

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 28, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE  
OF  
TAHSIN BASHIR  
PRESS SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT EL-SADAT  
AND  
RON NESSEN  
PRESS SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT

THE BRIEFING ROOM

12:37 P.M. EDT

MR. NESSEN: Two announcements which I forgot to make in the flurry of activity here earlier. Then I am going to re-read the statement on the Sadat meeting for those who want to tape it.

Q Is that all, those are the only things?

MR. NESSEN: Those are the three things.

The things I forgot to tell you was, one, the President and Mrs. Sadat are hosting a reception and dinner for the President and Mrs. Ford tonight at the Anderson House. The Anderson House is a museum owned by the Society of Cincinnati. It is up on Massachusetts Avenue, which some of you may know.

This Society is made up of the descendants of officers of the Revolutionary War whose commissions were signed personally by George Washington.

The President and Mrs. Ford are expected to leave the White House about 8:30 and are expected to get back about 11:00. There will be a travel pool that will accompany the President from here, and also that travel pool will cover the reception and the dinner because of space limitations.

The pool should assemble here in the briefing room at 7:45. The men should wear business suits and the women should wear long dresses.

We have not put the pool together. We will post it later in the day.

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I want to also tell you that the Republican National Committee has invited the President and he has invited the President, and he has accepted, to participate in a fund raising event in Massachusetts -- in Boston -- Friday evening, November 7, for the Massachusetts Republican Party.

Earlier that day, the President will go to Springfield to meet with the New England Society of Newspaper Editors and there probably will be one other event in the afternoon which I don't have for you at the moment.

Q What makes Boston different from Louisville?

Q What makes Boston different from Albuquerque?

MR. NESSEN: I am not sure what the connection there is.

Q The busing strike kept the President from going to Louisville. There are a lot of busing strikes in Boston.

MR. NESSEN: I will, if you would like --

Q Answer the question.

MR. NESSEN: Why is Boston different from Louisville? Well, Boston is up in Massachusetts, Louisville is down in Kentucky.

Obviously, Helen, the reasons that prevailed in Louisville do not in Boston.

Now, Mr. Bashir, my friend and the spokesman for President Sadat, who was not here earlier for the briefing, has come over after the meeting with the editors and would like to say a word or two. Then I have, if you would like, for those who asked to have it read for tape, the statement on the meeting.

Q Is Mr. Bashir's briefing available for sound and film?

MR. BASHIR: Yes.

Good afternoon. I have little to say because the President will be having a press conference at 4:15. However, I would like to clear up one issue that I received many questions on since yesterday. This is the issue on Zionism.

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Now, Egypt and the Arab countries have a long history of acceptance of people's religions and traditions. In our religion you cannot be a Moslem unless you believe in the prophets of Judaism. Jews lived with us since early times, before even the West used the word "tolerance" and they lived in peace and harmony.

Now, we are willing to settle the Middle East problem in peace according to the UN Resolutions, which is the whole thrust which we have been indulging in since October 16, 1973. However, the philosophical, political content of the word "Zionism" is a hair-splitting controversial issue. To us in the Arab world, Zionism meant the occupation of our territory by force, the displacement of the Palestinian people, the discrimination against the rights of the Palestinians, treating the Palestinians in Israel as second-class citizens and the continuous refusal by Israel to do two things -- not to annex a land by force and to declare this and to prevent this, and, second, to implement more than half a dozen UN Resolutions keeping the human rights of the Palestinians implementable.

Israel even refuses to implement the whole Geneva Convention regarding the occupied territory. It is against this that we are against. We want equality, equal treatment and equality under the international law and equal treatment for the Palestinians everywhere.

And we are striving to reach an equitable peace in which the Palestinians will have their self-determination, the Israelis will be accepted without expansion in the Middle East and everybody can live by the UN Resolution in our area.

It is difficult as it is, that is, difficult without introducing extraneous concepts which have some circulation in some minds but are meaningless to us.

Thank you.

Q Mr. Bashir, I would like to ask a two-part question, if I could, sir.

First of all, there are 6 Arab or Palestinian Arab members of the Knesset in Israel, to the best of my knowledge, one has risen to Cabinet rank. How many just sit in the Parliaments of any Arab countries, to your knowledge?

MR. BASHIR: Prior to the creation of Israel --

Q No, there are no Jews --

MR. BASHIR: There is no Jewish population of any size but a very small number of our population is Jewish in Egypt, about 500 people, because Egypt encouraged and asked for their immigration to Israel.

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However, in Israel there is a law of return that allows a Russian or American Jew to go automatically but Israel denied for the last 24 years to implement the UN Resolution giving the Palestinians the right to return or to get compensation. That is to us a discrimination.

Q Mr. Bashir, the second part of my question is this, sir. We have just had a controversy between two of our leading Senators and the Department of Defense because the Government of Saudi Arabia, which has substantially aided your Government, refuses to allow Jewish Americans to go there without a certificate --

MR. NESSEN: Mr. Bashir is not the spokesman for Saudi Arabia, or the Senators or the Defense Department.

Ted.

Q Ron, that is not right, that is not fair.

Q Ron, let him answer the question. He would like to answer.

MR. NESSEN: Should we end the briefing or go on with the questions.

Q I would like to know why this briefing is being held when you refuse to discuss Zionism. You have somebody that will discuss it. Why is that?

MR. BASHIR: In answer to your question, we don't indulge in the internal affairs of America nor in the internal affairs of Saudi Arabia.

