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Israeli President Chaim Herzog: Two Houses of Congress, Advance Text
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ADVANCE TEXT BY ISRAELI PRESIDENT CHAIM HERZOG
BEFORE THE TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1987

***** EMBARGOED UNTIL 3:30 P.M., EST *****

Mr. Speaker, how pregnant with significance is this occasion, as I, the Head of State of an old people, and yet a young democracy, which was reborn following centuries of prayer and struggle, have the privilege to address this august assembly, an assembly representing the leadership of the free world. This Congress is, after all, a shining beacon of hope to the hundreds of millions in a dark world who suffer bondage, inhumanity, poverty, are deprived of freedom of speech, of expression, of movement, who live in societies in which hundreds of millions have never known and do not experience the gifts of human freedom.

I stand here proudly before this great assembly and think back to the years of struggle and sacrifice which have led to this occasion which will be a milestone in the age-old history of our people: that of a first State Visit of the President of Israel to its closest ally and friend -- the United States of America, and that of the honor accorded my people by these two Houses with all that they signify in terms of human hope and dreams.

I come to you in the year of the 40th anniversary of Israel's independence. When I recall the enormous sacrifices that we made for our independence, when I recall how the flower of our youth gave its life so that we should live, when I recall how as we struggled for our existence we opened our gates and absorbed five times our original population including those refugees who had emerged from the ashes of the holocaust, I can but feel satisfaction and pride at the enormous advances that we have made in creating a free society with all its inherent strength and despite the numerous challenges it faces.

We have achieved peace with the largest Arab state, namely Egypt, and are advancing slowly but inexorably along the road of the ultimate goal of comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We have become in our area a major center of technology, agricultural, scientific and medical advance. Like you, so did we make very painful sacrifices in order to achieve the celebration of our 40th

birthday with all the accomplishments of which we are so proud and with all the problems which we have to face. This appearance of mine here today bears eloquent testimony to the historic significance of my visit to Washington.

Indeed, my visit here at this time recalls milestones in our history which occurred in this one month — November:

70 years ago this month, world Jewry was electrified by the Balfour Declaration in which the British government acknowledged the Jewish people's right to a homeland in Palestine. This was at a vital stage in World War One. The content of the letter sent by Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild was incidentally approved by President Wilson. This document gave rise to the Mandate which was granted to the British government by the League of Nations to implement the purpose of the Balfour Declaration.

49 years ago today, as I pointed out on the White House lawn on my arrival, Nazi Germany's major onslaught against Jews and Jewish culture assumed its most brutal expression in the terrifying Kristalnacht — the Night of the Crystals, when Jewish Synagogues, homes and schools were set ablaze throughout Germany, and our Hebrew Bible and our holy books were burnt in bonfires across the land.

40 years ago this month, the UN, with the support of both the United States Government and the Soviet Union, voted for a Resolution which determined, inter alia, the establish of a Jewish State in Palestine. We were thereupon attacked by seven Arab armies bent on our destruction. We fought literally for our lives, sacrificing one percent of our population in bloody battle and achieved our independence.

Twelve years ago today I had the privilege of defending Israel and the Jewish people against the scurrilous attack on Zionism launched at the U.N. General Assembly by a sordid assortment of totalitarian dictatorships. In that memorable struggle which split the U.N. and which, as I pointed out in the debate, the world had divided itself into good and bad, decent and vile, human and debased, the U.S. and other western governments stood by us staunchly. We shall never forget the proud and impressive stand taken at our side on that memorable occasion by the U.S. delegation led by a distinguished member of this Senate, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Senior Senator of New York. He represented in his remarks and in his proud stand the greatness of this country, its courage in standing up to an alliance of dictatorships and its unequivocal stand by our side in what was one of the memorable and historic

debates at the U.N. Senator Moynihan's words on that dramatic occasion will long be remembered by our people.

I thank both these Houses for having adopted recently the so-called Australian Resolution, which was passed unanimously by both Houses of the Australian Parliament on the even of my State visit there last year, rejecting the infamous U.N. Resolution 3379. I trust that other democratic parliaments will follow suit.

Again in November ten years ago, President Sadat made his historic trip to Jerusalem and addressed the Knesset. This visit marked an historic watershed in our region which was to lead to the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state — indeed, the leading Arab state. That Peace Treaty was signed here in Washington on the White House lawn by the late President Sadat, by Mr. Menachem Begin, the former Prime Minister of Israel and was witnessed by President Jimmy Carter. This peace would never have been achieved but for the intense involvement of the President and the Administration of the U.S.A. in the entire process leading up to it.

