrupt its trafficking activities," said OFAC Director Adam J. Szubin.

Active in southeastern Turkey and northwestern Iraq, and supported by some of Europe's Kurdish community, the Kongra-Gel was designated as a significant foreign narcotics trafficker for its more than two decades-long participation in drug trafficking. The drug trade is one of the Kongra-Gel's most lucrative criminal activities. Nearly 300 individuals connected to the Kongra-Gel were arrested on drug trafficking charges from the mid-1980s through the early 1990s, more than half of them in Germany. Such activity continues to this day; in 2007 and 2008, Turkish law enforcement seized a number of drug shipments and drug labs that belonged to the Kongra-Gel. The Kongra-Gel has also relied extensively on taxing drug shipments that move through its territory. Kongra-Gel has units on the borders of areas it controls to collect money from drug traffickers and a number of Turkish drug smugglers are reported to have given money to the organization.

Today's designation, supported by the Drug Enforcement Administration, is part of ongoing efforts under the Kingpin Act to apply financial measures against significant foreign narcotics traffickers worldwide. Internationally, more than 500 businesses and individuals associated with 82 drug kingpins have been designated pursuant to the Kingpin Act since June 2000.

Penalties for violations of the Kingpin Act range from civil penalties of up to $1.075 million per violation to more severe criminal penalties. Criminal penalties for corporate officers may include up to 30 years in prison and fines up to $5 million. Criminal fines for corporations may reach $10 million. Other individuals face up to 10 years in prison and fines pursuant to Title 18 of the United States Code for criminal violations of the Kingpin Act.

Excerpts of Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton, October 14, 2009[2]

Secretary Hillary Clinton was interviewed by Kim Ghattas of BBC in Kazan, Russia

Q. Secretary Hillary Clinton, thank you very much for joining us here on the BBC in a rather unusual location, Kazan—

Secretary Clinton. Indeed, Kazan.

Q.—the capital of Tatarstan, the Russian Federation. It's the end of a five-day trip for you, very hectic schedule. And I wanted to start by asking you about your last stop, which was Moscow. Now it does appear as though Russia now does see Iran as a threat, just like you, and we did hear from President Dmitriy Medvedev who said that sanctions were sometimes inevitable.

But you don't seem to be on the same page when it comes to a sustained, continued, public pressure on Iran. We heard yesterday the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov say that counter—that pressure would be counterproductive at this stage. This is not the united front you were looking for.

Secretary Clinton. Well, actually, I think it is, but I believe that the Russians have certainly agreed with us that we have to have a two-track approach—the first track, which we are pursuing, on diplomacy, the P-5+1 meeting in Geneva, the agreements that Iran has made to open

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its previously undisclosed site to international inspections and to ship out its low-enriched uranium for reprocessing outside of Iran. We are in total agreement on all of that. And we are also in agreement that if our diplomatic engagement is not successful, then we have to look at other measures to take, including sanctions, to try to pressure the Iranians.

The Russians believe that they are being more effective working in private, working behind the scenes. They have joined our public statements, the P-5+1 statement, and of course, the action at Geneva. We continue to believe that we do need to keep the public pressure on, but there's no difference in approach or ultimate objective.

Q. So do you feel that Russia's position is closer to yours than ever before on Iran?

Secretary Clinton. I do. I believe that in the last six months, we have seen that. Our two presidents have discussed this on several occasions. I was with President Obama when he met with President Medvedev in New York. In my conversations with Minister Lavrov and our meetings with other interested parties, I think that there has been a tremendous move on the part of the Russians to recognize this threat, because that's where it starts.

And in my conversations, I know that they have done an assessment. They've looked at the same evidence we have seen. And they're looking for the same outcome; they just want to be sure that what we're doing in their view is going to achieve it.

Q. But are they ready to discuss the specific of sanctions—when those sanctions will be needed? Because the next test of Iran's intentions comes very soon; in fact, over the next few weeks. So have you been able to get any specifics from them?

Secretary Clinton. Well, yes. Indeed, if the Iranians do not carry through on their agreement in principle to ship out their low-enriched uranium, the Russians have made it very clear that that will call for action. So I don't want to get ahead of myself and I don't want to answer a hypothetical. I think it's important that we stay together, we keep moving together, and we stay committed to the same goal, which is to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons pile.

Q. Are you at all worried that the Russians are maybe stringing you along? Because they can play nice, they can hold out hope to you that they're going to go along with you on sanctions. But they know that the Chinese will do all the stalling that is needed for them on the sanctions when it comes to action at the Security Council.

Secretary Clinton. I believe that this is a difficult process for both the Chinese and the Russians. Until relatively recently within the last months, I don't think they saw the threat the way that we and others saw it. We've been intensifying our cooperation, our sharing of information, our analysis of what could come more broadly were Iran to be successful.

And so I certainly see the Russians moving. Now, the Russians are more immediately affected. They are on—

Q. And so they're more careful?

Secretary Clinton. I think they are also more careful, but also perhaps more aware of the threats that we see coming from Iran because they're in proximity. China's a long way away. China's relationship with Iran is primarily commercial. But we're continuing to work and share information, and I think the fact that all of our P-5+1 partners have signed off on some very strong statements would not have happened without this kind of effort.

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Q. Do you think that the Iranians bought themselves some time in Geneva when they agreed in principle to, for example, allow the inspectors to enter the Qom site?

Secretary Clinton. I think that they did buy some time, but they also made some commitments. And any wavering from those commitments would be another reason for the international community to speed up its timetable. So this is what diplomacy is. The slow boring of hard boards, I think, is one expression. Well, the Iranians made commitments and they're going to be expected by the Russians and the Chinese to fulfill those commitments.

Q. How do you think that you can convince the Iranian leadership that it is better for them to give up their nuclear ambitions, that they would be safer if they didn't have this nuclear arsenal? Because after all, for the Iranians, it's about power, it's about regional clout, and it's—they do that for the same reason that they have ties with Hezbollah and Hamas. So why would they give that up?

Secretary Clinton. Well, because as you say, their fundamental assumption has to be that pursuing nuclear weapons enhances their power and prestige in the region. But if, by pursuing nuclear weapons, they spark a nuclear arms race, and countries that are opposed to their ambitions and have deep differences with Iran similarly obtain nuclear weapons, then are they safer? And—

Q. They may be more powerful.

Secretary Clinton. Or less powerful. I mean, you are probably more powerful if you are the only one in the group that has a certain asset. But if you are just one of several, and your enemies are as well armed with as great a capacity for destruction and the possibility for mistakes, miscalculations increases geometrically, I don't know that that's the best decision for you to make.

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Q. Very briefly, I'd like to move on to the Middle East. We heard from President Barack Obama last month that he expected you to report back in mid-October on any progress in getting this process off the ground in the Middle East. Do you have any good news for him?

Secretary Clinton. Well, the report is due on Friday, and I think I'll save it for him. But you know, because you know that region so well, this is extremely difficult. And we are determined; that's why we started early. It's not going to get any

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easier if we wait, but we never believed that it would yield to just our constant efforts, that we would have to keep working with the parties. They're the only ones who can make peace between themselves.

Q. Absolutely, and, you know, the parties don't seem to be very willing to take part in this process. We just heard from Hamas—sorry, excuse me, from Fatah leaders, the party of President Mahmoud Abbas, who say they've lost hope in your ability and the ability of the Obama Administration to make this process move forward. So you're now dealing with two reluctant parties.

