



PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P.J. KEATING MP
INTERVIEW WITH LINDA MOTTRAM AND DEBBIE WHITMONT, ABC
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PM: Yitzhak Rabin's life was a life that mattered. So it was a very, I think, moving ceremony to recount his life and some very moving things said including by King Hussein of Jordan, by President Mubarak, by members of his staff and family and I hope that his untimely death will, if anything, spur the peace process along.

J: It is a high price to pay for pursuing a political policy that you believe in. I wonder what you think as a leader yourself and also what you think in terms of world politics, that it has to come to that. Is that something that goes through your mind?

PM: I think anyone who is a democrat knows that there is an attendant risk. But, you do meet people and you must meet people because, for all democrats, the life source is from the public, it's from the people, and if one gets to the point where you don't have that free association, you can't pick up the bloom from the community, you can't pick up the buoyancy and the authority which a democrat must have. So, I understand very well what his life and, I think, what his attitude about that was. How he would have lived his life in this respect. But, of course, on the evening that he died he had, I'm told, a very successful rally for peace in what has been a very controversial debate here in Israel. So, he had a very clear manifestation and some jubilation and joy at the reception he had been given and it was at the end of that, of course, he was murdered, he was assassinated. So, he would have had a charge from knowing that on his most important mission that there was great support, a crowd of 100,000 or more had turned out to support him.

I think it may be too that Israeli's will reflect on their own political process and that the rabid and unprincipled attacks upon him, the extreme views put against him have created a climate which has produced his death and it may make people here reflect about that:

That they have to conduct their debate in more moderate terms, more sensibly.

J: How does it affect your view of Australia and Australia's role in the world?

PM Australia is blessed because it shares a continent with nobody and it is a very large nation which has, essentially, been held in trust for us by the Aboriginal people and which we have now developed as a united country. When you see old places sharing civilisations and borders and where old hatreds have been around for a long time this, fortunately, has been not our lot.

J: Can I just ask you also about the issue that is running in Australia regarding John Howard. He has suggested that you have dealt with this situation, in terms of his inability to be here, in an improper fashion, what is your response to that?

PM: I wouldn't for a second diminish Yitzhak Rabin's life or in any way seek to trivialise his tragic death by a debate about some of the meanderings of Australian politics. The important thing was, I think, that Australia should be represented to honour the life of a significant person who really made a difference in a country that has always struggled. And that representation can only be by the Australian Government. Thank you.

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