



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
DOORSTOP, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA, 5 NOVEMBER 1995**

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PM: I'll just give you a comment on Mr Rabin's assassination. The first thing I would like to do is to offer my condolences to his family, to his wife and his family, to the Government and people of Israel on behalf of the people of Australia.

I was left incredulous I must say at Mr Rabin's assassination. He was a real leader who made great strides for peace. He took the risks, he was a tough person, he had the support of the sceptics in Israel. The people in the military have had to fight conflicts over these issues. He had the power and he summoned it and he used it and it is a tragedy, a personal tragedy, that the world has lost him and a tragedy for Israel that he has been taken away.

The bad feature of this is that Jewish people around the world always regard Israel as a sanctuary from violence and to have violence done to their leader by one of their own, I'm sure damages that dream for them. But, the sad fact is that the people who have sought the peace and made the steps in the Middle East Anwar Sadat, in the first instance, now Yitzhak Rabin and others have had to wear the supreme sacrifice of their own lives.

I offer to Shimon Peres, the Acting Prime Minister, our very deepest condolences and to say that the thing that can be best done in the memory of Yitzhak Rabin is to continue the peace process and to see it consolidated and you know here that we have played a role in that process ourselves during these negotiations. We have had peace keepers in the Sinai, we will commit ourselves fully to that peace process which will do more, I think, than anything else to honour the memory of Yitzhak Rabin.

J: Mr Keating, has any thought been given to who will attend the funeral on Australia's behalf?

PM: We are thinking about that now. I would like to go myself. It is on tomorrow night at 10:00pm Australian time. So, it is just over 24 hours and there are no regular air routes there, so we are just trying to look at what arrangements might or could be put in place.

J: Mr Keating, does this have implications for the peace process given that you just described the Prime Minister toughness, experience with the military ... a peace maker, is there someone to take on that role now?

PM: Well, that is a matter for the Israelis, but no doubt all the people in Israel that value peace, they would feel I'm sure as I feel that the way to honour Yitzhak Rabin and his work would be to consolidate and accelerate that process. That political fillip and commitment inside Israel is probably as important as whoever it might be leading the country.

J: Prime Minister, are you concerned that this event may make Israel somewhere that Australian citizens should think twice about visiting the country?

PM: I don't think. I think that it is just another tragic event in the long road to peace in the Middle East. But, it doesn't hold any implications for the safety of any Australian person there. Thank you.

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