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Middle East

Subject on: Jordan:

Talks of King Hussein: June 1979.

RECORD OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON TUESDAY 24 JUNE AT 0915 HOURS

<u>Present:</u>	Prime Minister	King Hussein
	Mr. J.C. Moberly	Sharif Abdul Hamid
	Mr. M.O'D.B. Alexander	Sharaf

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King Hussein said that, although his reception by President Carter in the United States had been very warm, their talks together had not achieved a great deal. He had tried to convince the President that whatever progress might have been made in the Camp David talks, no lasting solution to the Arab/Israel dispute could be achieved through the Camp David process. It was time to think of the challenge that would remain once the Camp David stalemate had been recognised. President Carter, on the other hand, clearly remained of the opinion that no other approach to the problems had yielded results and that the Camp David effort should be continued. He and President Carter now understood each other's position better, but there was still no agreement on how to proceed. The Prime Minister said that she had discussed the Middle East situation with President Carter in Venice. She had told him about the disagreeable letter she had received from Mr. Begin and had had the impression that President Carter did not care for Mr. Begin's policies any more than she did. President Carter evidently intended to push ahead with the Camp David talks and was thinking in terms of a two or three year time scale. He was conscious that Mr. Begin had originally said he would never withdraw from the Sinai and hoped that he might also change his mind about the West Bank. President Carter did not appear to be thinking in terms of broadening the Camp David talks. He was deeply opposed to the idea of a separate Palestinian state which he thought would probably be taken over by someone sooner or later. The Prime Minister said that her own view was that it would be far better for any Palestinian political entity to be tied to another state. Confederation with Jordan would be the best outcome. An independent state would be prey to outside influences.

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King Hussein confirmed that President Carter had taken the same line with him as with the Prime Minister on the question of a Palestinian state. The matter was one of deep concern to the Jordanian Government. They were not prepared to attempt to prejudge the outcome of the exercise of self-determination by the Palestinians. But his own view was that a "Palestinian state" would not in the event prove dangerous and would not be controlled by radicals. Given the chance, he felt that the Palestinians would move to something which everyone could accept. Sharif Sharaf said that the problem of how the Palestinians would exercise their right to self-determination was academic so long as Israel pursued its present policy. The Prime Minister agreed, but said that it would nonetheless be useful to have the various options examined. If the various possible outcomes could be analysed and discussed, it might become easier for the Palestinians to see the advantages of a moderate approach. This consideration had been much in the minds of the European Heads of Government in issuing their recent declaration.

King Hussein said that there had been some discussion between him and President Carter about ways in which the Palestinians could advance their point of view. The Americans seemed to be looking for a group of Palestinians who would press the Palestinian case. King Hussein said that he, of course, had referred to the PLO. The Americans had given the usual answer about the need for the PLO to recognise Israel's right to exist. The Americans had suggested that a separate group of Palestinians might be included in the Egyptian delegation to the Camp David talks, but the Jordanians had, he hoped, dissuaded them from pursuing the idea. Sharif Sharaf said that King Hussein had instead floated the idea that West Bank opinion should be given some way to express itself. If the voice of non-violent protest could be channelled into some kind of assembly, this might one day be of great help in finding a way to peaceful self-determination. Of course the idea of such an assembly would not be practical unless international pressure was brought to bear on Israel. President Carter seemed to be only now discovering how oppressive Israeli measures in the West Bank had been.

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The Prime Minister asked which Palestinians might be prepared to raise their voice in the way the Jordanians had in mind. Would it be for instance the West Bank mayors or Palestinian intellectuals? Sharif Sharaf acknowledged that many of the intellectuals were associated with the PLO. However, the idea of a Palestinian Congress in which the Palestinians would press their demands peacefully seemed worth pursuing. The Jordanian Government would cooperate provided that it was agreed that the Israelis would not attempt to suppress it and provided it remained outside the Camp David framework. President Carter seemed to see possibilities in this. He had concluded the discussion of the idea by saying that it should be explored while the Camp David process continued.

