



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE, MARRIOTT HOTEL, AMMAN, JORDAN  
24 JANUARY 1987

~~E & O E~~ PROOF ONLY

PM: Ladies and Gentlemen, I propose to make a brief opening statement and then, if I can, to distribute the questions evenly between the local media and the representatives of the Australian press. I have today had very long and fruitful discussions with His Majesty and with the Prime Minister and with members of his government. As I think you will appreciate this is the first visit by an Australian Prime Minister to Jordan and it is reciprocation, albeit somewhat belated, of the visit to Australia by His Majesty in 1976 and by the Crown Prince in 1977. I am certain that on the basis of these lengthy talks that we have had and in the light of the visits to which I refer it is now clear that the relationship between our two countries is on a firm, friendly, mature and constructive basis. On the key issue of the resolution of the Middle East dispute, I took the opportunity of making clear to His Majesty the admiration that I and the Government and the people of Australia have for the readiness which His Majesty and the Government of Jordan have consistently shown in their search for a negotiated settlement of the Middle East dispute. It is a matter to be noted, I think with great admiration, how His Majesty has sustained his search now over many years despite the difficulties and the disappointments that have attended those efforts on his part, and that he continues that search for a negotiated settlement at the present time. I was given a detailed, cogent and, if I may say so, very interesting

account of Jordan's perceptions of the condition of the peace processes. Both His Majesty and the Prime Minister affirmed the determination of Jordan to try and inject momentum into the peace process because they expressed, and in my judgement, properly expressed, the apprehension that if the peace processes stall and despair takes the place of hope then the slide into conflict becomes inevitable. In particular, both His Majesty and the Prime Minister expressed their support for an international conference as an integral part of the process. And I told them that Australia sees merit in the concept of an international conference. It was made clear to me that the aim of Jordan remains a comprehensive and just settlement based upon resolutions 242 and 338. And I took the opportunity of telling both His Majesty and the Prime Minister of Australia's support for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement and for the resolutions 242 and 238 as an integrally important part of that process. And in that context, I reaffirmed our support for the position, which is theirs, of Israel's right to exist within secure and recognised boundaries. And of the rights of the Palestinian people. I had outlined to me Jordan's West Bank economic development plan. And Australia's moral and political support and if possible material support was



PM cont: sought. I expressed to both His Majesty and the Prime Minister our support for that plan as a humanitarian scheme calculated to improve the livelihood and well being of the people of the West Bank. And I undertook on my return to Australia to consider with my Ministers the possibility of some form of Australian material support for that plan. We also discussed the tragic situation in the Lebanon. The tragedy which has a particularly sharp profile for us in Australia because of the large population of Lebanese origin that we have in country. And both the Prime Minister and His Majesty also explained at length to me their perceptions of, and concern about, the tragic conflict between Iran and Iraq and of the very grave potential for regional destabilisation which is involved in the continuation of that conflict. His Majesty described to me how he was hopeful that participating countries in next week's Kuwait/Islamic conference might address how this tragic Iraq/Iran war may be brought to end. I am pleased to inform you that I also took the opportunity in my meeting with His Majesty to invite His Majesty to visit Australia at the earliest opportunity. And I am very pleased to say that His Majesty indicated both his pleasure at the invitation and his intention to take up that invitation at the first convenient opportunity. We also, of course, particularly in the discussions with the Prime Minister and the other Ministers had considerable discussions on matters of bilateral interest. And I will have distributed to you fairly shortly a two page summary of an agreed statement between the Prime Minister and his Ministers on the one hand and myself which sets out the broad areas that we covered. Suffice to say at this point that we affirmed the cordiality of our relations, the significance that we attached - both of us - to improving, increasing, the economic and commercial relationship between us. And understandably, the Jordanian Ministers referred to the imbalance in trade between us which currently is about three to one in favour of Australia. And the proposition was raised of the possibility of a trade agreement to be signed between us. That was raised by my Jordanian friends. And I undertook to have a draft agreement studied in Australia. Possibilities were examined for increasing the trade between us and there was agreement to study in further detail, both at the level of Ministers and at the level of businessmen in both countries the opportunities for further trade between us. As you will see from the note that will be distributed interest was expressed on both sides on the possibility of joint Jordanian/Australian ventures in this country. Ventures which would have the possibility of serving both Jordan and regional markets as well as the Australian market. And the possibility of such joint ventures is something now to be further explored. In particular, there was raised the possibility of fresh-chilled sheep meat based on the importation of live sheep from Australia for fattening in Jordan. The possibilities of joint ventures in the area of transport development and in the area of phosphate fertiliser industries in Jordan. In the area of technical cooperation, there was a review of current levels of assistance and we expressed our readiness to do more in this area consistent with our budgetary possibilities. There is in existence, as many of you will know, an existing dry land farming project which currently is scheduled to end its operation at the end of this year and I indicated to the Prime Minister my strong positive disposition to arrange for an extension of that project beyond the end of 1987.