Secretary Clinton. Well, we can't want it more than the parties, but it has been my belief for many years that the Israelis deserve to have the security that they can count on, and the Palestinians deserve to have a state that can fulfill their aspirations. We stand ready, willing to help, we—to help.

Q. But will you stand back if they don't move forward?

Secretary Clinton. Well, we will assess where we are. And a lot of what is said in public doesn't match what is said in private, and we're aware of that.

White House Press Release, October 20, 2009[3]

We express our deepest regret and strong objection that the Islamic Republic of Iran has sentenced Iranian-American scholar Kian Tajbakhsh to 15 years in prison. Mr. Tajbakhsh poses no threat to Iran or its national security. As an independent and internationally-respected scholar, Mr. Tajbakhsh has dedicated his life to fostering greater understanding between Iran and the international community. He embodies what is possible between our two countries. Our thoughts and prayers are with Kian's family and loved ones on this difficult day.

Further, we are deeply concerned that Mr. Tajbakhsh may have been forced to stand trial in the revolutionary court without the benefit of his own legal counsel. The right to due process is universal and must be respected. The right to a fair and public hearing is embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the right to legal representation is also guaranteed in Iran's own constitution, as well as in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party. We urge Iran to release Mr. Tajbakhsh as soon as possible.

Statement by President Obama, October 23, 2009[4]

President Barack Obama delivered this statement in Washington, DC

President Obama. We remember today the 241 American Marines, soldiers, and sailors who lost their lives twenty-six years ago as the result of a horrific terrorist attack that destroyed the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. The military personnel serving in Beirut were there to bring peace and stability to Lebanon after years of internal strife and conflict. The murder of our soldiers, sailors, and Marines on this day on 1983 remains a senseless tragedy.

We pay tribute on this day to the courage and sacrifice of those whose lives were lost in the Beirut attack, as well as their families and loved ones. We also wish to honor the brave service of all members of the United States military who are protecting Americans and promoting freedom and security around the world, as well as those international peacekeepers who serve in harm's way.

In remembering this terrible day of loss, we are at the same time hopeful that a new government in Lebanon will soon be formed. We look forward to working with a Lebanese government that works actively to promote stability in the region and prosperity for its people.

White House Statement, October 24, 2009[5]

We join the United Kingdom, France, and other concerned international parties in expressing our deep concern regarding the detention of human rights lawyer Haitham Maleh by Syrian security services since Wednesday, October 14. The arrest of 78-year-old Maleh comes as the latest Syrian action in a two-year crackdown on lawyers and civil society activists. We call on the Syrian government to meet its responsibilities under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and to end its practice of arbitrary arrests. Syria should demonstrate its commitment to international legal norms by releasing Maleh and other Syrian citizens who have been imprisoned solely for seeking to exercise their internationally recognized political freedoms.

Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, October 31, 2009[6]

Secretary Hillary Clinton and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu delivered these remarks in Jerusalem, Israel

Prime Minister Netanyahu. It's my pleasure to welcome Secretary of State of the United States Hillary Clinton to Jerusalem. Welcome, Hillary. You are a great friend and a great champion of peace. I think that we owe a vote of thanks to you, to George Mitchell, to your staffs, and of course, to President Obama and the entire Obama Administration for the tireless efforts to re-launch the peace process—the peace process between us and the Palestinians, and between us and the Arab world—following the President's vision of a regional peace.

We are eager to advance on both. We think that the place to resolve outstanding issues and differences of opinion is around a negotiating table. We think we should sit around that negotiating table right away. We're prepared to start peace talks immediately. I think what we should do on the path to peace is to simply get on it and get with it. So I'm sure we'll discuss these things and other things in the spirit of friendship between us and you,

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between Israel and the United States. Welcome to Jerusalem.

Secretary Clinton. Thank you so much, Prime Minister. It is a great personal pleasure for me to be back in Jerusalem and a great honor to be here as Secretary of State once again. And I look forward to our discussion, and I appreciate the very positive words about the need to get back into a negotiation that would be in the best interests of Israel and Israel's security, as well as create a state for the Palestinian people. Both President Obama and I are committed to a comprehensive peace agreement because we do believe that it holds out the best promise for the security and future of Israel, and for the aspirations of the Palestinians.

So I'm looking forward to our discussion tonight. I know you're someone who is indefatigable, so even though we're starting our meeting so late, I have no doubt that it will be intense and cover a lot of ground. And I'm very much eager to begin those discussions.

Q. Madame Secretary, do you think both sides should re-launch the peace process without any preconditions?

Secretary Clinton. I want to see both sides begin as soon as possible in negotiations. We have worked—and of course, Senator Mitchell has worked tirelessly—in setting forth what are the approaches that each side wishes to pursue in order to get into those negotiations, so I'm not going to express my opinion as to whether or not there should be conditions. The important thing, as the prime minister just said, is to get into the negotiations. I gave the same message today when I met with President Abbas.

We know that negotiations often take positions that then have to be worked through once the actual process starts. I think the best way to determine the way forward is, as the prime minister said, get on the path.

Q. Mark Landler, New York Times. Madame Secretary, when you were here in March on the first visit, you issued a strong statement condemning the demolition of housing units in East Jerusalem. Yet, that demolition has continued unabated, and indeed, a few days ago, the mayor of the city of Jerusalem issued a new order for demolition. How would you characterize this policy today? For the prime minister, sir, there's been increasing tension, as you know, around—surrounding the Temple Mount, some civil unrest in the streets. Every time the peace process has lagged, often matters have been settled through violence. Are you worried that we are heading into that phase?

And then a last question, if I may.

Secretary Clinton. That's the New York Times, for you.

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Prime Minister Netanyahu. I'm concerned with the attempts to create provocations around the issue of the Temple Mount. There are parties who are trying to do that. I assure you that the Government of Israel is not one of them. There are also extraordinary falsifications. My staff decided to have a meeting, a free evening, a few weeks ago. They decided to have it in the Old City. In the David City there's a little restaurant there. They said, "Could you come for dessert," because I worked long hours. I said, "Sure, I'll see what I can do. I don't promise, but we'll make the arrangements."

Our security people went there. Within an hour, Palestinian news agencies carried the story that Netanyahu was coming to the Old City to burrow a new tunnel under the Temple Mount. So help me God, this became an issue of great consequence. There were rumors that the violence would break out, exactly as you said. Now, this is entirely false. I give that as one example. There are daily examples of this and daily actions by militants, particularly the militant Islamic radicals who are trying to stir up trouble on the Temple Mount.

We are going to continue our efforts to keep Jerusalem safe, open, quiet, accessible to all three great faiths—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. And the city is now very robust. It's got a lot of tourism, as you see in the entire area. And the best way to see what is happening there is to go for yourself. Go take a look. You'll see. And you'll see our actual policy in place. We want a peaceful Jerusalem without provocations on the Temple Mount or anywhere else.

Q. Madame Secretary, you went to Abu Dhabi, and I believe you came up with not much from Abu Mazen, who is actually presenting Israel and the United States with lots of no's. Also, United States is encountering many no's from Iran. At the moment, it doesn't look like some arrangement is being made at the moment. What is your reaction to what—receiving the no's from the Arab world?

