
Neve Shalom/Wahat-Al-Salam
Arab-Jewish Village
Jerusalem
December 13, 1998

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF THE FIRST LADY

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**REMARKS OF FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON AT NEVE
SHALOM/WAHAT-AL-SALAM ARAB-JEWISH VILLAGE**

MRS. CLINTON: I am very honored and personally privileged to be here with you. Mrs. Netanyahu and I have both looked forward to my visit and being able to spend time together, and my husband and I are delighted that we are back here in Israel. I am especially pleased to be at this special place with all of you.

Just a few minutes ago, when I was being given a short explanation of the many different activities that go on here, I looked out across the Ayalon Valley, and I know how often that valley has seen war and conflict going back thousands of years. And it seems particularly fitting that your village would sit here above that valley, looking down, being reminded of the cost that violence and conflict takes on all of us, but particularly on children. When Father Bruno had this idea to establish this village, I think he was very wise to appreciate how important it is that people actually live together and share experiences together to learn from and about one another. As a young girl growing up in the United States, I lived in a community that was all white. I knew no black Americans. And it was because of another person of faith that I began as a teenager to meet black Americans, Americans who came from Spanish-speaking countries. And for the first time, to sit and talk with them, and to understand that we had so much in common, that I had never understood before. When I was in the classroom with the kindergartners and three of the children came forward to light the Menorah, and the Christmas tree, and the Ramadan lantern together, I felt as I felt as a young girl: that religion should not be an instigator of war, but a bridge to peace. That children should learn to respect their own traditions, and also to understand the traditions of others. It is particularly appropriate that we would gather here, today, at the beginning of Hanukkah -- a time of re-dedication for the Jewish people and a reminder of how important it is to re-dedicate ourselves to peace.

Israel was founded as a state that was committed to freedom and justice and peace, and that is still a dream that is held by people here in this country and in this region and around the world. But we know how difficult that is. And we have to believe it is possible because we have to believe that human beings will be able to overcome their pasts and live together in peace.

I am very grateful that the hard work that the Prime Minister and Chairman Arafat and my husband did at Wye helped move us closer to fulfilling a dream of peace here in the Middle East, and particularly between Israelis and Palestinians. Despite the set-backs that come any time that any great challenges are being pursued, the strong belief that peace will prevail must once again be reinforced. People who choose to live free from violence, blessed with security and peace, must prevail. And the way to prevail is not only through our leaders sitting down and negotiating -- a process that cannot be imposed from the outside, but can be nurtured and supported -- but also from the daily lives and interactions of people like yourselves. As you, both the government and the people of Israel, continue to take risks for peace, my husband has promised -- as he promised again last night -- that the American people and the American government will stand with you. And we know that that is the dream that you share. In order for that to be real, however, people have to learn to live and work and go to school together. You can't just sign an agreement and by a signature change attitudes and values and beliefs and experiences. Peace actually begins in our homes, in communities like this and in our hearts. And it has to be nurtured between and among human beings, and then passed on to our children. And that is precisely what you are doing here. I have heard some of the stories about the children. Children who work together and live together and visit in each other's homes. And one young girl, I was told, picked up a newspaper not so long ago and saw a picture of a Jewish child and an Arab child holding hands, and that was news. And she went to her father, somewhat confused, because she couldn't figure out why two children holding hands would be in the newspaper -- why something so normal to her would be considered newsworthy.

Well, I hope that we will move toward a time when it is not newsworthy, when it is more as it is here, where children from three different faiths, from different backgrounds, from different experiences, are living with one another in such a normal way that they are not making news at all, but living their lives. And of course in order to do that, we have to abolish the stereotypes that keep people apart. And this is not just an issue for this region of the world, it is an issue throughout the world. In my own country, we still struggle with stereotypes. We still have to overcome those snap judgments about what kind of person someone is because of how they

look, what their skin color is, what religion they pursue, and instead force ourselves to get to know one another as individuals. I often say in my own country that we are working toward a time when we will respect each other. And we will learn to live with each other, totally in peace. And that is what I know you are doing here. If all children -- Sarah and I were talking about this in the kindergarten -- if all children could have this experience, we would be that much closer to peace, where we would respect and look at each other as individuals and not classify people according to the group from which they come.

I would like to imagine a time when, as we heard the children singing in the song called "A Time of Peace," that that will be a reality, here and around the world. In Arabic and Hebrew, they sang "between the lightning, a rainbow will appear and then I'll know that this is the time: a time for peace, a time for peace, God willing." Well, God willing, that rainbow will appear not just in the sky, but in our hearts and our minds, and God willing, we will create peace and security, and justice and freedom, and we will provide all children with the experience that you are giving them here: to be looked at and judged as an individual, to learn to build trust with one another. President Kennedy once said that on this earth, God's work is our own, and certainly the work of building peace and building trust is among the most important work we have to do. Thank you for doing God's work -- the everyday work of peace.

Thank you very much.