



## Remarks With Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal

**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

October 3, 2006

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** *(In Arabic.)*

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much, Foreign Minister Saud. I very much appreciate the warm welcome here again in Saudi Arabia. I want to thank very much His Majesty for seeing me last night. I think we've had very extensive and fruitful discussions here in Saudi Arabia, as is usually the case. We are discussing, of course, a period of time in the Middle East when there is much that is changing and much that is challenging.

We have had a very extensive discussion of the situation in the Palestinian territories and the desire to find a way for the Palestinians to resolve their political crisis so that we might have progress again toward a two-state solution as envisioned by President Bush and, in fact, as envisioned in the Arab Initiative and which was once the Crown Prince Initiative, the initiative of then Crown Prince Abdullah.

We have talked also about the need to support the young states of Lebanon and Iraq, young democracies that are under considerable pressure, Lebanon in particular, after the war to support its reconstruction, to support its rearming and reform of its armed forces, which now are being used to extend Lebanese authority throughout the country.

We talked about the need for resolution for the United Nations relating to Lebanon to be fully implemented. And that includes for there to be respect for the arms embargo that the UN has recognized so that there will be no arms to any group, and that includes Hezbollah, any group except to the authorized Lebanese security forces.

We have also discussed in considerable detail the support that Saudi Arabia is providing to the Iraqis as they try to find their way toward national reconciliation. We appreciate that support very much as do the Iraqis. Iraq has the opportunity to be a unified country, a country that can be a democracy in which Sunni, Shia, Kurds and others are all fully represented, but it must get past, at this point, a very challenging security environment, great violence. And the Iraqi people who want a better life appreciate the support of their neighbors and their friends like Saudi Arabia. And indeed Saudi Arabia is working with us on the international compact, which will support the Iraqi national compact.

Finally, of course, we discussed our concerns about Iran, about the Iranian nuclear program. I was able to brief His Royal Highness and earlier King Abdullah about the lack of progress in the Iranian nuclear problem. We continue to hope that Iran will decide to suspend its nuclear programs, but we have no indication at this point that they intend to do so. In fact, the statements of the Iranian President are to the contrary. And so there will be shortly consultations among the members of the P-5+1 because we have a clear route ahead, which is under Resolution 1696 to return to Security Council measures under Article 41, Chapter 7 should Iran refuse to take the generous package that has been offered to it by the international community.

But all in all this has been a very useful discussion. Over dinner last night we had a chance to talk about some of the changes that are going on here in Saudi Arabia and about the progress of reform. We, of course, have a strategic dialog that deals in larger part with many issues of our bilateral relations, and that has not been so much the focus of our conversations today because Prince Saud and I, of course, are preparing for -- preparing to meet our colleagues at the GPC+2 in just a few hours in Cairo.

So thank you very much, Foreign Minister, and I look forward to seeing you in Cairo.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, could you comment directly on the violence that has occurred between Hamas and Fatah forces in Gaza and to some extent in Ramallah over the last couple of days? Is there not a limit to what the United States and regional partners like Saudi Arabia can do even as the political differences have now spilled over into violence?

And Your Royal Highness, could you tell us what you think are the dangers if the United States does not make a more sustained effort to resolve or to find a way back to the Arab-Israeli Peace Process?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, on the violence, obviously Palestinians -- innocent Palestinians are caught in this violence and in this crossfire, and we call on all parties to stop, that the Palestinian people deserve calm. The immediate problem is to find a political solution by which the Hamas, which was duly elected, and we recognize that, but has been unable to deliver for the Palestinian people because it has been unable to join the consensus, including consensus in the Arab world, that the route to a better life for the Palestinian people is through the roadmap, through the Arab Initiative, and through a two-state solution.

There is that road should Hamas choose to take it. They face a choice. Clearly they cannot govern in a circumstance in which they cannot represent a responsible government before the international system. And so I would hope that they would take up what I understand to have been many overtures by the duly elected President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, who is after all a man who is committed to the agreements that the Palestinians have signed over the last decade or so, committed to the roadmap, committed to the Arab Initiative and committed to the two-state solution.

I think the answer politically is for the Palestinians to find a government that can be committed to the principles outlined by the Quartet but embodied in all of those international documents that have been accepted by Palestinians for decades.

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** Whenever there is an answer to question in justice and the rights of people are not responded to, it's a breeding ground for extremism. There is a very short step from extremism to terrorism. And ever since the problem arose of Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the region has been destabilized. Like a disease on its -- the body, it calls for other diseases to attack that weakened body. And therefore, we think it's a core problem, if settled, would have beneficiaries on all the other core problems of the region. And I think this conclusion is of almost universal acceptance now, and it is the hope that the present efforts of the United States will restart the peace process and lead the region to peace and stability that will benefit all in that instance.