I stand here representing a democracy aged forty years, in the heart of the greatest democracy in the world, celebrating the 200th anniversary of its Constitution. I represent an ancient people and a young state, but what binds us is not our age but our values. Israel represents the belief in man and in his right to the basic freedoms and to peace. We believe that the democratic system of government is the only one valid for mankind. In the great trials of our times between totalitarianism and democracy, democracy has invariably emerged triumphant. We believe that man must help his fellow man. We believe that prosperity comes only to those who share it with other fellow men. We are a society that has made enormous strides and advances in agriculture, in industry, in science and as such see ourselves as a bridge between the developed world and the developing world. Our great ally, the United States, unselfishly supports other nations in the world. So do we, as a matter of national policy, aid, support and share our experience and our progress with developing countries who require it.

We live in a world in which a minority of the members of the United Nations are democracies. We live in a world in which hundreds of millions of people wake up every morning hungry. We live in a world in which helplessness exceeds ability. We live in a world in which insensitivity is greater than enlightenment. We live in a world a great part of which believes in violence and the solution of problems by force. We live in a world of holy wars, racism and prejudice, a world which experienced two world wars and has been incapable of putting an end to war. A world which believed in the League of Nations and has been frustrated and disillusioned

by the United Nations. It is a world which is in dire need of hope and of aid and which instinctively turns to this country, the powerful keeper of the seal of democracy in the world, a fortress that no upheaval, political or economic, can move from the basis which was created by its Constitution 200 years ago.

I represent a country which is proud of the fact that despite five wars, despite the defense and economic burden which it has borne since its inception, has never hesitated on the issue of its basic values. Like you, we have never known one minute without democracy. Our democracy faces the most involved challenges -- a constant state of readiness, long military and reserve service and the complex problems arising out of the refusal of our neighbors to enter into negotiations for peace with us.

We absorbed several times our own population, many of the immigrants coming from countries that have never known democracy. We have overcome the desert and the wilderness. We have created new forms of society. We have constructed a most sophisticated agricultural system and an industry based on high technology and have created important centers of scientific research. Truly, we are entitled to look back with no small measure of pride and to say that we have created something that perhaps those who dreamt of the future never believed would come to pass.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand here there flash upon my inward eye the images of great leaders of the world who stood here in times of challenge and tragedy to the world and expressed their gratitude to the American people and its leaders for its generosity and support. Never in the history of man has there been such an unselfish approach to the less fortunate countries of the world than that of this great nation. For in the spirit of the prophet Isaiah, "Ish et Re-ehu Ya'azor," "Each one helps his neighbor and every one said to his brother be of good courage."

We note that the aid provided to Israel is extended as a function of the vital interests of the United States. Today in the Near East the longest war in this century is being waged -- a brutal, bloody war motivated by fanatic religious fundamentalism on the one hand, and the ambitions of a megalomaniac dictatorship on the other hand. Tens of thousands of prisoners have been shot out of hand. An unconventional weapon, poison gas, has been introduced, and the world has stood by in mute helplessness. The figure of those killed has gone well beyond the million mark. A war which threatens one of the vital arteries of the Western World, with all that this implies for the freedom of the world, a life line which you are so valiantly defending today.

How blind were the so-called experts in analyzing the developments in our area. The obsessive fixation with every stone-throwing incident in the West Bank led to a situation whereby the real ominous developments in the Middle East were overlooked by most observers. Thus again and again the Western world was taken by surprise when the real focus of danger erupted. How can we forget how the free world was taken by surprise by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, by the Khomeini revolution in Iran, by the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war?

Let me emphasize to the distinguished members of these two Houses that the world has in many ways been misled in viewing the Israel-Arab conflict as being the main issue in the Middle East. Today, you know as well as I do that if the Israel-Arab conflict were to be resolved and to disappear, as I certainly hope and pray that it will, all the centers of bloodshed, war, instability and fundamentalistic religious fanaticism from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf, would persist. It is against this background that we must view the sole bastion of democracy in our region — Israel. A glance at the map of the Middle East must surely emphasize the vital significance for the security of the US and the free world of this solid island of stability, loyalty and friendship to the US. We are proud of our alliance and of the joint mutual base of common values and traditions on which it stands.

A few weeks ago, we welcomed to Israel a number of prominent Jews from the Soviet Union. It was not coincidental that the first people to speak on the phone with Ida Nudel, after she arrived to freedom, were the President of the US and the Secretary of State. That act reflected the gratitude of an entire nation and of countless numbers of our brethren and sisters in the Soviet Union who pray for freedom and who know of the great efforts of the leadership of this country and the members of these Houses to bring them to freedom. The winds of change may be blowing in the Soviet Union, but for us there is one litmus test — that is the granting of full rights for Jews in the Soviet Union to learn their language, to adhere to their traditions and to be free to practice their religion as they wish. This, together with their exercise of their intrinsic right to be free to meet(?) and to rejoin their people in Israel, if they so wish. For this is the crucial test and we will judge the behavior of the Soviet Union by its attitude towards its Jewish population.

