

Statement in the Knesset by Prime Minister Rabin on the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty, 25 October 1994.

The Israel-Jordan peace treaty was initialled by prime ministers Rabin and Al-Majali in Amman on 17 October. In the following statement, Prime Minister Rabin presented the agreement to the Knesset and sought its approval. He explained the major components of the agreement, including the establishment of peace, normalization, determination of the border, with rectification in certain places, water rights and various economic arrangements. This will be the second peace treaty with an Arab neighbor and the first since the Madrid peace process started in October 1991. Much emphasis was placed on the security arrangements which forbid Jordan from entering into any anti-Israel military coalition. This effectively eliminates the so-called Eastern Front. By accepting the agreement, King Hussein was in fact ignoring the demands of Syria that he refrain from doing so. The Syrian veto on the peace process has thus terminated. After a lengthy debate, the Knesset overwhelmingly approved the agreement. 105 voted in favor, 3 against and 6 abstained.

Mr. Speaker,
Members of Knesset,

It is with great satisfaction and joy that the Israeli Government, today, presents to the Knesset the peace treaty that has been initialled between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Tomorrow afternoon, the peace treaty will be signed at the Arava crossing point near Eilat. Tomorrow afternoon, we all hope, an end will be put to years of hostility, war, and bloodshed. The time for peace has come.

Members of Knesset,

For a generation we lived within the sights of thousands of snipers and opposite Jordanian bunkers. Civilians were shot to death, IDF soldiers fell in retaliatory and security operations and in wars. For many long years, we lived in the shadow of other terms: infiltrators, Mandelbaum Gate, municipal line, Fast Hotel, the biweekly convoys to Mt. Scopus, the university, Beit Faji, Abu Tor, the "nut on duty," archaeologists shot at Ramat Rahel, and death on the approaches to Beitar.

There are many among us who remember nights at Nahalin, Husan, and Kalkilye. Our best soldiers paid in blood.

In two great wars — the War of Independence and the Six-Day War — we faced the Arab Legion and the Jordanian army. In both wars, we defended our homes. In both wars, we achieved our goals.

Here, in this hurting land, generations were brought up on the words and actions whose origins lay in the bloody struggle against the Jordanians, from the fall of Gush Etzion and the killing of some of its residents to the Old City [of Jerusalem] that was lost to us, from the empty market square to the person who does not read on the Temple Mount, from Ammunition Hill and Augusta Victoria to the UN Government House and Tel el-Ful, from French Hill and Givat Hamivtar, the pursuits that

claimed so high a price in blood during the war of attrition, the shelling of Beit She'an, and the infiltration of terrorists from Jordan to Yarden and Beit Yosef. Every such name is a firefight, every such name is a story, every such name is a legend about brave and enthusiastic people. Those who are no longer with us, because they remained on the killing fields, and those who have arrived here, for the day of peace.

This peace is devoted to those who fell, and to you, the living. Politicians wrote it, you fought for it.

Members of Knesset,

The journey to peace between Israel and Jordan officially began at the Madrid conference three years ago. But the dialogue between ourselves and the Jordanians, which has taken various forms — on both sides of the Jordan River — has hardly ceased for 70 years. Every Israeli Government and prime minister has had contacts with Jordan and aspired to making peace with it. Researchers and historians will have much to tell in coming generations about the complex relations between Amman and Jerusalem, relations of love and hate, of war and peace.

The time for peace with Jordan has arrived. In recent years, we have taken step after step towards peace: in Madrid and Washington, in the Arava, on both shores of the Dead Sea, at Beit Gavriel on the shore of the Kinneret, in Eilat, Aqaba, and Amman.

In the Washington Declaration that was signed on 25 July 1994 in the presence of the president of the United States, we declared an end to the state of belligerency and war between Israel and Jordan. We brought this Declaration before you, and it was approved by a large majority in the Knesset and reflected the broad national consensus that the efforts for peace with Jordan enjoy; this pleases us. In the days that have gone by since the Washington Declaration, a boost was given to the negotiations, and in the nights which have passed by since then, Israeli and Jordanian representatives have met and made efforts to formulate a draft Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty.

In my statement to you at the opening of the Knesset's winter session, I said that according to our estimation, it would be possible to sign a peace treaty with Jordan before the end of the current calendar year. We have lived up to our word.

[Now], at the end of the accelerated negotiations in Aqaba and Amman, we have reached the big moment. The peace treaty was initialled last week in Amman. The draft treaty was approved by the Israeli Government, and — to the best of my knowledge — by the Jordanian government as well. Today, we are submitting the Treaty to the Knesset for approval.

