

## **His Majesty King Abdullah II address at a joint meeting of the US Congress on Wednesday 07/03/2007.**

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Madam speaker, Mr. vice president, honourable senators and members of Congress, my friends,

Thank you for such a warm welcome. It is an honour to stand, as my father did, before this historic institution. Allow me to thank you, on behalf of all Jordanians.

Jordan and the United States have had a long friendship. It is a special privilege to be here in the year that the American Congress welcomes its first woman speaker, and its first Muslim American member of Congress. These milestones send a message around the world about the America I know so well, a place where individuality is nurtured, a place where hard work is rewarded, a place where achievement is celebrated. The America I know so well believes that opportunity and justice belong to all.

In my days in Massachusetts, I also learned something of New England virtues. There wasn't actually a law against talking too much, but there was definitely an attitude that you didn't speak unless you could improve on silence.

Today, I must speak; I cannot be silent.

I must speak about a cause that is urgent for your people and for mine. I must speak about peace in the Middle East. I must speak about peace replacing the division, war and conflict that have brought such disaster for the region and for the world.

This was the cause that brought my father, King Hussein, here in 1994. With Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin beside him, he spoke of a new vision for the Middle East. Their courageous work for peace received bipartisan support from your leaders. And there was tremendous hope for a new era. There was tremendous hope that people would be brought together. There was tremendous hope that a final and comprehensive settlement of all the issues would be achieved.

Thirteen years later, that work is still not completed. And until it is, we are all at risk. We are all at risk of being victims of further violence resulting from ideologies of terror and hatred. It is our greatest and most urgent duty to prevent such dangers to our region, to your country and to the world. The choice is ours: An open world full of promise, progress and justice for all; or a closed world of divided peoples, fear and unfulfilled dreams. Nothing impacts this choice more than the future of peace in the Middle East.

I come to you today at a rare, and indeed historic, moment of opportunity, when there is a new international will to end the catastrophe. And I believe that America, with its enduring values, its moral responsibility, and yes, its unprecedented power, must play the central role.

Some may say: "Peace is difficult, we can live with the status quo." But, my friends, violent killings are taking place as part of this status quo. Palestinians and Israelis are not the only victims. We saw the violence ricochet into destruction in Lebanon last summer. And people around the world have been the victims of terrorists and

extremists, who use the grievances of this conflict to legitimise and encourage acts of violence. Americans and Jordanians and others have suffered and survived terrorist attacks. In this room, there are representatives of American families and Jordanian families who have lost loved ones. Thousands of people have paid the highest price, the loss of their life. Thousands more continue to pay this terrible price, for their loved ones will never return. Are we going to let these thousands of lives be taken in vain? Has it become acceptable to lose that most basic of human rights? The right to live?

The status quo is also pulling the region and the world towards greater danger. As public confidence in the peace process has dropped, the cycle of crises is spinning faster, and with greater potential for destruction. Changing military doctrine and weaponry pose new dangers. Increasing numbers of external actors are intervening with their own strategic agendas, raising new dangers of proliferation and crisis. These are groups that seek even more division: Faith against faith, nation against nation, community against community. Any further erosion in the situation would be serious for the future of moderation and coexistence, in the region and beyond. Have we all lost the will to live together in peace celebrating one another's strengths and differences?

Some may say: "But there are other, urgent challenges." How can there be anything more urgent than the restoration of a world where all people, not only some people, all people have the opportunity to live peacefully? This is not only a moral imperative, it is essential to the future of our world, because long-term, violent crisis is the enemy of all global prosperity and progress.

Certainly, our era faces critical issues. There is great public concern here, just as in our region, about the conflict in Iraq. The entire international community has vital decisions to make about the path forward, and how to ensure Iraq's security, unity and future. But we cannot lose sight of a profound reality. The wellspring of regional division, the source of resentment and frustration far beyond, is the denial of justice and peace in Palestine.

There are those who say: "It's not our business." But this Congress knows there are no bystanders in the 21st century, there are no curious onlookers, there is no one who is not affected by the division and hatred that is present in our world.

Some will say: "This is not the core issue in the Middle East." I come here today as your friend to tell you that this is the core issue. And this core issue is not only producing severe consequences for our region, it is producing severe consequences for our world.

The security of all nations and the stability of our global economy are directly affected by the Middle East conflict. Across oceans, the conflict has estranged societies that should be friends. I meet Muslims thousands of miles away who have a deep, personal response to the suffering of the Palestinian people. They want to know how it is, that ordinary Palestinians are still without rights and without a country. They ask whether the West really means what it says about equality and respect, and universal justice.

Yes, my friends, today I must speak. I cannot be silent.

Sixty years of Palestinian dispossession, 40 years under occupation, a stop-and-go peace process, all this has left a bitter legacy of disappointment and despair, on all sides. It is time to create a new and different legacy, one that begins right now; one that can set a positive tone for the American and Middle East relationship; one that can restore hope to our region's people, to your people, and to the people of this precious

world. Nothing can achieve that more effectively, nothing can assert America's moral vision more clearly, nothing can reach and teach the world's youth more directly, than your leadership in a peace process that delivers results not next year, not in five years, but this year.

How do we get there? Not by a solution imposed by one side. A lasting peace can only be built on understanding, agreement and compromise.