In expressing our gratitude to the members of Congress, we would urge you to maintain your deep interest in favour of the reunion of Soviet Jewry with their brothers and sisters in Israel.

I would urge you, too, to help us in our efforts to reunite

with us the Jews from other repressive countries, such as Syria.

We see as our major challenge the achievement of peace between us and our Arab neighbors, including the Palestinian people. In our Declaration of Independence, we held out our hand in peace to our neighbors. After the Six-Day-War in 1967, a week after the sounds of battle receded, the government of Israel — at that time a National Unity government — called on the Arab states to open negotiations for peace. The reply given us by the Arab world at that time was the three "NO's" of the Khartoum Conference — no peace, no recognition, no negotiations.

A great man arose in the Middle East — President Anwar Sadat. His dramatic offer was matched by the no less dramatic response of Prime Minister Menachem Begin and the warm and enthusiastic welcome accorded him by the Knesset of Israel and by the people of Israel. The President came, spoke, and negotiated, and thanks to the active involvement of the President of the US and the US administration, we achieved a Peace Treaty.

We have never achieved any advance without negotiations. We have never negotiated with our Arab neighbors without achieving an advance. This is our message, and hence, the unanimous desire of our people for negotiations. There may be differences of opinion as to procedures and modalities, but not as to the vital necessity of achieving peace through direct negotiations. On this, our people are united.

Since President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, not a single Israeli or Egyptian soldier has fallen along our border. What greater recompense can both of our countries ask for? A bus departs

from Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv every morning for Cairo — and vice versa. We pray for the day when similar buses will depart daily from Israel to all the other capitals of our neighboring Arab countries.

We are irrevocably committed to the inexorable process moving towards peace in the Middle East. I am convinced that we will achieve it. For I only have to look back to ten years ago today when most of Israel's borders were hermetically sealed and there was no passage of people or trade across them. Who would have dreamt then that today the Israeli flag would fly over an Israeli Embassy in Cairo and an Egyptian flag over an Egyptian Embassy in Israel? Who would have dreamt that over a million people would be crossing annually over the bridges of the River Jordan in both directions, and that daily hundreds of trucks would be carrying produce and exports in both directions? And who would have dreamt that

thousands of Israeli Moslems would be making their way to and fro in performance of the Holy Pilgrimage to Mecca? Who would have dreamt that a Jordanian bank would be operating in Nablus and reporting to both the Bank of Israel and the Jordanian Treasury? Who would have dreamt that tens of thousands of Israeli tourists would be thronging Egyptian resorts and tourist sites, that joint Israel-Egypt agricultural projects would be taking place in the Nile Delta, that Israeli stands would be exhibiting alongside stands of Arab countries at industrial fairs in Cairo? That an Arab book fair displaying books and literature from all over the Middle East would be opened by the President of Israel in Haifa?

Yes, my friends, we are moving inexorably towards peace and that is the major goal of our people reflecting as it does the prayers of millions who cannot express themselves freely in our area, torn by fundamentalist religious fanaticism. That peace will be achieved because we want it and because the people of the Middle East want it and because we know that we will be supported in this endeavor by the President, the Administration, and Congress of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, since World War II you have borne the burden of Western civilization and guaranteed the forces of democracy. You have experienced a difficult period and may be facing further trying problems. This nation produced the greatest and most powerful economy on earth. Your achievements in science and technology, your advances in arts and culture have opened up new vistas for mankind and for the world. You are a strong, great and dynamic people which has given the world a constitutional system which has weathered the storms of two-hundred years and has maintained your freedom as a nation. It is particularly at times such as these when clouds hover in the skies that the ordinary individual, wherever he may be realizes in his heart what the United States means to the world.

You know that, as you face challenges, countless myriads in the teeming masses of the world depend on you. They look to you and draw courage and inspiration from your moral fabric. It is at times such as these that the little man wherever he may be, in freedom or in bondage, realizes what the United States and the American dream means to the world.

Thanks to your aid my small country is capable of defending all that you stand for in terms of human freedom and dignity in an area buffeted by the winds of extremism and fanaticism. It is proper and just that on this occasion we utter a reminder of what free people owe to this great nation and of what hopes this mighty country keeps alive in the hearts of people in bondage wherever they may be.

Never in history has a nation given to mankind in so unselfish a manner what the American people have made available to the world. Mindful of the unique role that Providence has bestowed upon you, I stand before this great assembly today, in the year of our fortieth anniversary, and extend to you the greetings of a grateful nation and a staunch ally. God Bless America.

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