The Prime Minister asked what hope there was for peaceful progress when the Fatah were issuing such violent declarations as that which followed their recent meeting in Damascus. She of course understood that many Palestinians argued that a peaceful approach had got them nowhere. Sharif Sharaf commented that the PLO were more moderate in private than in public. As regards their public posture it was similar in many respects to that of the Likud. King Hussein said that, unfortunately, there were governments, e.g. those of Syria, Libya and South Yemen, whose attitude was completely unhelpful. This related to their links with the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister, noting that there was little chance of any move on the part of the United States until after the Presidential election, asked whether there was likely to be further violence on the West Bank in the coming months. King Hussein said that Mr. Begin's decision to move his office to East Jerusalem was bound to provoke trouble and might well lead to further violence. The Prime Minister asked whether all the natural leaders of the Palestinian people were now committed to the PLO and its violent policies. King Hussein said that they were all in it or sympathetic to it. Sharif Sharaf added that this would remain the case so long as the PLO represented the resistance to Israeli oppression. The Prime Minister said that she had hoped that some Palestinians would be prepared to dissociate themselves from the methods of the PLO. King Hussein said that he had been encouraging moderate Palestinians to join the PLO

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precisely in the hope of tempering its methods. Sharif Sharaf said that it was very difficult for any Palestinian to condemn the PLO's activities at present. The same trend to violence was, of course, apparent in Israel. Unless an alternative and peaceful road could be offered to the Palestinians to achieve their objectives, the violence would continue to escalate. Events in Rhodesia had demonstrated this. The PLO were no more extreme than other organisations which had fought for their people's independence. The Prime Minister agreed that unless people could be given the hope of achieving their objectives peacefully, they would take to terrorism. It had taken a great deal of international pressure to persuade Mr. Mugabe to opt for the ballot box. The United Kingdom could not have done it alone.

Sharif Sharaf said that he had reminded President Carter that both Mr. Begin and Mr. Shamir had terrorist backgrounds. President Carter had acknowledged the point, but had added that while the Jordanians were talking about principles, he was interested in methods. He agreed that the Palestinians should have a homeland. The question was how it could be achieved. The Jordanian reply had been that Camp David was not the way. President Carter spoke logically but he lacked experience of the events of the last 30 years. He did not seem to be conscious that the Israeli attitude to the West Bank was quite different from their attitude to Sinai. They had been prepared to give up Sinai in return for the neutralisation of Egypt, but had never indicated a willingness to make the same sort of gesture to the inhabitants of the West Bank. They were still, of course, engaged in establishing settlements there.

The Prime Minister said that everyone condemned the Israeli Government's settlement policy. Even the Jewish community in this country disapproved. There were signs that public opinion in Israel itself was turning against the policy. However, she doubted whether much progress towards an agreement would be made in the next few months. Indeed it would probably prove difficult to make progress so long as Mr. Begin remained in office. There would have to be change in the political situation within Israel. She hoped that the European initiative could achieve something. The Israelis would put themselves in the wrong if they refused to receive a

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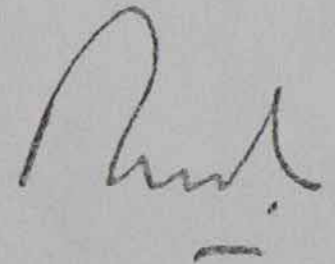
representative of the EC Presidency. Both Sharif Sharaf and King Hussein said that the European statement had been helpful. It had encouraged moderate Arab opinion. In the long run it would help President Carter.

The Prime Minister said that President Carter had clearly learnt a lot from his meeting with King Hussein. His attitude in Venice had been different from that when he had met the Prime Minister in Washington before Christmas. It was a pity the meeting with King Hussein had not taken place earlier. King Hussein said that President Carter had acknowledged that the delay in arranging a meeting had been a mistake.

At the end of the meeting, King Hussein mentioned that he had discussed regional security, particularly in the Gulf area, during his visit to Washington. It had been agreed that the Americans and Jordanians should look at the problems together. The Prime Minister said that there was a need for contingency plans. But she doubted whether these could be worked out at Summits. Sharif Sharaf agreed.

The Prime Minister commented that the United Kingdom still remained out of favour with the Saudi Government and that this was very worrying. King Hussein said that as soon as he returned to Amman he would get in touch with the Saudi authorities and see what could be done. Sharif Sharaf said that in private the Saudis admitted that they had over-reacted. Mr. Moberly said that the latest signals from Jeddah were more encouraging.

The discussion ended at 1000 hours.



25 June 1980