And the same question, please, to Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Secretary Clinton. Well, first of all, I believe that strategic patience is a necessary part of my job, and I view the conversations that we had this morning with President Abbas and his team as being very constructive and useful in continuing the move toward engagement that leads to negotiations. So if Senator Mitchell and I appear to be patient and persistent, it's because we are. We think it's worth being both.

With respect to Iran, there is not yet a final decision with respect to the Tehran research reactor. The important matter that I would underscore is the unity among the P-5+1, which includes not only the United States but the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, China, and also the EU, in putting forth and in staying firm with this. The world is united in a view that Iran should not have or acquire nuclear weapons capacity. And our view is that we are willing to work toward creative outcomes like shipping out the low-enriched uranium to be reprocessed outside of Iran. But we're not going to wait forever. Patience does have, finally, its limits. And it is time for Iran to fulfill its obligations and responsibilities to the international community, and accepting this deal would be a good beginning.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. You asked two questions, one on Iran and the other on the peace process. On Iran, I want to express our appreciation for the very clear stance adopted by President Obama that has united, as Secretary Clinton has just said, an international consensus that Iran must cease its efforts to become a nuclear military power. I think the fact that there has been unity that has not been seen for a

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long time on this position is something very valuable, very important. And I think it's important not only for Israel, I think it's important for the Middle East, for our region, for the peace of the world. So I want to commend the efforts of you and President Obama and the Western and other leaders have taken here to—on this issue that I think is central to the future of the world, to the future of peace.

As far as the question about the peace process is concerned, look, first let me, before you talk about the no's, talk about the yes. And I want to put rhetoric aside and talk about facts. It's a fact that since my government took office, we dismantled hundreds of earth blocks, checkpoints, facilitated movement in the Allenby Bridge, and eliminated a lot of bureaucratic hurdles to daily life and economic activity in the Palestinian Authority's areas. And as a result, there's been a Palestinian economic boom. That is a fact.

The second fact is that I gave a speech at Bar Ilan University in which I said that Israel will accept the vision of two states for two peoples, a demilitarized Palestinian state that recognizes the Jewish state of Israel. It wasn't easy to do, but we did it. That is a fact.

The third fact is that we've been talking earnestly, openly, and transparently to the American Administration, and we've talked about measures that we can take to facilitate further the launching—the relaunching of the peace process. That is a fact.

The simple fact is this: We are willing to engage in peace talks immediately without preconditions. The other fact is that, unfortunately, the other side is not. It is asking and piling on preconditions that it never put on in the 16 years that we've had that the peace process since the annunciation of the Oslo Accords. There have not been these preconditions. It's a change of Palestinian policy, and I hope they change back to the right thing, which is to get into the negotiating tent. We're eager and sincere in our desire to reach an agreement to end this conflict. I happen to think that we're able to do this, contrary to all the pessimists around us. But the only way we can get to an agreement is to begin negotiating, and that is something that we are prepared to do. That is a fact.

Moderator. Finally, Joe Klein from Time Magazine. Yes.

Q. I'm tempted to ask why is this night different from all other nights—

Secretary Clinton. Do you want us to burst into song?

Q. Yes. For 40 years, we've seen American secretaries of state and Israeli prime ministers in a similar situation. Despite the prime minister's optimism, the talks are stalled. The prospect of talks is stalled. And while you've said yes without preconditions to talks, so many of your—you've said no to a settlement freeze. And I wonder whether that would be open to negotiation.

And Madame Secretary, is the Obama Administration still in favor of a total freeze? And if not, what's Plan B?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Joe, the specific question you asked about the settlements also has to be fully factual. The fact of the matter is that we—I said we would not build new settlements, not expropriate land for addition for the existing settlements, and that we were prepared to adopt a policy of restraint on the existing settlements, but also one that would still enable normal life for the residents who are living there.

Now, there has not been in the last 16 years—not 40 years but 16 years, since the beginning of the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians—any demand every put not on restraint, but on any limitation on settlement activity as a precondition for entering negotiations. This is a new thing. Now, it's true that you can take a new thing and you can repeat it ad nauseum for a few weeks and a few months, and it becomes something that is obvious and has been there all the time. It's not been there all the time.

Q. It was there in the first Bush Administration, right?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. No, there has not been a precondition for entering or continuing with the peace process between us and the Palestinians. There's not been a demand coming from the Palestinians that said we will not negotiate with you unless you freeze all activity—something that is problematic in so many ways, judicial and in other ways. I won't get into that. But this is a new demand. It's a change of policy, the Palestinian policy. And it doesn't do much for peace. It doesn't work to advance negotiations. It actually—this uses a pretext, or at least does something as an obstacle that prevents the reestablishment of negotiations.

Now, mind you, the issue of settlements, the issue of territories, the issue of borders—these will be engaged in the negotiations, and they'll have to be resolved for a peace agreement to be achieved. But you can't resolve it in advance of the negotiations, and you certainly shouldn't pile it on as a precondition.

Secretary Clinton. Well, I would add just for context that what the prime minister is saying is historically accurate. There has never been a precondition. It's always been an issue within the negotiations. What the prime minister has offered in specifics of a restraint on the policy of settlements, which he has just described—no new starts, for example—is unprecedented in the context of the prior two negotiations. It's also the fact that for 40 years, presidents of both parties have questioned the legitimacy of settlements.

But I think that where we are right now is to try to get into the negotiations. The prime minister will be able to present his government's proposal about what they are doing regarding settlements, which I think when fully explained will be seen as being not only unprecedented but in response to many of the concerns that have been expressed. There are always demands made in any negotiation that are not going to be fully realized. I mean, negotiation, by its very definition, is a process of trying to meet the other's needs while protecting your core interests. And on settlements, there's never been a precondition, there's never been such an offer from any Israeli government. And we hope that we'll be able to move in to the negotiations where all the issues that President Obama mentioned in his speech at the United Nations will be on the table for the parties to begin to resolve.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Thank you very much.

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Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton, November 2, 2009[7]

Secretary Hillary Clinton delivered these remarks in Marrakech, Morocco

Secretary Clinton. For 40 years, successive American administrations of both parties have opposed Israel's settlement policy. That is absolutely a fact.

And the Obama Administration's position on settlements is clear, unequivocal. It has not changed. And as the President has said on many occasions, the United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. Now, the Israelis have responded to the call from the United States, the Palestinians and the Arab world to stop settlement activity by expressing a willingness to restrain settlement activity. They will build no new settlements, expropriate no land, allow no new construction or approvals.

And let me just say this offer falls far short of what we would characterize as our position, or what our preference would be. But if it is acted upon, it will be an unprecedented restriction on settlements and would have a significant and meaningful effect on restraining their growth.

Let me take a step back because I want to put this into the broader context. I will offer positive reinforcement to the parties when I believe they are taking steps that support the objective of reaching a two-state solution.

I will also push them as I have in public and in private to do even more. And in my report to the President last month, I talked about Israeli willingness to restrain settlement activity as a positive step.

In the same report, I praised President Abbas' leadership of the Palestinian Authority for their courage and the security measures on the West Bank. The steps being taken under President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayed are also unprecedented and we have never seen such effective security. I have on many occasions going back—as you know in Sharm El Sheikh—praised the accomplishments that the Palestinian Authority has demonstrated in building, training, and reforming their security forces.

I told Prime Minister Netanyahu that these positive steps on the part of the Palestinians should be met by positive steps from Israel—movement and access, operations by the IDF and on Israeli security arrangements on the West Bank. Israel has done a few things in that regard but they need to do much more. And President Abbas has shown leadership and determination on this issue and Israel should reciprocate.