This is a time for goodwill and for gratitude. I would like to thank the many dozens of people at the various ministries, first and foremost the ministers and especially the foreign minister, who worked so hard for days and nights to reach this exciting moment. I would like to especially thank two loyal civil servants — Elyakim Rubinstein and Ephraim Halevy. There is no limit to the praise that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker,

Members of Knesset,

The peace treaty with Jordan — both in Hebrew and English — is before you.

the English version being the binding one. The peace treaty with Jordan includes 30 chapters and has five appendices concerning the border issue, the boundary line and its demarcation, Bakura/Naharayim, and Tsofar. Also in the peace treaty are [chapters concerning] water issues, police cooperation, environmental matters, and temporary mutual border crossing procedures. I would request to bring to your attention that we have several short documents entitled "agreed-upon memoranda" — these are also before you — that concern several activities and interpretations of certain paragraphs. A map is also attached. Detailed aerial and satellite photographs appear in the treaty's appendices.

Members of Knesset,

What is in the peace treaty with Jordan? In the Washington Declaration, we announced an end to the state of belligerency between Israel and Jordan. The peace treaty that is to be signed tomorrow will raise the relations [between Israel and Jordan] to the maximum level — full peace — and contains everything beginning from the establishment of full diplomatic relations, the appointment of ambassadors and the construction of embassies, to care for environmental and economic matters, and more.

What did we struggle and debate over? Over the demarcation of the international border, over water, over security, over the refugee problem, over the nature of [our] bilateral relations, and — as we like to put it — normalization. Normalization is the Israeli bus that leaves the Jerusalem Central Bus Station and goes to Amman. Normalization is the Jordanian planes that fly in Israeli airspace on their way to Europe. The international border is being demarcated, according to the agreement, by following the Mandatory border between the Land of Israel and Transjordan. I must point out that this border was defined only in general verbal terms at the beginning of the Mandatory period, and was never demarcated — except for a few kilometers at its southern end. It was for us to jointly determine the location of the border and ways of demarcating it. After negotiations, it was agreed that the boundary line would be based on the Mandatory border and on the cease-fire line that was agreed to by Jordan and Israel in 1949; since then, it was this line which appeared on our maps from the early days of the State.

However, it was also agreed that both sides would have to consider the reality created over the years, by making minor corrections to the border on a reciprocal basis. Neither of the two countries gave up a single square centimeter in comparison with the boundaries determined on the basis of the cease-fire line. These corrections will enable the Arava communities to continue working the lands they currently work — these will remain under Israeli sovereignty — and to continue using the water irrigating these areas. Also taken into account regarding these minor border corrections were security considerations and the proximity of the Arava road. In one instance, a special arrangement was made regarding part of the lands belonging to the community of Tsofar.

Members of Knesset,

The issue of the transfer of areas to Jordan in exchange for areas being transferred to Israeli sovereignty by the Jordanian side was considered together with the other legal aspects of the treaty, by the attorney-general. Since the implementation of the peace treaty will require certain legislation, appropriate draft laws will be presented

to the Knesset so that the legislation will be completed within the three months allocated for this in the treaty.

In the peace treaty with Jordan, it was agreed that supply of water to the Arava communities will be assured by the Jordanian side according to current quantities, and possibly with larger quantities. Concurrently, we will transfer considerable quantities of water from the north of the country, as is detailed in the treaty, to Jordan. Existing wells, even those not under Israeli sovereignty, rather under Jordanian sovereignty, will be technically operated by an Israeli company, under Jordanian sovereignty of course.

[As to] the community of Tsofar, whose agricultural lands are a few kilometers from the new international border inside Jordan: It was not possible to include these in the minor border changes; rather they were included under a special arrangement. This arrangement will continue for 25 years, with the possibility of being extended. The arrangement will enable the land to be worked as it has been until now. The arrangement at Tsofar will be based on the arrangement worked out beforehand in the negotiations over the small island located close to Kibbutz Ashdot Ya'akov, that was originally private land belonging to the Israel Electric Company, from Pinchas Ruthenburg's time. This 830-dunam tract has remained in our hands since 1948, even though under Jordanian sovereignty. The special arrangement that was worked out for it — and by the way, it is not a leasing arrangement but an arrangement enabling ongoing activity to continue. This will also allow the development of joint enterprises with Jordan. The Arava communities, as well as Kibbutz Ashdot Ya'akov, who are involved in the matter have expressed their support for the arrangements.

Knesset Members,

With respect to the water issue, Israel has agreed to transfer 50 million cubic meters of water a year to Jordan from northern Israel. It was agreed to build two dams, on the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers, as soon as funding is available — which has not happened yet. The dams will provide Jordan with additional water. Plans for the future are being made for establishing water factories in the Arava, which would be developed jointly under both Israeli and Jordanian sovereignty.

