

Quotes from Secretary Hillary Clinton remarks at the American Jewish Committee Annual Gala Dinner, April 29 2010

"Since our first day in office, the Obama Administration has made the pursuit of peace and secure and recognized borders for Israel a priority because that is, we believe, the best way to safeguard Israel's long-term future as a democratic Jewish state. As President Obama has said, a strong and secure Israel – and an Israel at peace with its neighbors – is critical not only to the interests of Israelis and Palestinians, but vital to our own strategic interests."

"So our commitment to, and our belief in and our interest in, a strong and secure Israel is also why the President and I asked Senator George Mitchell to serve as our Special Envoy for Middle East Peace. He is working toward the goal of restarting good-faith negotiations between the parties and moving toward an outcome of two states, living side by side in peace and security, with a comprehensive regional peace that brings an end to the conflict between Israel and Syria, and Israel and Lebanon, and normal relations between Israel and all the Arab states.

"And last month at AIPAC's national conference, I spoke about the challenge that continuing conflict poses to Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state. How dynamics of ideology, technology, and demography make the status quo unsustainable for the long term and make the pursuit of peace a necessity.

And two weeks ago at the Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace, I highlighted the urgency of the struggle between those in the region, especially in the Palestinian territories, who seek peace and progress and those who seek to perpetuate conflict.

Well, tonight I want to focus on the regional threats to Israel's security and the imperative of reaching a comprehensive regional peace that will help defuse those threats. Because without a comprehensive regional peace, the Middle East will never unlock its full potential, and Israel will never be truly secure. Pursuing peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and Israel and its neighbors can be a mutually reinforcing process, and today it is more essential than ever to make progress on all tracks."

"And all of us who are dedicated to Israel's future must recognize that a comprehensive regional peace that isolates the terrorists, ends the conflicts with Israel's neighbors, brings normal relations with all the Arab states is far better than any missile shield or defensive battery.

Regional peace must begin with the recognition by every party that the United States will always stand behind Israel's security and, as President Obama put it recently, "no wedge will be driven between us. Now, we will have our differences, but when we do, we will work to resolve them as close allies." Israel's right to exist, and to defend itself, is not negotiable. And no lasting peace will be possible unless that fact is accepted.

But similarly, Palestinians must have a state of their own. They must be able to travel, conduct business, govern themselves, and enjoy the dignity of a sovereign people. There can be no equivocating on this either.

And the only way to achieve a two-state solution is through negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. So we will do everything we can to support such negotiations. We are literally working around the clock to move forward with proximity talks, which we hope then will set the stage for a resumption of direct negotiations on all permanent status issues as soon as possible.

We believe that through good-faith negotiations the parties can agree to an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based

on the '67 lines, with agreed swaps, and Israel's goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israel's security requirements.

The United States recognizes that Jerusalem is a deeply, profoundly, important issue for Israelis and Palestinians, for Jews, Muslims, and Christians. And we believe that through good-faith negotiations the parties can agree on an outcome that realizes the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem and safeguards its status for people around the world.

Now, simultaneously moving toward a broader regional peace will help set the conditions for that outcome. As I've said, these are mutually reinforcing tracks.

But this will not be easy – and I recognize the frustration after years of false starts and failed hopes. But peace is possible. Think back. In 1978, after years of conflict, Egypt and Israel put away their guns and they made a peace that has stood the test of time. And in 1994, I watched as King Hussein of Jordan and Prime Minister Rabin of Israel signed a treaty in the desert that effectively ended decades of war.

These were clear-eyed, realistic, hard-headed leaders who recognized that war would not serve their nations' long-term interests and brought their people along. As Yitzhak Rabin said on that blistering hot afternoon, "Leaders should clear the path, should show the way, but the road itself must be paved by both peoples." The peace they made that day has held. As has the peace of Sadat and Begin. Israel, Egypt, and Jordan are all better off – and the goal of a comprehensive peace more likely as a result.

For the Arab states, pursuing peace with Israel is the best way to help achieve the goal of an independent Palestinian state. For everyone who proclaims their support of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, who cares more about the results than the rhetoric, there is no other path.