I just want to clarify that what we are trying to achieve is a two-state solution with a state that represents the aspirations of the Palestinian people—the sovereignty and to have control over their own future, and provide the security guarantees to Israel for their own future. That is my goal. And when either party takes any steps that looks like it moves us in the right direction—even if it is not what I would like or what I would prefer—I'm going to positively reinforce that.

This is an opportunity for both sides to try to move forward together, to get into negotiations, and to realize the goal that many of us around this table have supported and worked for for many years.

Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton, November 3, 2009[8]

Secretary Hillary Clinton was interviewed in Marakech, Morocco by Michel Ghandour of Al Hurra Television

Q. Madame Secretary, first, thank you for your time. You have met yesterday with Arab foreign ministers. Were you able to convince them to take some gestures toward Israel?

Secretary Clinton. Well, we had a very constructive meeting yesterday. I have pledged to consult with my counterparts, and I try to keep them informed as to what we are doing. I think there was an opportunity at our meeting to explain better how we saw the current situation with respect to the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. I was able to clearly answer questions about what is the Israeli offer on no new settlement activity. And we talked about how important it was for President Abbas to continue his leadership and his commitment to the two-state solution—something that he had first stated back in 1972. So we had a very broad-ranging discussion.

But ultimately, I asked for their continuing support for the process, and I asked them to look for ways that they can demonstrate that support both to the Palestinians and to the Israelis.

Q. In the Arab world, they are saying that the U.S. Administration started by criticizing Israel and asking it to—for a settlement freeze, and ended by praising Prime Minister Netanyahu after he denied the American calls. What can you answer?

Secretary Clinton. Well, first of all, I think President Obama has demonstrated his commitment and sincerity in pursuing a comprehensive peace that includes a two-state solution.

Secondly, both I and Senator Mitchell, our special envoy, have worked constantly since President Obama became our president to reach out not only to the Israelis and the Palestinians, but to the larger region and the world, about everyone working toward this goal.

Thirdly, I believe it's important to recognize the positive steps that either side takes. That's why I have been very strongly in favor of what the Palestinians have done on security. And I have done that publicly and privately, not only with them, of course, but with the Israelis and the Arab nations. Because when people do things which advance the cause of a two-state solution, they should be recognized.

Now, when we called under President Obama's leadership for an end to settlement activity, it was a restatement of American policy and a recommitment to the Obama Administration's very strong conviction that settlement activity is not legitimate. The President said that in New York.

What the Israeli Government has offered would end all settlement activity that would be going forward. It would end permits, it would end approvals, it would end expropriation of land. It is not at all everything we would want, but for that government to do anything is unprecedented.

So I think that the foreign ministers from Arab nations understood. I showed

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them how it would work. Now, it is not what anybody would want, but when you negotiate, very often you start off with the maximum position but you try to figure out where you can realistically end up.

What I want is a discussion between the parties on the final status issues—the '67 borders, the refugees, Jerusalem, everything that needs to be resolved. Anything which moves us toward the resumption of negotiations and closer to our goal of a two-state solution, I am going to say is a positive development.

Q. Do you expect resuming negotiations in the near future?

Secretary Clinton. Well, we are pushing very hard for such a resumption to occur. But as I have also said, I'm a very patient and persistent person. I know how difficult this is for everyone. And yet I believe it is so much in the interests of both the Palestinians and the Israelis that I am very hopeful we're going to see that resumption occur.

Q. Last question on the peace process side. Saeb Erekat has said if America cannot get Israel to implement a settlement freeze, what chance do Palestinians have of reaching agreement with Israel on permanent status issues? Can you give the Palestinians and the Arab states guarantees regarding these issues?

Secretary Clinton. There have been numerous peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. I know very well what happened in the 1990s with my husband and Yasser Arafat, how close everyone got. And there was no demand or expectation that settlements would be dealt with before the entire negotiation. After my husband's administration, I know what Prime Minister Sharon and Prime Minister Olmert were talking about with President Abbas and his negotiating team, and there was no demand about settlements. Everyone believed that when the borders of a new state were set, the settlement issue would take care of itself.

So President Obama has gotten more before negotiations ever started out of Israel than anybody has ever gotten, more than was ever asked for before. So I think everyone should take a deep breath and say, look, what is our goal here? Is our goal to end a few hundred settlements or a few thousand more units? Or is our goal a Palestinian state? And I think if we keep that in mind, we've actually made some progress along that way, even though not everybody is satisfied with it. But nevertheless, do we want to say, oh, well, that's not good enough?

Michel, if there had been a final agreement at Camp David, there would have been no more settlements. The capital of a new state would have been in East Jerusalem. And we were so close, but we didn't achieve it. So now we are here talking about what we talked about 10 years ago. I want to end the talk. I want to see Israel have the security it needs. I want to see the Palestinian people have the state they deserve.

Q. On Iran, Iran has expressed its readiness for a third meeting with the P5+1 in Geneva to discuss how—or to buy uranium from the international community. Are you ready, first, to attend this meeting, the third meeting with Iran, and to sell Iran uranium?

Secretary Clinton. Well, the P5+1, which are the group of nations negotiating with Iran, have said that they were willing for another meeting. I am sure that the United States will attend. We are waiting for an answer to the offer that was made by the United States and Russia and China and France and the United Kingdom and Germany and the European Union. We believe Iran should accept the offer that was made, and we are hoping that it does so.

Q. On Lebanon, the Lebanese leaders have been trying to form a new government since six or seven months, and they failed. Some leaders are blaming Iran and Syria. How do you view the situation in Lebanon?

Secretary Clinton. Well, the situation in Lebanon is distressing, and I think it's time for the people and leadership of Lebanon to stand up for Lebanon, not to stand up for any foreign influence or any other outside concern. And they should put personal interests or personal ambition behind the interests of the entire nation and form a government that represents the full diversity of Lebanon so that decisions can be made that will improve the future for Lebanon.

Q. Last question, Madame Secretary, on Syria. After months of engagement with Syria, how do you assess the dialogue with Damascus? Are you planning to visit Syria in the near future?

Secretary Clinton. I have no plans to visit Syria in the near future, but I do want to see changes in Syrian behavior and actions. We have, as you know, engaged in diplomacy with Syria on a number of issues. But the jury is out as to how Syria intends to respond. We are hoping for a positive response, and we will continue to try to achieve that. But it can't be just talk. There has to be action as well.

Q. Thank you, Madame Secretary.

Secretary Clinton. Thank you very much.

Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton, November 3, 2009[9]

Secretary Hillary Clinton was interviewed in Marrakech, Morocco by Abderrahim Foukara of Al Jazeera Television

Q. Madame Secretary, welcome to Al Jazeera in Marrakech. A lot has been said about the change that a lot of people think has taken place in the U.S. position on the issue of settlements. Today, the Arab press is saying that yet again your position has changed during your meetings in Marrakech. I want to hear in your own words what the U.S. position on the settlement issue is, please.

Secretary Clinton. Well, thank you not only for the question but for the opportunity to talk with you here on Al Jazeera in Marrakech. And let me start from the position of the United States Government and the Obama Administration. As President Obama said in his very important speech at the United Nations General

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Assembly, the United States believes that settlements are not legitimate. That has been the policy of our government for 40 years. That is the policy of President Obama today and going forward.