JOURNALIST: Mr Prime Minister, what order of material support were you thinking of in terms of this development plan?

PM: Are you talking about the West Bank Development Plan. I can't make any commitment on that until I talk with my colleagues about it. I explained to the Prime Minister that we had in Australia last year to curtail the extent of our foreign aid because of the very substantial loss of national income - of the order of \$6 billion - that we have suffered with the adverse turnaround in the terms of trade. I was pleased to be able to say that in that context the level of assistance to Jordan had not been cut in any way, in fact it marginally increased. So the extent of our capacity to provide some assistance will be a matter for discussion with my Ministers. And that is something that is understood by my friends here.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, where did the King and the Prime Minister rate the search for peace at the moment. If they said to you that they feared the slide to conflict was inevitable if peace processes failed - where is it now?

PM: I think it is fair to put it this way - that there is a stalling in the process. But I must emphasise that both the Prime Minister and His Majesty were not totally pessimistic. They said simply that you cannot afford to be pessimistic in this situation. They recognise the difficulties that exist but expressed, each of them, their total commitment to continue this search for peace. There is a preparedness to talk with all parties involved and I certainly left my discussions with both of them of a feeling of realistic optimism, if I can put it that way. That is they recognise the very, very considerable difficulties that exist but believe that if there is a commitment and if there is integrity that a resolution can be found. But it is not something obviously that is going to occur quickly. I think it would be fair to say that while obviously they attach vast importance to the resolution of the Israeli/Arab conflict that in the sense of looking at the possibilities of significant destabilisation in the area of the conflict between Iran and Iraq ... even more important. And that is why both the King and the Prime Minister are hopeful that out of the Islamic conference in Kuwait next week there will be some sort of strong statement which may possibly lead to positive developments there.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you were talking about peace and the probable optimism that exists here. Would you say that it could have helped had you allowed the conference on Palestine to take place in Australia with the admission of the PLO representative?

PM: I think it would have had no influence upon what was happening here at all.

JOURNALIST: Not here but in the peace process?

PM: No, I don't think that of itself it would have made any difference.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, did the Jordanian Government ... PLO participation in the international conference? And would the Australian Government support PLO in the conference?



PM: Obviously, the position of Jordan is that the PLO is a significant representative body of the Palestinian people. And they regard the participation of the PLO in the conference concept as necessary. Our view is that the question of an international conference and its composition is a matter for the parties. AS to the position of the PLO, let me put the position this way. There are really three points which I think are relevant. And this just doesn't relate to the question of an international conference. Firstly, the position of Australia has been and remains that we will not recognise the PLO while it continues to deny the right of Israel to exist. Secondly, however, we acknowledge the significance of the PLO as a body representative of Palestinian interests. And we say that the capacity of the PLO to play a role would be strengthened to the extent that it recognised the right of Israel to exist and within that framework recognised the relevance of resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for negotiation.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, have you been asked to convey any message from the Jordanian Government to the Israeli Government in relation to ...

PM: No, I haven't been asked to act as messenger. But I think that the whole content of discussions that one has in these sort of circumstances in something that is best kept, except to the extent which it is appropriate to outline it as I have, best kept between ourselves. Let me say this that both on my part and on the part of His Majesty and the Prime Minister we have undertaken to keep in contact with each other.

