

# NEWS & FEATURES USA

## New Middle East Peace Steps Urged by Bush

International community must stand with those working for peace, he says

THE WHITE HOUSE  
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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT ON  
THE MIDDLE EAST

**THE PRESIDENT:** Good afternoon. In recent weeks, debate in our country has rightly focused on the situation in Iraq — yet Iraq is not the only pivotal matter in the Middle East. More than five years ago, I became the first American President to call for the creation of a Palestinian state. In the Rose Garden, I said that Palestinians should not have to live in poverty and occupation. I said that the Israelis should not have to live in terror and violence. And I laid out a new vision for the future — two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

Since then, many changes have come — some hopeful, some dispiriting. Israel has taken difficult actions, including withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the West Bank. Palestinians have held free elections, and chosen a president committed to peace. Arab states have put forward a plan that recognizes Israel's place in the Middle East. And all these parties, along with most of the international community, now share the goal of a peaceful, democratic Palestinian state — a level of con-

sensus never before seen on this crucial issue.

The past five years have also brought developments far too familiar in the recent history of the region. Confronted with the prospect of peace, extremists have responded with acts of aggression and terror. In Gaza, Hamas radicals betrayed the Palestinian people

with a lawless and violent takeover. By its actions, Hamas has demonstrated beyond all doubt that it is [more] devoted to extremism and murder than to serving the Palestinian people.

This is a moment of clarity for all Palestinians. And now comes a moment of choice. The alternatives before the Palestinian people are stark. There is the vision of Hamas, which the world saw in Gaza — with murderers in black masks, and summary executions, and men thrown to their death from rooftops. By following this path, the Palestinian people would guarantee chaos, and suffering, and the endless perpetuation of grievance. They would surrender their future to Hamas's foreign sponsors in Syria and Iran. And they would crush the possibility of any — of a Palestinian state.

There's another option, and that's a hopeful option. It is the vision of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad; it's the vision of their government; it's the vision of a peaceful state called Palestine as a homeland for the Palestinian people. To realize this vision, these leaders are striving to build the institutions of a modern democracy. They're working to strengthen the Palestinian security services, so they can confront the terrorists and protect the innocent. They're acting to set up competent ministries that deliver services without corruption. They're taking steps to improve the economy and unleash the natural enterprise of the Pales-



*President Bush addresses the Mideast peace situation, Monday, July 16, 2007, in Cross Hall at the White House in Washington.*