We believe that all settlement activity should cease. It should not be pursued because it could prejudice the final outcome of negotiations to achieve a two-state solution. And I think as you know, President Obama clearly said he wanted to see an end to settlement activity. Now, that had never been requested prior to any negotiation entered into by any representative of either the Palestinians or the Israelis, so it was a new element that was introduced by President Obama. And of course, the immediate reaction was from the Palestinians and many in the Arab world, great, we would love to see that. And the immediate reaction from the Israelis is never, no, we're not going to do that.

Now, in a negotiation, you stake out positions and then you work very hard, because let's remember what the ultimate objective is. It is the two-state answer to the suffering of the Palestinian people, to the security needs of the Israeli people. So when this government in Israel came forward and said we've already permitted a certain number of units of housing to go forward, we can't legally undo that, but we will put an end to all new settlement activity, no new permits, no new approvals, no expropriation in the West Bank, I said, and believe it today as I believed it yesterday, that was a positive step, just as when the Palestinians took real risks and put in place a very effective security force. I said that was a positive step. And it is not what we would want. It is nowhere near enough. But I think when you keep your eye on what we want to achieve, it is a better place to be than the alternative, which is unrestrained.

And therefore I think we should be trying to keep moving the parties to relaunch negotiation. Just as in the past, settlement activity will be solved when the borders of a new state are determined. That should be our real objective, and that's what we're working toward.

Q. When President Obama first started talking about the issue of settlements, he was understood to be saying that he wanted a halt to settlements, period. That's the way a lot of people in the Arab and Muslim world understood it. Are you saying that the Arabs misunderstood, or are you saying that President Obama did not explain his position as clearly as he could have done?

Secretary Clinton. Well, I think President Obama was absolutely clear; he wanted a halt to all settlement activity. And perhaps those of us who work with him and for him could have been clearer in communicating that that is his policy, that is what we are committed to doing, and it is what we hope to see when there is eventually a Palestinian state, and obviously, there will be no settlement activity.

But I think it's important to recognize that in a negotiation, you oftentimes don't get everything you want. That doesn't mean you change your objective. It means that you keep working to achieve it. And the alternative to stopping all new settlement construction is that it continues, that there is no halting, it continues on. And we, the United States, does not want to see that, and I know that the Palestinian people don't want to see a set of construction activity that will further prejudge or prejudice the outcome.

So we believe that halting new construction is a positive step on the way to the two-state solution. And I have to say I feel very personally committed to this. I was the first American associated with any administration to call for the establishment of a Palestinian state. And when I first did it more than 10 years ago, a lot of people thought that was very radical. Now there is consensus we must get to a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel.

And I, of course, can't help but reflect back that when my husband was working so hard on the Camp David accords, it got very close. If it had gotten to an agreement, we would not be sitting here talking about settlement activity because there would be a Palestinian state, it would have a capital in East Jerusalem, it would be working to further the aspirations of the Palestinian people, there would be shared supervision and protection of the holy sites—I mean, everything that was part of the Camp David negotiations. I want to see President Obama achieve this goal of a two-state final resolution for the benefit of the Israeli people and their security, and for the benefit of the Palestinian people.

Q. When Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu met President Barack Obama at the White House a few months ago, after their meeting President Barack Obama clearly said that he wanted the focus to be on the Palestinian issue. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu at that time said that the focus should be on Iran. There are people now in the Arab world saying that there was a quid pro quo, if you will, whereby Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu accepted to sort of step back on the issue of Iran if President Obama could change his position on the issue of settlements. Any truth to that?

Secretary Clinton. Well, first let me say that President Obama has not changed his position on the settlements. And I want to say that over and over again because I do not want any of your viewers to misunderstand. President Obama believes that settlements are not legitimate. He would like to see an end to the settlements. What is the best way to end all settlements forever? It is a Palestinian state where the borders are clear and delineated.

And with respect to the offer that the Israeli Government has made, no one has to accept it. I mean, the fact is that this offer was made to put an end to new settlement activity. If people don't want it, then settlement activity continues. I come from a school of thought which says the perfect cannot be the enemy of the good, that we can be paralyzed if we just say we can't get everything we want the first time out so we will do nothing. I think that's what happened in 2000. That's what my personal belief is.

So I think that to reiterate, President Obama and I and the Obama Administration, the United States Government, has not changed its position at all. But we are trying to get into a negotiation where the issue will finally be put to rest, because there will be a Palestinian state in control of its own territory.

Now, with respect to Iran, I think that it's important to add that several events have transpired, one being the agreement of Iran to come and meet with the countries that are members of the P5+1—the United States, China, Russia, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the

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European Union. The agreement by Iran to accept in principle the proposal put forth by Russia, the United States, and France for Iran to ship out its low-enriched uranium to be reprocessed outside and then to be sent back to fuel its research reactor which does work in medical, cancer and other work.

I think it's also important to recognize that the Iranians had a secret facility disclosed to the world, something which I know concerned many of the viewers of Al Jazeera when the Iranians had concealed their facility at Qom for years. So that also changed the dynamic, and now there are inspectors at that facility.

So I think the world—not just one country, but the world—wants to see what Iran does going forward. Will they agree to ship out their low-enriched uranium? Will they agree to the kind of inspections that are expected under international law? Will they agree to absolutely decide for the world to see that they are not pursuing nuclear weapons? So everyone's waiting. We're all trying to get to the point where Iran lives up to the responsibilities that it has already been asked to by the international community.

Q. Madame Secretary, if you'll allow me before I ask you a follow-up question to the issue of Iran, just quickly, you met Arab foreign ministers here in Marrakech. You explained to them the intricacies, if you will, of the U.S. position on the issue of settlements. Did you gain any traction in terms of narrowing the gap, if you will, between your position and any positions they may have regarding the issue of settlements as you articulated it?

Secretary Clinton. Well, we have the same position on settlements. The United States wants to see an end to settlements, and obviously the Arab foreign ministers want to see an end to settlements. The big gap in the proposal that was put forth by the Israelis is that it doesn't include Jerusalem. That's totally unacceptable. Everybody knows that. And we discussed how you narrow that gap.

But the overwhelming message that I received from my counterparts was that we have to get into negotiations, that we have to bring the parties to the table. So they are working to persuade President Abbas and the Palestinians. We are working to persuade both Israelis and Palestinians. Because what is the ultimate answer? What is the goal we are seeking? It is a two-state solution. And we know that has to include borders, refugees, Jerusalem, the issues that are deeply emotional for everyone. But we can't talk about those and we can't even try to make progress toward that achievement of a two-state solution if people are not negotiating. So that is the overall message is let's get this—let's quit talking about talking, and let's start talking about the content of the negotiations and all of the final status issues that have to be resolved.

Q. Madame Secretary, on the issue of the Iranian nuclear program, there's, as you know, a sense in the Arab world that the United States would have less of a hard time with the issue of Middle East peace if it had been as forceful with the Israelis over their nuclear weapons as it is forceful with the Iranians over theirs. What do you say to that?

Secretary Clinton. Well, what I hear from so many people in the Arab world is a great concern about Iran having nuclear weapons. That is the paramount concern as I travel the region, as people meet with me, over and over again. Everyone in the region worries about the destabilizing effect of Iran getting nuclear weapons, about the impact that would have on the other nations. That's what people talk to me about. And that is, in part, what really motivates President Obama to put the pressure on Iran. Iran has already been the subject of numerous Security Council resolutions. Iran signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty but has violated it. Iran has concealed its ambitions. It has engaged in behavior that causes a great deal of worry and anxiety among its neighbors. So I think that it is fair to say that what most people in the Arab world and in the larger Middle East region talk to me about is the Iranian threat that nuclear weapons would pose.