JOURNALIST: What explanation have you been given about the Crown Prince's absence?

PM: I haven't asked for, nor been given.

JOURNALIST: You said that you wouldn't ... Israel doesn't recognise the PLO equally, how can you ...

PM: The term recognition is, I think, somewhat confused in the question. I don't think there is any doubt about the fact that Israel recognises that the PLO exists. I was using the phrase if you like in the technical, diplomatic sense that we, as a Government in Australia, wouldn't formally recognise the PLO. That doesn't mean that there has not been contacts between this Government and representatives of the PLO. And indeed that goes back to the period before my Government came into office. There is contact between representatives of my Government and the PLO that has taken place at diplomatic posts and also at the United Nations.

JOURNALIST: Do you have any specific reason why your Government turned down the UN request to hold the seminar in Australia?

PM: I wouldn't in fact promote this into a matter of very great significance. The advice was put to me and which I readily accepted was that at this stage it was not appropriate this year in 1987 to sponsor that conference in Australia. If the situation arises at a later date it is open for consideration.

JOURNALIST: In what context are you expecting the situation to arise?

PM: I don't know whether there will be a further request. There



PM: may be at a later date. I am simply saying that the recommendation that was made to me, and which I accepted, applied to 1987.

JOURNALIST: Why is it not appropriate?

PM: I guess that if you wish to pursue that you could pursue it with the Foreign Minister. Part of the reason that was put to me that there were other conferences being held in other countries and there was no necessity in Australia at this stage. I don't frankly see it as a matter of very great moment.

JOURNALIST: Does it bear any relationship to the fact that there is an election this year?

PM: No.

JOURNALIST: You have good relations with Israel and the Arab world. How do you think Australia can play a major role?

PM: I don't think that we can play a major role. I said that before I left Australia. And I take this opportunity of repeating it. We are very realistic about our position. Firstly, let me make the points as to why we have a very deep interest in the situation. Firstly, it is a tragedy for the people in the area. And is a potential flashpoint for wider conflict in the region itself and for that reason, obviously, Australia has an interest. Something like a third of both our exports and our imports pass through the Suez Canal. A great deal of our international communication passes through the region. So we have those sorts of interests in addition. But having said that we are a small nation of only 16 million people. We are not a powerful nation. I think we are a nation which is respected by the major elements involved in the dispute. And so what I have said, and I hope it is accepted in this sense, is that we don't therefore suggest or imply that we can be a mediator, a settler. — But simply say that because of the relations that we have with the countries in the region. If they feel that there is any way in which we can, however small that way may be, to be of assistance then we are prepared to be so.

JOURNALIST: There have been media reports that there are the possibility of joint Jordanian and Israeli economic cooperation. In your talks today was this raised as a possibility?

PM: No, the only part of the discussions which I think could be relevant to that question, Greg, were that there was a recognition that some of the sorts of things that have been said by Mr Peres at the time when he was Prime Minister about possible Israeli economic assistance in the West Bank was consistent with the sorts of concepts that are involved with Jordan's economic development plan. But in my discussions there was no reference to Israeli/Jordanian projects.

JOURNALISTS: Are you going to meet with any Palestinian personalities?

PM: Yes, I am. I don't know their names at this stage. But I understand from what I have been told so far they represent a cross-section of the Palestinian community in terms of their religious affiliation, their professions, their status in the Palestinian community, their outlook and their generational attitudes. The names at this stage I don't know.



JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, was the involvement of the PLO representative a factor in the Australian Government's declining to ...

PM: It was one of the factors mentioned by the Foreign Minister in our discussions.

JOURNALIST: What is the number of the Arab community in Australia?

PM: It is difficult to put a precise figure on it because of the classifications in the Census and Statistics form but I think broadly it would be said that the order of people of Arab or Muslim background of the order of quarter of a million.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, in your interview with Jordanian television last night you were asked the question "how about Jordan's call for holding an international peace conference - what is your opinion on that point?" And you replied "yes, I believe there can be a place for such a conference. We raise no objection to that concept". You then went on and made some other points. The specific proposal, as I understand it, from Jordan is that the permanent members of the Security Council would be party to that. And as I also understand it, Israel objects to that. Now in answering that question are you saying that you do accept the Jordanian concept that the permanent members of the Security Council would be involved in such a conference?