**QUESTION:** Minister Rice, how is the relation between the Saudi citizen who may live in U.S. and the U.S. Government after what happened with Mr. (inaudible)? And why you are not giving visas to Saudi student to go to American University? Why the U.S. Government want to detain the Saudi media people inside U.S.? What is the latest update about the Iran's (inaudible)? And what the American strategy can do to solve these problems?

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** Is that one question? (Laughter.)



**QUESTION:** Practically you are visiting Saudi Arabia seeking for them help for Iraq. But why in Ramadan? And what kind of help you are asking for? Like what about your trip to Egypt, is it also asking for them help to Iraq or what? Thank you.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Thank you very much. First of all, on Saudi citizens in the United States, I would hope that Saudi citizens who are abiding by our country's laws are well treated in the United States. We've gone out of our way to increase the number of Saudi students going to the United States. In fact, the Saudi Government and the United States undertook an initiative I believe last year to increase the number of students going to the United States. And we now have crossed the threshold as I'm told of about 12,000. So we are very much pleased that we are having that kind of people-to-people exchange.

As for Iran, as I said, we are continuing to hope that Iran will suspend its enrichment activities, but we have no evidence that it intends to do so. And should it not, then the only choice for the international community is to live up to the terms of Resolution 1696 and that means to bring sanctions under Article 41, Chapter 7.

And finally, I believe that it is in all of our interests to have a stable situation in Iraq. This is Saudi Arabia's neighborhood. It is the neighborhood of Egypt and Kuwait and others. And so the efforts that these governments are making to support the Maliki Government are in their best interest, they're in the interest of the Iraqis and they're in the interest of the international community as a whole.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary --

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm sorry. Go ahead, Anne.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, do you think the Hamas Government is close to collapse or perhaps to capitulation? And are you confident that Mahmoud Abbas could pick up the pieces if that occurred?

And for the Foreign Minister, has the Saudi Government continued its financial support for Hamas since the government formation in March either directly or indirectly? And if so, by how much?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I can't make a judgment about what Hamas will or will not do. I do know that the Palestinian people need to have a government that can serve their needs. And we are all trying to support President Mahmoud Abbas. One of the reasons that I will go to the Palestinian territories is to talk with him about what more we can do to support him. If you remember, at the Quartet meetings we expanded the possible uses of the temporary international mechanism to try and deal with some of the near-term problems of the Palestinian people, and we would hope also to be able to help him with security sector reform and a number of other matters.

I might note, too, the Foreign Minister talked about how important it is to have an active diplomacy on the Israeli-Palestinian front. We could not agree more that an active diplomacy is extremely important and hope, too, that that diplomacy will be not just that it's carried out by the international community and the United States but also that at some time in the near future Mahmoud Abbas and Ehud Olmert will be able to meet and to talk about some of the issues that need to be resolved.

It would be enormously helpful if some of the short-term problems could be resolved. I know the Egyptians have been working hard for the return of the Israeli soldier, Corporal Shalit. And I would hope that the Israelis can see their way forward to make some progress on movement in access for the territories because the economic situation in the Palestinian territories is, of course, made very much worse if there is not the ability to move through some of the crossings.

And so there is a very busy agenda of trying to help with the near-term problems that the Palestinians and the Israelis face. But in the long-term, of course, the best answer is to return to an active process of engagement between the two and their engagement with the international community.

**QUESTION:** Foreign Minister, what about the question about the money?

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** Pardon?

**QUESTION:** The question about the money to Hamas.

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** Me?

**QUESTION:** We asked whether you, the Saudi Government, had continued its financial support to Hamas?

**FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD:** We support the Palestinian Authority not support a party. But may I say that the Arab League has funds for the Palestinian Authority, which is unable to relate to them. And especially at this time of great need and great hardship for the Palestinian people, we hope that these issues can be facilitated and resolved as quickly as possible.

Last question.

**QUESTION:** *(In Arabic.)*

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, thank you. First of all, we have made very clear that we believe that all parties now in the region need to be dedicated to helping particularly these young government in places like Lebanon and Iraq and to help the Palestinians. But the way that one does that is to support the moderate forces that are fighting those who are extremists and are fighting those who would use terror as a political weapon.

The Syrian regime has not been one of the regimes that is supporting those moderate forces, in fact, quite the opposite. Syria has been a major transshipment point for weapons from Iran to Hezbollah. Syria's negative role in Lebanon is well known. Fortunately, Syrian forces were forced to leave Lebanon under international pressure and the pressure of the Lebanese people last year, but Syria continues to be a force that could stabilize Lebanon and that engages in continued intimidation of those leaders.

And so it's extremely important that Syria make a choice. This is not a choice for the United States to make; it's a choice for Syria to make. And that is does it intend to be a part of the consensus that is represented by states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and others that the Middle East should be a place in which the Palestinian Authority is supported not those like Palestinian Islamic Jihad or the Hamas based in Damascus that continues to frustrate the hopes of the Palestinian people or the -- those who would destabilize Lebanon. It's a choice for Syria to make. Thank you.

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