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Q. Madame Secretary, there's a special relationship between some countries of the Maghreb and the United States. The situation in the Maghreb is plagued by the issue of Western Sahara. How does the Obama Administration view the prospects, future prospects of relations within the Maghreb?

Secretary Clinton. That's a great question. We do cooperate with the countries of the Maghreb on counterterrorism, on law enforcement, on our joint efforts against trafficking in drugs and human beings. We have quite a positive program going on where we try to help the countries of the Maghreb deal with these threats to their security.

And we are also well aware of the growing threat posed by al-Qaida in the Maghreb. Every country in the Maghreb has raised this with us. And we have offered any additional assistance that the countries would seek in order to be effective against the potential threat of al-Qaida.

With respect specifically to the Western Sahara, the Obama Administration has not changed the policy of the United States Government which originated in the Clinton Administration. It was ratified in the Bush Administration and it continues to be United States policy under the Obama Administration. We do support the United Nations effort because we would like to see a peaceful political resolution of a lot of the concerns that have been expressed.

But on the larger question, we think the Maghreb presents such a potential for development, and if there were more regional cooperation, the economic potential of the Maghreb would be unlimited. It would be such a bridge between the north and the south. And I know that there are some difficulties among and between some of the countries, but we would like to encourage the resolution of those difficulties because we think it would have a very positive impact on the countries and the people of the Maghreb.

Thank you very much. Good to talk to you.

Statement by President Obama, November 3, 2009[10]

President Obama. Thirty years ago

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today, the American Embassy in Tehran was seized. The 444 days that began on November 4, 1979 deeply affected the lives of courageous Americans who were unjustly held hostage, and we owe these Americans and their families our gratitude for their extraordinary service and sacrifice.

This event helped set the United States and Iran on a path of sustained suspicion, mistrust, and confrontation. I have made it clear that the United States of America wants to move beyond this past, and seeks a relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran based upon mutual interests and mutual respect. We do not interfere in Iran's internal affairs. We have condemned terrorist attacks against Iran. We have recognized Iran's international right to peaceful nuclear power. We have demonstrated our willingness to take confidence-building steps along with others in the international community. We have accepted a proposal by the International Atomic Energy Agency to meet Iran's request for assistance in meeting the medical needs of its people. We have made clear that if Iran lives up to the obligations that every nation has, it will have a path to a more prosperous and productive relationship with the international community.

Iran must choose. We have heard for thirty years what the Iranian government is against; the question, now, is what kind of future it is for. The American people have great respect for the people of Iran and their rich history. The world continues to bear witness to their powerful calls for justice, and their courageous pursuit of universal rights. It is time for the Iranian government to decide whether it wants to focus on the past, or whether it will make the choices that will open the door to greater opportunity, prosperity, and justice for its people.

Excerpts of Remarks by Secretary of State Clinton and German Foreign Minister Westerwelle, November 9, 2009[11]

Secretary Hillary Clinton and Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle delivered these remarks Berlin, Germany

Q. First of all, congratulations on your day, Mr. Minister. I want to break with—I was going to try to break with tradition and ask only one question, but ask you –ask it of both of you. But something has just happened which—in Iran, which is that the reports that the three American hikers have been—who were detained have been charged now with espionage, and I'm wondering if I could get your comment on that, Madame Secretary.

And then, for both of you, what was going to be my only question is on Iran as well, and that is that for weeks the Iranians have been stalling, have not been answering—have not been giving an answer to your—to the offer that was proposed in early October. And I want to know when can they reasonably conclude that your warnings of sanctions, if they don't agree, is just an idle threat? Because there are obviously some who believe that it is just an idle threat. When does that time come? Thank you.

Secretary Clinton. Thank you, Matt. With respect to the three American hikers who were detained by the Iranians when they were hiking in northern Iraq, we believe strongly that there is no evidence to support any charge whatsoever. And we would renew our request on behalf of these three young people and their families that the Iranian Government exercise compassion and release them so they can return home, and we will continue to make that case through our Swiss protecting power who represents the United States in Tehran.

Secondly, the question of Iran's response to the proposal by the P-5+1 regarding the exporting out of their low-enriched uranium for reprocessing and then return to the Tehran research reactor has not yet been formally replied to by the Iranians. We believe that this offer represents an important opportunity for Iran both to meet the medical and humanitarian needs that the Tehran research reactor fulfills and to begin to restore international confidence in their nuclear program. We are at very close consultation with our P-5+1 colleagues on next steps; we very much appreciate the active involvement of our German partners. And because we don't yet have a formal reply from the Iranians, it would be premature to go to any next steps if Iran decides ultimately to reject this offer.

So what we intend to do is press, both through P-5+1 and through the IAEA, to convince Iran to accept this opportunity. But as you know, during the United Nations General Assembly, there was an important meeting in New York where each of the countries in the P-5+1, which include China and Russia, obviously the United States and Germany, France and the UK and the European Union was represented. We all signed a statement that set forth the understanding that what we were pursuing was a dual-track strategy—one track aimed at engagement and diplomacy and efforts like the one represented with the offer on the Tehran research reactor, but the second track very clearly intended to show the Iranians that there were consequences if they failed to fulfill their obligations and if they continued to ignore the opportunity to work with the international community.

So although it is premature to speculate at this point, I think the Iranians are well aware that this is a two-track process, and we continue to urge them to work with us on the first track of diplomacy and engagement.

Foreign Minister Westerwelle. First of all, with the—even if the question was not addressed to me, I would like to stress the solidarity of Germany with the three young individuals and their families. This is, of course, a very difficult situation, and those individuals who are impacted by this should know that we are looking to them and that we are at their sides.

And I would also like to make a brief statement regarding your question on Iran. We want dialogue and we want a diplomatic solution. We also we know that dialogue and partnership and talks are what

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are most important with Iran. But Iran must also know that our patience in the international community is not unlimited. The federal chancellor made a very clear statement in her speech in Washington and we (inaudible) nothing from this.

White House Press Release, November 10, 2009[12]

Statement by the Press Secretary on the New Lebanese Government

The United States commends Prime Minister Hariri and President Sleiman for their stewardship during the government formation process, and looks forward to working with the next Lebanese government on behalf of the people of Lebanon. We hope that the cabinet statement and government program will reflect a commitment to full implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701. The United States will stand by those partners who share our commitment to Lebanese sovereignty. We look forward to working with a new Lebanese government that is committed to extending its authority over all of Lebanon, and to advancing political and economic reforms that benefit the people of Lebanon. Pursuing these goals presents a clear path towards the advancement of peace and stability, and economic opportunity—both in Lebanon and the region. Lebanon will play a key role in the effort to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. There can be no lasting solution in the region reached at Lebanon's expense.

White House Press Release, November 12, 2009[13]

Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to Iran

On November 14, 1979, by Executive Order 12170, the President declared a national emergency with respect to Iran, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701-1706), to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the situation in Iran. Because our relations with Iran have not yet returned to normal, and the process of implementing the January 19, 1981, agreements with Iran is still underway, the national emergency declared on November 14, 1979, must continue in effect beyond November 14, 2009. Therefore, consistent with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year this national emergency with respect to Iran.

