



## PRIME MINISTER

TRANSCRIPT OF STATEMENT FOLLOWING TALKS WITH PRESIDENT MUBARAK  
KUBBEH PALACE, CAIRO - 2 FEBRUARY 1987

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PM: I have had the opportunity of having an extremely interesting discussion with the President. And he has been generous enough to share with me his views about the processes, as he sees them, that will need to be involved in securing a resolution of the Israeli-Arab dispute. He also talked about other areas of conflict and problems in the region most particularly the Iraq-Iran war and the situation in Lebanon. I found myself in a very considerable degree of identity of opinion with the President and I am convinced, as I was in Jordan and Israel, that here in Egypt there is a total commitment to trying to accelerate the processes of peace so that out of those processes peace in the region can be obtained and not merely a peace which will be formal but one from which can grow greater degrees of co-operation which will ensure that the economic and social interests of people in the region can be advanced. As far as relations between Egypt and Australia are concerned we talked of a number of matters of mutual concern. I repeated to the President my interest in trying to ensure that there would be an increase in the economic and cultural and social relationships between us and the President agreed with me in this respect. Finally, I am very pleased to say that I issued an invitation to President Mubarak to visit Australia and he has graciously accepted that invitation. And it will be a matter now for discussion at official level to when he will be able to take up that invitation.

JOURNALIST: Mr Prime Minister, concerning the Palestinian issue do you support an independent Palestinian State?

PM: What the position of Australia is on that, as I have said before and I will repeat again here, is that we believe that an essential element of the resolution of the Israeli-Arab dispute is a resolution of the Palestinian problem. We recognise the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination and we have said including the right if they were to so decide an independent state. All the discussions that I have had in the region, including the discussions I have had here, the discussions today, show me that that is not looked upon as the most likely or the most appropriate outcome; that it would be neither politically or economically viable as it's put and that the most likely and most appropriate outcome of those processes, discussion and self-determination would involve the confederation of the Palestinian people with the State of Jordan.

JOURNALIST: ... inaudible question ...

PM: No, what has happened is that gratification has been expressed for our interest and for the information that I have been able to convey from Jordan to Israel, Israel to here. And I have simply said as I have said from the outset if there is any way however small in which we can be of assistance then we are prepared to be. And that has been welcomed but there are no specific projects which are on the plate.

JOURNALIST: Jordan, Israel and Egypt - are you now convinced that there is a willingness between the two parties to hold an international conference on the Middle East?

PM: Let's pick up the elements obviously Jordan and Egypt are at one on wanting to hold an international conference. But let's make it clear that they are at one also in their perception on the role of that conference. Neither Jordan nor Egypt sees the international conference as being the medium for settling the dispute. They see it as providing a framework within which the necessary negotiations would take place between the parties. And that's a common position between Jordan and Egypt. And as far as Israel is concerned you know that Mr Peres negotiated a position with President Mubarak at Alexandria. He adheres to that position. And there is, as you know, some apparent disagreement which has been made public between Mr Peres and the Prime Minister but as far as Mr Peres, who negotiated that understanding with Egypt, is concerned he is clearly adhering to it. So when you take all those factors in account there is a very considerable degree of common ground in the region on this issue.

JOURNALIST: Mr Hawke, what have you got out of this trip?

PM: What have I got out of it? I have got the unique opportunity and privilege of having been given from Jordan and Israel and Egypt the most comprehensive exposition of their thinking, of their explication of the issues that are involved and how they see the possible processes working to bring about a resolution of the Israeli-Arab dispute. I think I am fairly uniquely placed now in having been given that opportunity - I appreciate it very much. It certainly means that Australia and the Australian Government is better informed on this issue. Because we have the confidence of the states immediately concerned I think we will now continue to be kept informed and as I say without any exaggeration of our position it will be the case that if there is any suggestion made to us as to the ways in which we maybe able to be of some assistance than we are certainly now much better placed to do that.

JOURNALIST: Can we say that you are very near to acknowledging PLO officially now?

PM: It is not a question of being close to acknowledging PLO officially now. Let me just take a couple of minutes on that. The position of the Australian Government, and I think overwhelmingly the Australian people, is that we would not officially recognise the PLO while they don't recognise the right

of Israel to exist. We have said that we see the capacity of the PLO to have an important role in the processes of resolving important issues in this region, that their capacity to exercise that role will be a function of their readiness to recognise Israel. And I have said before, those travelling with me have heard it before, I don't want to take a great deal of time in putting the point again, but very simply I have expressed the view that I think the reality is that the PLO now does accept that Israel exists. Obviously and further than that, that they accept that Israel is going to continue to exist. I think that is the reality. Unfortunately, the formal expression from the PLO doesn't match that reality. On the part of Israel, equally, I think they understand that there is a representative capacity in the PLO and so what seems to me to be the desirable thing, both for the PLO, for Israel, the Palestinian people, the states in the region, is that those realities that I referred to should be reflected in formal statements. And as far as we are concerned if the PLO is to adopt the position of saying 'yes we accept 242, 338 - the right of Israel to exist, the repudiation of terror'. If the PLO says those things than you will have no trouble as far as Australia is concerned and more importantly there will also in those circumstances be an obligation on Israel to accept the PLO as part of the negotiating processes.

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