It begins with courage and vision. We, all of us, must take risks for peace. The Arab states recognised that reality in 2002, when we unanimously approved the Arab Peace Initiative. It puts forward a path for both sides, to achieve what people want and need: A collective peace treaty with Israel and normal relations with every Arab state, collective security guarantees for all the countries of the region, including Israel, an end to the conflict, a dream every Israeli citizen has longed for since the creation of Israel, and an agreed solution to the refugee problem, a withdrawal from Arab territories occupied since 1967, and a sovereign, viable and independent Palestine.

The commitment we made in the Arab Peace Initiative is real. And our states are involved in ongoing efforts to advance a fair, just and comprehensive peace. His Majesty King Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia initiated the 2002 proposal; today, he continues to rally international support. Momentum is also building among Muslim countries outside the Arab world. Ten days ago, in Islamabad, the foreign ministers of key Muslim states met. They came together to assure Palestinians and Israelis that they are not alone, that we back their effort to make and build peace.

The goal must be a peace in which all sides gain. It must be anchored in security and opportunity for all.

It must be a peace that will free young Palestinians to focus on a future of progress and prosperity.

It must be a peace that makes Israel a part of the neighbourhood, a neighbourhood that extends from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, across the breadth of the southern Mediterranean, to the coast of the Indian Ocean.

It must be a peace that enables the entire region to look forward with excitement and hope, putting its resources into productive growth, partnering across borders to advance development, finding opportunities, and solving common challenges.

This goal is visionary, but my friends, it is attainable. History shows that longtime adversaries can define new relationships of peace and cooperation. The groundwork for a comprehensive, final settlement is already in place. At Taba, as in the Geneva accords, the parties have outlined the parameters of the solution.

But we need all hands on deck. The international community, especially the United States, must be engaged in moving the process forward to achieve real results. Above all, we must make our process serve our purpose. We must achieve an agreed solution to the conflict.

Madam speaker, Mr. vice president, honourable members,

Your responsibility today is paramount. Your potential to help Palestinians and Israelis find peace is unrivalled. This is because the people of the region still regard the United States as the key to peace, the one country most capable of bringing the two sides closer together, holding them accountable and making a just settlement reality.

Time after time, there has been progress towards peace when Americans have actively engaged. Camp David, Madrid, Wye River: Nearly every breakthrough was accomplished when America was determined to help the parties succeed.

On behalf of all those who seek and strive for peace in my part of the world, I ask you now to exert that leadership once again. We ask you to join with us in an historic effort of courage and vision. We ask you to hear our call, to honour the spirit of King Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin, and help fulfil the aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace today.

Let me reaffirm that Jordan is committed to playing a positive role in the peace process. It is part of our larger commitment to global coexistence and progress. Ours is an Islamic country with a proud record of diversity, moderation and shared respect.

Allow me to say, we thank the Congress and the administration for supporting Jordan's progress and development. I deeply value the partnership between our peoples, and the contributions of so many Americans to the future of our country.

My friends,

"A decent respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, large and small." That's how President Roosevelt — the great FDR — described the basis of American foreign policy. He pledged American support for the four freedoms, freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech and freedom of religion, everywhere in the world.

The Four Freedoms speech was given right here, before Congress. And that's entirely fitting. Because it is here in the People's House, that the voices and values of America have made hope real for so many people.

Today, the people of the Middle East are searching for these four freedoms. Today, the people of the Middle East are searching for new hope, hope for a future of prosperity and peace. We have seen the danger and destruction of violence, hatred and injustice. But we have also seen what people can achieve when they are empowered, when they break down walls, when they commit to the future. And we know that Middle East peace can be a global beginning, creating new possibilities for our region and the entire world.

We look to you to play a historic role. Eleven American presidents and 30 American congresses have already faced this ongoing crisis. For not the future generation, but the generation alive today, let us say together: No more! Let us say together: Let's solve this! Let us say together: Yes, we will achieve this!

No Palestinian father should be helpless to feed his family and build a future for his sons and daughters. No Israeli mother should fear when her child boards a bus. Not one more generation should grow up thinking that violence and conflict are the norm.

As Roosevelt also said: "The justice of morality must and will win in the end." But he knew that it was up to responsible nations to stand up for justice when injustice threatens.

This is our challenge as well. And we must not leave it to another generation to meet this challenge.

Thirteen years ago, my father was here to talk about his hopes for peace. Today, we are talking about a promise that is within our reach.

We can wait no longer and that is why I am here before you. We must work together to restore Palestine, a nation in despair and without hope. We must work together to restore peace, hope and opportunity to the Palestinian people. And in so doing, we will begin a process of building peace, not only throughout the region, but throughout the world. How much more bloodshed and how many more lives will it cost for this grave situation to be resolved?

I say: No more bloodshed and no more lives pointlessly taken!

The young boy, travelling to school with his brother in Palestine, let him have a life of peace.

The mother, watching with fear as her children board a bus in Israel, let her have a life of peace.

The father in Lebanon, working hard to provide an education for his children, let him have a life of peace.

The little girl, born in Iraq, with her wide eyes full of wonder, let her have a life of peace.

The family, together eating their evening meal, in Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, Australia and the Middle East, let them all have a life of peace.

Today my friends, we must speak; we cannot be silent.

The next time a Jordanian, a Palestinian, or an Israeli comes before you, let it be to say: Thank you for helping peace become a reality.