This notice shall be published in the Federal Register and transmitted to the Congress.

White House Press Release, November 17, 2009[14]

Statement by White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs on Jerusalem

We are dismayed at the Jerusalem Planning Committee's decision to move forward on the approval process for the expansion of Gilo in Jerusalem. At a time when we are working to re-launch negotiations, these actions make it more difficult for our efforts to succeed. Neither party should engage in efforts or take actions that could unilaterally pre-empt, or appear to pre-empt, negotiations. The U.S. also objects to other Israeli practices in Jerusalem related to housing, including the continuing pattern of evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes. Our position is clear: the status of Jerusalem is a permanent status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties.

Excerpts of Remarks by Secretary of Defense Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Admiral Mullen, November 19, 2009[15]

Secretary Robert Gates and Admiral Mike Mullen delivered these remarks in Arlington, VA

Q. Sir, I would like to ask you about your meeting on Tuesday with the Saudi Prince bin Sultan. Could you give us an update about that meeting? Did the prince deliver any request, any message? And what are your views about the conflict—the current conflict in Yemen?

Secretary Gates. Well, we have a—we obviously have a very close—excuse me—military to military relationship with the Saudis and an ongoing arms sales program with them. And I would just leave it at the fact that we reviewed the programs that are—for which there are outstanding requests and those that the Saudis may be thinking about. We did discuss the situation in Yemen, and he—the assistant secretary—basically outlined for me the Saudi view of the situation there. I'd just leave it at that.

Yeah.

Q. Just wanted to ask you about Iraq—excuse me—about Iraq and the veto of the election law there in January. How does that impact the drawdown? And are you concerned by that—the pace the drawdown might be impacted? And is the U.S. military basically in limbo waiting for Iraqi politicians to come (inaudible)?

Secretary Gates. No, I would say—I would say that we have—we are continuing to proceed on the assumption that the drawdown will take place as General Odierno has described it. Frankly, we were very heartened when the election law was passed. And we hope that the concerns that have been expressed can be resolved quickly and a—and new legislation passed so that the election can take place within the constitutional framework, meaning before the end of January.

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Q. (inaudible) a push to slide things to the right (inaudible)?

Secretary Gates. I would say we've seen nothing at this point that would make that necessary.

Statement by President Obama, November 25, 2009[16]

President Barack Obama delivered this statement on Hajj and Eid-ul-Adha

President Obama. Michelle and I would like to send our best wishes to all those performing Hajj this year, and to Muslims in America and around the world who are celebrating Eid-ul-Adha. The rituals of Hajj and Eid-ul-Adha both serve as reminders of the shared Abrahamic roots of three of the world's major religions.

During Hajj, the world's largest and most diverse gathering, three million Muslims from all walks of life—including thousands of American Muslims—will stand in prayer on Mount Arafat. The following day, Muslims around the world will celebrate Eid-ul-Adha and distribute food to the less fortunate to commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son out of obedience to God.

This year, I am pleased that the Department of Health and Human Services has partnered with the Saudi Health Ministry to prevent and limit the spread of H1N1 during Hajj. Cooperating on combating H1N1 is one of the ways we are implementing my administration's commitment to partnership in areas of mutual interest.

On behalf of the American people, we would like to extend our greetings during this Hajj season—Eid Mubarak.

White House Press Release, November 26, 2009[17]

Statement from White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs on Kian Tajbakhsh

The United States is deeply concerned about reports of additional charges facing Kian Tajbakhsh, an Iranian-American scholar who has been detained in Iran without access to an independent lawyer since July 9, 2009. The charges against Mr. Tajbakhsh are baseless, and his original sentence on October 20 was an outrage. The Iranian government cannot earn the respect of the international community when it violates universal rights, and continues to imprison innocent people. We call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to release Mr. Tajbakhsh, and to respect the human rights of those within its borders.

White House Press Release, November 27, 2009[18]

Statement from White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs on today's IAEA vote

Today's overwhelming vote at the IAEA's Board of Governors demonstrates the resolve and unity of the international community with regard to Iran's nuclear program. It underscores broad consensus in calling upon Iran to live up to its international obligations and offer transparency in its nuclear program. It also underscores a commitment to strengthen the rules of the international system, and to support the ability of the IAEA and UN Security Council to enforce the rules of the road, and to hold Iran accountable to those rules. Indeed, the fact that 25 countries from all parts of the world cast their votes in favor shows the urgent need for Iran to address the growing international deficit of confidence in its intentions.

The United States has strongly supported the Director General's positive proposal to provide Iran fuel for its Tehran Research Reactor—a proposal intended to help meet the medical and humanitarian needs of the Iranian people while building confidence in Iran's intentions. The United States has recognized Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy and remains willing to engage Iran to work toward a diplomatic solution to the concerns about its nuclear program, if—and only if—Iran chooses such a course. To date, Iran has refused a follow-on meeting to the October 1 meeting with the P5+1 countries if its nuclear program is included on the agenda. Our patience and that of the international community is limited, and time is running out. If Iran refuses to meet its obligations, then it will be responsible for its own growing isolation and the consequences.

Remarks by President Obama and Lebanese President Sleiman, December 14, 2009[19]

President Barack Obama and President Michel Sleiman delivered these remarks in Washington, DC

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody. I want to welcome President Sleiman and his delegation for the excellent visit that we've had.

I thought that this meeting was critical because the relationship between the United States and Lebanon is critical. We have a strong friendship between the two countries. Part of that results from the fact that we have 2 million Lebanese Americans who have made extraordinary contributions to the life of the United States, and continue to do so. Obviously Lebanon is a critical country in a critical region, and we want to do everything that we can to encourage a strong, independent, and democratic Lebanon.

The President has, I think, done extraordinary work in managing what is a difficult situation, and we have continued to see progress in dealing with a lot of the cross-currents that exist not only in Lebanon but also in the region as a whole.

The United States wants to be a partner in this process. We want to strengthen Lebanese armed forces so that they can help to secure the sovereignty and territory of Lebanon. We want to make sure that there's full implementation of United States—United Nations' resolutions that help keep the peace in the region and ensure Lebanon's stability.

We both agree that the issues of Middle East peace are linked to the issues that exist inside Lebanon, and so the more we can work together to encourage the parties involved—not only Israel and the Pales-

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tinians, but also the Israelis and the Syrians, for example—to have constructive dialogue and try to negotiate out of the current impasse, the better off Lebanon will be, the better off the world will be.

We also want to make sure that the United States' assistance to Lebanon is not seen just through a security lens. As I indicated in my speech in Oslo last week, part of peace is economic opportunity and justice in civil society. And so to the extent that we can help provide support around issues like education that promote opportunity within Lebanon, we want to do so.

Let me just close by saying here on the South Lawn there is actually a Lebanese cedar tree that was planted 30 years ago, a testimony to difficult times for both the United States and Lebanon, but also the fact that we remain hopeful about the future. That tree is strong; it is thriving. I think it represents the friendship between the United States and Lebanon. And we will continue to water that tree just as we continue to nurture the relationship between our two countries.

And I don't know if you want to do a quick translation. I apologize, I should have stopped in between my comments.

President Sleiman. Thank you very much. I am pleased—I had the pleasure today to come here in response to the invitation of this President, of President Obama to the United States, and I had the pleasure to meet President Obama and high officials in the United States administration.