Mr. Speaker, Knesset Members,

Regarding security, the main point is to prevent one of the two nations, and of course from our point of view the stress is on Jordan, from joining a hostile coalition. We believe that the agreement is a fitting solution to this. The Jordanians are committed to fight against terrorism, its initiators, and its foundation, and to cooperate in order to prevent infiltrations of terrorists over the border which exists between us.

Our neighbors, the Jordanians, also raised the issue of refugees. The negotiations were not easy. Section Eight of the agreement deals with refugees. It mentions that humanitarian problems were caused by both sides, and not just by one, as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The agreement also discusses ways to deal with the refugee problem. Of course, and this was accepted by both sides, these problems cannot be solved as a result of bilateral negotiations alone.

The issue of Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem is worded exactly as it was in the Washington Declaration, without additions or deletions.

Most of the remaining sections of the agreement deal with bilateral issues, what is called normalization. A procedure for negotiations has been established, beginning with culture and science, continuing to crime and drugs, transportation, civilian airlines, postal services and communication, tourism, environment, energy, development of the Jordan Valley, health and agriculture, and ending with the issue of Aqaba and Eilat.

A joint committee will be established to follow up negotiations about economic agreements. It will discuss, of course, the cancellation of boycotts and trade agreements, including a free trade area.

Members of Knesset,

We very much desired that the peace be actively felt by Israeli citizens. Therefore it was agreed, even before preparations for diplomatic relations and prior to the completion of the tourism agreement, that tourism will begin with visits by residents immediately after the exchange of the ratification documents. I wish to remind you that according to Jordanian law, the Jordanian Parliament will ratify the agreement only after the signing tomorrow, and the instruments of ratification will be exchanged after the ratification of the agreement by the Israeli Government. I assume that this will take place within 10 days or so.

Furthermore, the memorandum includes mutual obligation to consultation on economic and monetary issues in the areas of Judea and Samaria, in order to prevent as much damage as possible to both sides.

Mr. Speaker,

Members of Knesset,

The peace treaty presented for ratification by the Knesset today is a balanced document, mutually beneficial in the main requirements of both parties and therefore suitable. Only a mutually acceptable peace agreement will ensure an everlasting peace. With this peace there are no losers. With this peace we are all winners. This is the second peace agreement of the Israeli nation. Since the Egypt-Israel peace agreement signed by the late prime minister, Menachem Begin, this is a very important step in consolidating the Jewish nation in the Land of Israel, our historical homeland.

The significance of the peace agreement is not just political, but conveys a basic and essential change towards the essence of our existence. This is a deep and fundamental change, a change that will affect us throughout our lives — from the lorry driver travelling with cargo from Haifa to Amman, to the aircraft taking off from Sde-Dov and landing thirty minutes later in Amman; businessmen taking off in the morning to conduct and close business deals and returning to Jerusalem the very same night; families vacationing with their children in Petra, just a three-hour journey from Tel Aviv. This change will affect each and every one of us in our day-to-day lives.

A word on Syria. We want to believe that the peace treaty with Jordan will promote the treaty with Syria. We still do not have an agreement with Syria. There are discussions, however still no agreement. The agreement with the Jordanian Kingdom, that followed the agreement with Egypt and the agreement with the Palestinians, proves that there is purpose in having patience, and that a serious approach to peace is advantageous.

I must say a few words about terror, the current terror perpetrated by the enemies of peace, the radical Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organizations, who conduct 90 percent of the terrorist activities carried out against us from within the Palestinian population in the Judea-Samaria area and the Gaza district, and by Lebanon-based organizations who carry out attacks against the IDF and SLA forces from South Lebanon. This terror affects us tremendously. We have lived with terrorism for a long period. There are those who ask: What is the point of peace if terrorism still exists? And I say to you: I cannot, and I am not capable of promising an end to terrorism. I can only promise that in the end we will beat this terror. Peace is the only means to isolate the terror. The peace will prove to the surrounding nations that there is an alternative to terror.

Mr. Speaker, Members of Knesset, citizens of Israel, last week we stood at night on the balcony of the king's palace in Amman, looking out across the valley at the lights of Jerusalem. So close, only a few tens of kilometers, but 46 years of enmity and separation between Amman and Jerusalem. Members of Knesset, from now [on] the road is safe.

The Government of Israel today presents to the Israeli nation the initialled peace treaty with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In Jerusalem and in Amman, in Eilat and in Aqaba, in Irbid and in Tiberias, tomorrow will open a new page in history and this is wonderful in our eyes. Our nation is pleased and calmed by it.

I will conclude with the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains, are the feet of the messenger of good tidings, that announce peace, the harbinger of good tidings."

Members of Knesset, I request you to ratify the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel.

Thank you.