

Remarks by the President and Amir of Qatar after Bilateral Meeting

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THE PRESIDENT: Well, I just want to welcome the Amir of Qatar and thank him and the people of his country for the friendship they've shown toward the United States. There's an excellent relationship between the United States and Qatar on a whole range of levels - with respect to security, with respect to our military cooperation, our commerce and our trade.

Qatar has been a center of innovation. We've seen enormous progress within the country on everything ranging from education to health care. And I think His Highness has shown extraordinary leadership over the last many years in helping to guide this country.

Obviously, Qatar is also an important country in the region, and has an influence that extends beyond its relatively small population. And so we had an opportunity to discuss a whole range of issues that directly relate to U.S. interests and U.S. security, but, more importantly, the security of the entire world.

We had a conversation about the situation in Syria. And obviously we've been cooperating closely with Qatar and other countries in seeking to bring about an end to the slaughter that's taking place there; the removal of President Assad, who has shown himself to have no regard for his own people; and to strengthen an opposition that can bring about a democratic Syria that represents all people and respects their rights regardless of their ethnicity or their religious affiliations. And I'm very pleased that we are going to be continuing to work in coming months to try to further support the Syrian opposition, and we'll be closely coordinating our strategies to bring about a more peaceful resolution to the Syrian crisis.

We also had an opportunity to discuss the situation in Egypt, where we both very much want to see success on the part of Egyptian democracy. And both of our countries are committed to trying to encourage not only progress in this new democracy, but also economic progress that can translate into actual prosperity for the people there.

We had an opportunity to discuss the situation with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we both agree that peace is in the interest of everyone -- a secure Israel side-by-side with a sovereign Palestinian state. And we exchanged ideas about how we can advance those negotiations, and I've shared the importance of providing support to President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority so that they can be in position to have fruitful negotiations with the Israelis that can bring about, in a timely fashion, a two-state solution.

And I had an opportunity to thank the Amir for the strong support that his country has provided to our efforts in Afghanistan, including the efforts that he has personally been involved with in getting a dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban that might potentially result in some sort of political reconciliation.

These are all very difficult issues and neither of us are under any illusions that they will be solved overnight. But what we agree with is that if our two countries are communicating frankly and constructively, and pursuing common strategies, that we can be a force for good for the entire region and for a vision of a Middle East that is democratic, that is prosperous, that is tolerant, that is representative of all peoples, and that is a force for good around the world.

And so I want to thank the Amir for this visit and for his friendship. And I look forward to working with him and the government of Qatar for many years to come.

AMIR HAMAD: (As interpreted.) I was delighted to have this very positive meeting with the President today. We discussed several issues of mutual concern to both our countries, especially the situation in Syria. We also addressed issues concerning our mutual military relationship, which is good, as you know, and also exchanges in education. As you know, there are several universities, American universities that opened branches in Qatar.

We also discussed our economic relationship. There are joint oil and gas projects between the two countries. We also talked about the serious changes that are affecting the Middle East, especially countries like Egypt, which we consider to be a very important country, and also important for peace with Israel.

And for Qatar, it's very important for us to see peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and to see also a good relationship between Arab countries and Israel once a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement is reached.

AMIR HAMAD: Actually, she meant by gas and oil that we will talk with the President, but we have a relation between us and America to be with American companies like ExxonMobil -- enjoy working with us in the sector of the hydrocarbon.

The other thing is the Syrian issue. As you know -- (speaks in Arabic and then is interpreted.) We also discussed the Syrian issue. What's happening in Syria is a major, horrific tragedy in the region and the world. And we hope to find a solution for the bloodshed in Syria and for this current government to leave power to give room to others

to take over. And we hope that any party that succeeds the current regime would be supportive of democracy and the political process. We in Qatar support the peace process and finding a political peace, and Qatar supports that.

And we once again would like to thank the President.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Thank you, everybody.

END 4:38 P.M. EDT