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Remarks Following President Reagan's Discussions with President Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia

June 18, 1985

President Reagan. President Bourguiba and distinguished guests and ladies and gentlemen, I've enjoyed this opportunity to exchange views with one of the great liberators of modern day Africa. President Bourguiba of Tunisia is a statesman whose influence extends far beyond the boundaries of his own country, a man of dignity and honor. And today he and I discussed issues of particular concern to our two governments and peoples, including developments in the Maghreb and the situation in the Middle East.

The United States and Tunisia share common interests and common values, including a belief that international relations should be based on mutual respect, reason, and cooperation, not subversion and coercion.

The United States remains firmly committed to the sanctity of Tunisia's territorial integrity and to the principle of non-interference in its internal affairs. We welcome the evolution of closer relations between the states of the Maghreb within such a framework.

President Bourguiba and I also discussed the present state of affairs in the Middle East and the efforts to maintain momentum toward a regional peace.

Historically, Mr. President, you have supported a constructive approach to ending the turmoil that has plagued the region for decades. We hope you will again use your influence to support those who are taking the steps necessary for direct negotiations based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

As you know, the goal of this administration remains a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace which will address the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and provide for the security of all states in the region, including Israel.

Mr. President, your visit reaffirms the underlying strength of the bond between us and the warmth of our friendship. It has been a great pleasure to review with you our past exemplary ties. We're confident that the good will between us will flourish in the years to come. Tunisia can rely on the continuing support and friendship of the United States of America.

Mrs. Reagan and I wish you and Mrs. Bourguiba Godspeed on your journey home and on the great endeavors in which you will continue to lead Tunisia. Thank you, and God bless you all.



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President Bourguiba. I should like, first, to tell you how happy I am to be once again in the United States, this great nation, friend of Tunisia.

My visit, at the invitation of President Reagan, has deep significance for me since it stresses, once again, the exemplary nature of the friendly relations between Tunisia and the United States that have been between us for so long.

I should like to express my heartfelt thanks to President Reagan, as well as to his administration of the American people, for the extremely warm and friendly welcome extended to myself and to my delegation since we arrived in Washington. I am deeply touched by this exceptionally friendly greeting and welcome, and I am very impressed to find the President so fit. I am also very impressed by his very sharp and acute analyses and perceptions.

Together we carried out a review of bilateral relations between us. We are gratified by the positive trend of those relations. We agreed upon the ways and means to give them more impetus and greater diversification.

Together, also, we have carried out a survey of international and regional problems of interest to our two countries; more specifically, we have looked into the situation in the Maghreb, the Middle East, Africa, and the Mediterranean area. More specifically, President Reagan and I took up the evolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Since in 1965 I had first called upon parties concerned to show realism and to accept the United Nations legal framework as a basis for settlement, 20 years later I remain convinced that this approach remains the only honourable one for all, and 20 years later the Arabs are sorry that they did not accept this approach. At the Fez summit, the Arab community had the great merit to give its support to this approach, and now it remains for the other party -- Israel -- to resolve to choosing a realistic and peaceful policy.

It remains, nevertheless, that true to our policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and respectful of the free choice of the Palestinian people. Tunisia will bring her support to any initiative of peace that the Palestinians themselves will deem the most appropriate to recover their legitimate rights and set into motion a just and durable peace in the region.

In this connection, may I stress how close our views are, and I am personally very gratified that President Reagan's and my views are so close on these issues. I am also happy to observe that President Reagan is motivated by a sincere will to work for relaxation of tensions, peace, and security in the world.

I also use this opportunity to recall to President Reagan that the essential and permanent principles of the foreign policy of Tunisia are based upon dialog and peaceful coexistence among states. It strives at strengthening peace and stability in the world, and supporting all just causes.



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Finally, I should like to express to President Reagan my best wishes for his personal happiness and health and ask him to convey to the American people a message of friendship and esteem from the Tunisian people.

Note: President Reagan spoke to reporters at 1:22 pm at the South Portico of the White House. President Bourguiba spoke in French, and an interpreter translated his remarks. Earlier, the two Presidents met in the Oval Office and then attended a luncheon in the Residence.