PM: I think that the concept that they are putting forward is something that has merit. I have said that. What I am saying is that it is going to be a matter for the parties to determine the structure, the procedures and the functions of a conference. I believe it is the position of the Jordanian Government that such a conference could not impose decisions that would involve some discussions on a regional basis and in the end how that international conference would be structured would be a matter as I say, for resolution between the major parties. What I am saying is that I see merit in the concept that the Jordanians are putting forward and it is going to be a matter that has to be thrashed out between the parties. Clearly, the position of the Jordanians in something which must be taken into account.

JOURNALIST: Could I ask as a follow-up question that if, in fact, one of the stumbling blocks to that conference is Israel's objection to the Soviet Union's involvement. Given that the Israeli Prime Minister has already foreshadowed that he may ask you for your assistance in the release of Soviet Jews to Israel, do you feel that there is any place for you to raise in turn with the Israeli Prime Minister that perhaps there may be some way that Israel's objections could be broken down if that is a stumbling block?

PM: Obviously, when I meet the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Mr Peres, I will be having detailed discussions with them about this whole issue. And I don't intend to prejudice the discussions that I intend to have with Mr Shamir and Mr Peres by making some announcements in advance. But I go into those discussions with a very deep commitment to do whatever I can to assist the processes of achieving a peaceful resolution of this dispute. I don't think whatever small part Australia may be able to play would be assisted by making some public announcement in advance of how I will approach those discussions. But I will be doing everything I can possibly can to assist the process.



JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, on that point. Though you stress that you are not here as a mediator or advocate, have there been any specific suggestions about how you could contribute to the peace process?

PM: I think in the discussions we have had today certain things have flowed from that, but I repeat it is not appropriate when you have discussions with one government and you are going on to have discussions with another that you indicate what may flow from the one into the other. You don't conduct discussions in that way, I certainly don't.

~~JOURNALIST: You give the feeling you carrying a message to Mr Shamir... waiting for an answer?~~

PM: No. I am not carrying a message. What has happened is that I have been given a very particular opportunity of hearing in the frankest possible way the views of His Majesty and of the Prime Minister. They could not have been more forthcoming, more frank, more courteous, more friendly in the exposition they have given me of the view of the Jordanian Government. Now that puts me in a position where in my discussions with the Israeli Government that I am able to do so with that fullest possible knowledge. And all I am saying and all I am intending to convey in the answers that I have given is that I don't think it is useful that I should say in advance of meeting Mr Shamir and Mr Peres - this is what the King said, this is what the Prime Minister said and this is what I am going to say to the Prime Minister of Israel and the Foreign Minister of Israel on the basis of what I have been told here. That is not the way I conduct myself. But you are not to confer from what is a sensible and intelligent response that I am making to you to conclude that Mr Hawke has got a message which he is taking and he is not going to tell you. That is not a logical conclusion to arrive at.

JOURNALIST: From your own point of view and particularly in view of today's talks, do you believe that there is more common ground now between Israel and Jordan than in the past?

PM: It is not possible, Kerry, to give a final answer to that question, obviously, until I have spoken with the Israeli Government. By definition, I don't know the answer to that question until I have spoken with them. But what I can say is that I couldn't have been more impressed than I have been with the integrity and commitment of His Majesty and of his Government. They are seeking with great steadfastness I believe to secure a just and reasonable and lasting resolution to this dispute. I am now in a position as a result of my talks to know that with completeness. I am in a position to know the nature of their thinking. And all I can say is that I believe from listening to His Majesty and to the Prime Minister that there ought to be, albeit through perhaps somewhat protracted processes, prolonged negotiations - that there ought to be a basis for finding a resolution of this dispute. But I can't obviously answer until I have had the opportunity of talking with the Prime Minister and with Mr Peres.



JOURNALIST: Did the Royal Couple show any interest in the America's Cup?

PM: They did, indeed.

JOURNALIST: Any bets?

PM: No, but I think I am not disclosing a state secret if I indicate that they are hoping for an Australian victory.

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