Around the world, people who have never been to Israel and never met a Palestinian are waiting for an end to the conflict in the Middle East. When I traveled the world as a First Lady, in a time of hope for the peace process, it was rare to hear people in places far from the region even mention the issue. But now, I have to tell you, wherever I go, it invariably is the first, second, or third concern on every agenda. And in every country, my answer is the same: Become part of the solution. Support the peacemakers and condemn the rejectionists. Invest with those who seek to build credible institutions and find common ground. Close your doors to those who traffic in violence and hate. All of us who care about the future have a responsibility to help shape it.

Because as Yitzhak Rabin said, ultimately, the leaders and the people of the region must provide the vision for peace and the will to realize it. The Arab Peace Initiative offers such a vision, a vision of a better future for all of the people of the Middle East. It rests on the bargain that peace between the Israelis and Palestinians will bring recognition and normalization from the Arab states. It is time to advance this proposal with actions, not just words.

We do not expect the Arab states to move forward in a vacuum. Israel must do its part by respecting the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, stopping settlement activity, addressing the humanitarian needs in Gaza, and supporting the institution-building efforts of the Palestinian Authority.

And Palestinians must continue their efforts to take responsibility and accountability for security in the West Bank. They must be vigilant in their work to stop incitement and prevent violence and terror. And they must press forward with the institutional and economic reforms under President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad's leadership, which we support.

And both sides should refrain from unilateral statements and actions that could undermine trust or prejudice – or appear to prejudice – the outcome of negotiations.

So we will continue to emphasize the responsibilities of Israelis and Palestinians, who must *ultimately themselves negotiate* a two-state solution. But there are also clear expectations of the Arab states. They have an interest in a stable and secure region. And they should take steps that show Israelis, Palestinians, and their own people that peace is possible and there will be tangible benefits if it is achieved.

First, all states must stop supplying weapons to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. (Applause.) Every rocket smuggled into southern Lebanon or Gaza sets back the cause of peace.

Second, the Arab states can and should continue to provide President Abbas with the support he needs to negotiate in good faith with Israel.

Third, they could do more to support the Palestinian Authority budget and its two-year development plan. The long-term success of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad's efforts to build the institutions of a future Palestinian state depend on a larger, steadier, and more predictable source of financial support from the international community. The United States has done our part. We have become the Palestinian Authority's largest bilateral donor, and Europe also has stepped up to help. Arab states need to share a greater portion of these responsibilities. The two-year plan to build a Palestinian state that provides security, good governance, and economic opportunities is an essential investment in the future and a necessary foundation for peace and security.

Fourth, as negotiations proceed between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and mutual confidence increases, Arab states should reach out to the Israeli public, demonstrating that Israel's isolation in the region is ending, and all states should resume multilateral discussions on critical regional issues. We would hope to see such concrete steps like the opening or reopening of commercial trade offices and interest sections, overflight rights, postal routes, and more people-to-people exchanges that build trust at the grassroots level. All the people of the region need concrete evidence of the benefits that peace will bring."

"Nearly a year ago in Cairo, President Obama called for a new spirit of partnership in the region and beyond, with broader engagement on education, economic development, health, science and technology."

"Peace, both between Israel and the Palestinians and between Israel and her neighbors, will take us one step closer to fulfilling that vision. It will open so many new avenues of cooperation, from conserving scarce natural resources to promoting broad-based and sustainable economic development to preventing the looming threat of a nuclear-armed Iran. There are so many common challenges and common interests that the people of this region share.

And perhaps most of all, the people deserve an end to the culture of fear and hostility that has dominated their lives for decades. Israelis deserve to live in a secure and democratic Jewish state. Palestinians deserve a state to call their own, with dignity and opportunity. A two-state solution coupled with a regional peace promises a future of prosperity. The status quo promises only more violence and failed aspirations.

The Obama Administration will continue making this case forcefully and frequently. We know we cannot and will not impose a solution. It is up to the parties themselves. They must negotiate, compromise, and ultimately resolve this conflict. That is the only path that leads to security and prosperity. But the United States is committed to being an active partner for peace every step of the way."