We have with President Obama a common policy of openness and dialogue. And we believe that the election of President Obama was a great mark in history, especially his speech in Cairo, which gave hope to find peaceful solutions to controversial issues. In addition to that, President Obama gaining of Nobel Peace Prize also gave hope to people across the world, and especially the people of the Arab countries, to find a peaceful solution that would return the rights of the people of Palestine, and that would ensure withdrawal and grant Palestinian refugees the right of return.

We have asserted our attachment and our support to the Arab Peace Initiative, which was stated in 2002 in Beirut and which was affirmed in the Doha summit, which grants all the rights back to their owners.

We have also discussed the situation in Lebanon which had witnessed great stability last year and this year, be it on the political, security, and economic levels.

We also discussed the Israeli threats against Lebanon that are taking place and that place obstacles to the economic growth of the country. We ask President Obama and the United States to exert further pressure on Israel to implement Resolution 1701 and to withdraw from Israeli occupied—Lebanese occupied territories namely from the village of Ghajar, Kfar Shouba, and the Shebaa Farms.

We also talked about the bilateral relations between Lebanon and the United Nations. We believe we have many common denominators with the United States. The first one are Americans of Lebanese descent which play a great role in the United States, and also the shared values we have with the United States and its people, namely the value of democracy, respect of human rights, public freedom, rejection of extremism and fundamentalism, and confronting terrorism.

And Lebanon has paid a very heavy price to preserve these values—a heavy price because of the cost of its soul of its people, its infrastructure, and also it had a heavy economical price, especially regards this part of the Lebanese views we're obliged to indicate.

We have asked for the support of the United Nations on various levels: first of all, on the military level, because a strong army and strong armed forces could defend Lebanon against hostility of the enemy. Also it could allow the country to confront terrorism which focus dangers not only on Lebanon but on humanity as a whole.

The second level is the economic level in order to promote new—more economic growth and social justice, because injustice is sometimes taken as a pretext by terrorist and fundamentalist organizations to recruit people and invite them to terrorism.

We also asked for the political support of the United States to take a political position to support Lebanon and to support a peaceful solution for the Middle East crisis—that cannot be done at the detriment of Lebanon—and to reject settlements. We insist on the rights of return for Palestinians because as stated in the Arab Peace Initiative, we reject any form of settlement since it contradicts our constitution and our special circumstances. So did the Arab Peace Initiative state as well.

In 2010, and since we have been elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, we will keep on cooperating and coordinating with the United States on issues related to the world so that we can ensure Lebanon's interests, and so that we can represent the position of the Arab League and the general interest of all of humanity and reach better solutions.

President Obama. I'm going to have to take one question.

Q. Mr. President, did you talk about Hezbollah weapons? Because it's my understanding that the Lebanese government now considers it an internal issue and doesn't want the Security Council to deal with it.

President Obama. We discussed this. And as President Sleiman said, we discussed the enforcement of 1701. We've made progress on this front, but it's incomplete. President Sleiman emphasized his concerns with respect to Israel. I want to be clear that I emphasized to him our concerns about the extensive arms that are smuggled into Lebanon that potentially serve as a threat to Israel. And it is in the interests I think of all parties concerned to make sure that enforcement is exerted with respect to such smuggling, as well as to any other issues.

So one of the things that I want to make clear is that President Sleiman and I aren't going to agree on every issue with respect to how Israel, Lebanon, the Palestinians, Syria, are interacting. What we do share is a commitment to resolve these issues through dialogue and negotiations, as opposed to through violence.

And that is consistent with the democratic traditions of Lebanon. That's consistent with what we believe is in the interests of both Lebanon as well as the other countries in the region. And we are going to continue to be promoting those processes that bring parties together, even though there are going to be some strong disagreements with respect to what the terms, for example, of a final peace between

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Israel and the Palestinians may be. And I'm confident that we can arrive at those—such an agreement as long as all the parties are entering into it in good faith.

Okay. All right, thank you, everyone.

Treasury Department Press Release, December 15, 2009[20]

U.S.—Israel Joint Economic Development Group mid-year review joint statement

Delegations of the United States and Israel discussed the status of the U.S. and Israeli economies, the progress of Israel's economic reforms, and ways to enhance high-tech cooperation during the U.S.-Israel Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG) 2009 Mid-Year Review, held today in Jerusalem.

The U.S. delegation was led by Andy Baukol, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs, and Tom Engle, Director of the Office of Monetary Affairs at the Department of State. The Israeli delegation was led by Stanley Fischer, Governor of the Bank of Israel, Chaim Shani, Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Finance, and Eugene Kandel, Chairman of the Israeli National Economic Council.

During the JEDG Mid-Year Review, Israel presented its progress towards meeting conditions for the release of 2009 and 2010 loan guarantees, as agreed to at the June 2009 JEDG, subject to statutory deductions. The U.S. delegation commended Israel for being on track to meet its 2009 fiscal targets, which includes a maximum 1.7 percent plus 1.35 percent (3.05 percent in all) increase in real expenditures over 2008 spending, and a maximum 6 percent of GDP budget deficit.

The delegations also discussed possibilities to expand high-tech cooperation, with the goals of promoting job creation, innovation, and business-to-business collaboration. Both countries noted the success of existing bi-national foundations and institutions that have substantively enhanced bilateral private-sector high-tech cooperation.

The United States looks forward to receiving a report from the Government of Israel in early 2010 detailing whether it has met 2009 conditions connected to the U.S. Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 loan guarantee tranche of $333 million. As of December 15, 2009, Israel has $3.148 billion available in U.S. loan guarantees, subject to statutory deductions.

The United States and Israel look forward to continued discussions at the 2010 JEDG, tentatively scheduled for May or June 2010 in Jerusalem.

White House Press Release, December 28, 2009[21]

Statement by White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs on construction in East Jerusalem

The United States opposes new Israeli construction in East Jerusalem. The status of Jerusalem is a permanent status issue that must be resolved by the parties through negotiations and supported by the international community. Neither party should engage in efforts or take actions that could unilaterally pre-empt, or appear to pre-empt, negotiations. Rather, both parties should return to negotiations without preconditions as soon as possible. The United States recognizes that Jerusalem is a deeply important issue for Israelis and Palestinians, and for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. We believe that through good faith negotiations the parties can mutually agree on an outcome that realizes the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem, and safeguards its status for people around the world.

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1. Treasury Dept. Press Release, October 14, 2009.
2. Dept. of State Press Release, October 14, 2009.
3. White House Press Release, October 20, 2009.
4. White House Press Release, October 23, 2009.
5. White House Press Release, October 24, 2009.
6. Dept. of State Press Release, October 31, 2009.
7. Dept. of State Press Release, November 2, 2009.
8. Dept. State of Press Release, November 3, 2009.
9. Dept. of State Press Release, November 3, 2009.
10. White House Press Release, November 3, 2009.
11. Dept. of State Press Release, November 9, 2009.
12. White House Press Release, November 10, 2009.
13. White House Press Release, November 12, 2009.
14. White House Press Release, November 17, 2009.
15. Dept. of Defense Press Release, November 19, 2009.
16. White House Press Release, November 25, 2009.
17. White House Press Release, November 26, 2009.
18. White House Press Release, November 27, 2009.
19. White House Press Release, December 14, 2009.
20. Treasury Dept. Press Release, December 15, 2009.
21. White House Press Release, December 28, 2009.

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