Q Would it have been offensive to President Sadat if President Ford had raised the issue of the UN Resolution on Zionism in their talks?

MR. BASHIR: It depends what you mean by "raising it." The issue was raised, the American delegation to the UN had its opinion, we had our opinion. It was discussed candidly and publicly. Israel refused the UN Resolutions. There is a whole catalog of them.

Q The question is if he had raised it in their talks, would President Sadat have been offended by that?

MR. BASHIR: We would answer that clearly there is nothing between friends that is offensive but ill taste.

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Q There was nothing between --

MR. BASHIR: Anything between friends could be discussed. It is only matters of ill taste. However, our position and the American position on that is publicly known to both Presidents.

Q I didn't quite understand your statement. Will Egypt accept or support the anti-Zionism resolution?

MR. BASHIR: Egypt voted with that resolution because Israel refuses to implement the human rights resolution adopted by the U.N. in the last eight years.

Q This position will be consistent in the General Assembly?

MR. BASHIR: Unless Israel changes its policy and acts with the Palestinians equitably and respects the human rights according to these resolutions, then we will consider it in that light when it happens.

Q Mr. Bashir, what was President Sadat's reaction when he learned of Mayor Beame's decision not to welcome him officially in New York?

MR. BASHIR: There was no reaction whatsoever. We are visiting the United States. We are guests of the President of the United States. Mr. Beame wanted to meet the President. He contacted our Consulate on the 14th of May to pay a courtesy call or have a party for the President, and we accommodated him because as good guests we try to be nice to everybody.

Now, as to whatever he said yesterday, that is up to him. We make no comment on that.

Q Mr. Bashir, in response to your question just prior to that, you said that Egypt voted for the Zionism resolution because Israel refuses to implement the resolutions on the Palestinians. Should one take from that that the two issues are related, the Zionism and the Palestinian question?

MR. BASHIR: It is not only the Palestinian question, it is the Palestinian question plus the half dozen U.N. resolutions on the human rights in the occupied territory.

Q You were not at the last briefing, and we were told they were unrelated. I just wanted to check that.

MR. BASHIR: No, we take all this as related.

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Q Would you explain your reference to ill taste? I got the impression you would have felt that if President Ford had raised the issue of the Zionism resolution, it might have been considered ill taste, is that correct?

MR. BASHIR: No, that is not my intention. I was giving a general statement of what goes on between good friends. They can discuss anything. However, in this particular issue, all the facts are known to both Presidents.

Q Would the Israeli press be allowed to attend the press conference of President Sadat this afternoon?

MR. BASHIR: The list for the press conference was cleared by security. I don't know who is there and who isn't.

Q Where is it being held?

MR. BASHIR: At Blair House.

Q Mr. Bashir, has President Sadat made any request this morning for military aid?

MR. BASHIR: No. We continue to discuss the general matters. We keep again and again saying that the issue of arms is actually related to the issue of peace. It is how to use the arms as a means to increase the momentum for peace rather than as a means to torpedo the momentum of peace or to de-escalate it or to hamper it.

Q Are you saying with reference to Zionism and Israel that even though there is an agreement made under 242 and 338, Egypt will not recognize Israel as a legitimate independent Jewish State because of Zionism?

MR. BASHIR: No, that statement you are making. It is not what I am making. My statement is very clear. When Israel implements the U.N. resolutions for those in the occupied territory and stops hampering the Palestinian self-determination, then we are willing to accept all the dictates of 242 and 338 and live in peace in our area.

Q Can you tell us what "stop hampering Palestinians" means?

MR. BASHIR: By one, occupying their territory and, two --

Q In other words, you want Israel --

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MR. BASHIR: Do you want to argue with me, or do you want to listen to my answer. I have not finished my answer. Now, you listen to me.

One, leaving the occupied territories; two, implementing the U.N. resolutions regarding their rights, whether they are humanitarian or political. When this is done, there is no hampering of Palestinian rights.

Q Does President Sadat understand his position on the Zionism resolution controversy is strongly opposed by many Americans and, therefore, might make it more difficult to get Congressional approval of economic and arms assistance to Egypt?

MR. BASHIR: In answer to your question, we don't know what you mean by "Zionism." Some people mean by Zionism the right of Jews to live in Israel. That we have accepted, when Israel implements 242 and 338. We don't know if you are living here and they are living there. What do you mean by Zionism?

The only manifestation we see connected with Zionism in our scene is the persecution of the Palestinians and the occupation of our territory, and for that we are against it. If Zionism means something else, we would like to see it.

So far, this is the only experience we have had with the ideology called Zionism.

Q How do you mean the persecution of the Palestinians?

MR. BASHIR: When the Palestinians are denied to return to their homes and when the Palestinians are not on an equal footing in Israel with the Israelis, one having the rights of return, the law of return.

The others are not allowed to move or to return from the refugee camps. This is discrimination.

Q Was it not true that when Egypt was in charge of the Gaza Strip, they had martial law and a citizen of the Gaza Strip could not go to Cairo? Is that true?

MR. BASHIR: That is not true.

Q What does President Sadat feel about the present situation in Lebanon?

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MR. BASHIR: We are trying to do our best to help Lebanon settle its own affairs in a spirit of harmony without interference from any outside power.

Anyway, the President is having his press conference. You can ask him whatever questions you have.

Thank you very much.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (AT 12:55 P.M. EDT)