Question: Mr. President, there seems to be a widespread consensus now that this is perhaps the best chance for peace in the Middle East that we've ever seen. Do you agree with that assessment?

President: Exactly, exactly, I have said this before. We are in a crucial moment, really, to achieve peace, and there has never been a moment in which the Arabs were prepared for peace like this moment. Let us hope that the Israelis have the same idea.

Question: You've made the unprecedented offer, for an Arab leader, as saying you're willing to go even to Jerusalem to advance the cause of peace. Now, are you serious about that offer?

President: For sure, for sure I'm serious and whenever I shall be receiving the invitation, I shall be making all the preparations needed and visit the Knesset there, and discuss with them the whole problem.

Question: Will you go without conditions, Sir?

President: Well, I don't know what you mean by conditions. If you consider that claiming land occupied by others by force is a condition, well I don't consider it a condition
at all, this if you consider that solving the core and crux of the problem, namely, the Palestinian question, if you consider this a condition, well how can we establish peace in the area without solving the crux of the whole problem. So, apart from this I have an open mind.

Question: But you see that possible Jerusalem visit as a preparatory step on the road to a Geneva Conference?

President: It is, maybe you have heard me before saying that we shouldn’t go to Geneva without good preparations, or we shall be losing time there quarrelling over procedural arrangements and so. And I am always accustomed to go direct to the substance of the problem. Well, at some time, I proposed a working committee under U.S. Secretary of State Vance. This was 4 or 6 months ago... Well, I’m going to the Israelis there in the Knesset, the 120 deputies and in their own home and tell them, «what do you want?» and tell them the real facts, and after that, it is for them to decide for themselves.

Question: When do you expect to go, Sir?

President: Whenever I receive an invitation a proper invitation, I shall be making my plans.

Question: Well, Prime Minister Begin said he’s ready to receive you at more or less any time.
President: Well, it doesn’t prove to be a proper invitation, especially when he talked in this same speech about imposing conditions and so on. Well, until I receive a proper invitation, I shall be waiting.

Question: Doesn’t the flexibility that you’re showing towards Israel, right now, offend some of the more hard line Arab states, particularly Syria?

President: Well, for sure it may have shocked some of my Arab colleagues, as it has already shocked my aides themselves when they heard me declare this in Parliament. But, for peace and for evading the very horrible alternative to peace, I’m ready to take this step.

Question: Some of your colleagues in the Arab countries have described your offer as a somewhat dangerous gamble.

President: Well, since I came to power, it has always been like this, when Richardson came, we didn’t have diplomatic relations with the United States in 1970 when Nasser died. Richardson came to offer condolences and, when he returned to the States, he made his report and said Sadat will be staying from 4 to 6 weeks. The British Intelligence Service had the same idea and the same conclusion. Well, here I am after 7 years, and after my first term had expired and I am now serving the second term as President when I started dealing with Dr. Kissinger, President Nixon and
Dr. Kissinger, and then after that Ford and Dr. Kissinger, and then after that, Carter and Vance, they said the same thing: that I'm gambling. Even some of my friends in the United States who were in President Nixon's entourage when they came here in Egypt, they were very pessimistic, and I told them «no, I am optimistic». From time to time there is always attacks on me, especially from the Soviet Union, that I am gambling, that I shall lose, so and so,» Well, in 7 years I didn't lose any battle.

**Question**: In specific terms, what would you hope to achieve by going to Jerusalem? Would you hope to agree with the Israelis on an agenda for the Geneva Conference?

**President**: My real aim, really, from this visit, is that, as I told you, I consider the Arab-Israeli conflict contains: 70 per cent psychological problem and 30 per cent substance. Well, let us get rid of the 70 per cent psychological problem. I'm going there to put the facts, the real facts, before them, and it is for them to decide for themselves.

**Question**: But you seriously expect to have much success in Israel with a government that is probably the hardest-line Israeli government that the country has ever seen.

**President**: I don't fear governments or Big Powers. You know my dealing with the Soviet Union, the second big power in the...
whole world. I don't fear anyone I fear God
God only. So, I'm ready — I'm going to their
den.

Question : Are you confident that you'll
be able to obtain the support of the other
frontline Arab states for the moves that you
are now undertaking?

President : I never asked for this . . .

Question : Don't you have a tremendous
problem, Mr. President, selling your visit to
the other Arab states, particularly Syria and
the hard-line states?

President : Well, sincerely, I'm trying to
fulfil my responsibility as an Arab leader who
wants to end this vicious circle that we have
lived in during the last 30 years, I shall be
doing my best — some will agree, others will
not agree, but whenever I feel that I am ful-
filling my responsibility I shall always be at
rest.

Question : But you don't see a danger that
Egypt might be isolated in the Arab world?

President : Egypt can never be isolated,
and the aim of my visit is not to conclude a
separate agreement with Israel, as I said, be-
cause it is not an Egyptian-Israeli problem —
it is an Arab-Israeli problem and when Mr.
Begin made his declaration, two days ago to
the Egyptian people, we said that he should
have made this declaration to the whole Arab
nation, because it is not Egypt only that is concerned in this conflict. And, as I told you before it (the conflict) has started with the Palestinian problem. For that I'm trying to do my best, but no one can isolate Egypt at all.

Question: So, you wouldn't do any serious negotiating on your visit to Israel. You'd leave that for Geneva.

President: Not at all, not at all. We must do very serious negotiations, but not to conclude a separate agreement, or another step-by-step policy like it has been before, of partial agreement or so, no I'm going there for permanent peace in the area. For that I'm insisting that all the parties concerned, with the Palestinians and Israelis, should attend to establish peace.

Question: Attend Geneva.

President: Attend in Geneva, yes, to establish peace.

Question: So, in a sense, your visit is not a substitute for a Geneva Conference.

President: Not at all, it is not an alternative for Geneva at all. My theory is this: As I told you, I have proposed a working committee to prepare for Geneva, so that we can work on a paper rather than sitting and quarrelling. So it is in the field of preparation that I am going there, but our negotiations should be serious on the main issues in the conflict, psychological or substance.
Question: How do you seriously rate the chances for success of a new Geneva Conference?

President: As I have said before, if we make good preparations, we can reach agreement in Geneva in a very short time.

Question: The gulf seems extraordinarily wide between the Arab and Israeli positions.

President: Well, I don't agree with you on this, is what the Israeli is show, but (as to) the real mechanics of the whole problem, I don't think anyone will agree that Israel occupies others' land by force. Lately, the whole world, the whole public opinion in the world agrees that the Palestinians should have a homeland. Well if these are known all over the world, I don't think that we shall find difficulties in reaching agreement.

Question: But you were saying that you want Israel to return to the 1967 borders and recognize a Palestinian homeland. Israel is saying that it won't withdraw to the 1967 borders, that it is prepared perhaps for limited withdrawals on the Syrian and Egyptian fronts, not on the West Bank of the Jordan, and that there is no question of even talking about a Palestinian homeland.

President: Very well, let them tell me this in the Knesset, and I shall be telling them my idea about the whole thing and I repeat again: If they insist on this, well, the alternative will be very horrible for all of us here in the area.
Question: But I still wonder, Sir, how you can have any optimism for these negotiations succeeding? When you have a Prime Minister in Israel now who says in respect to the West Bank that it is part of the Jewish biblical homeland? That this is liberated not occupied territory.

President: Well I don't anticipate anything less than this, from Begin or from the creators of Israel, but we have our logic, we have our rights, and I want to put it quite clearly before them and before the whole world, and then let the whole world and the whole public opinion all over the world decide.

Question: How do you answer those Israelis who say that a return to the 1967 borders bringing Tel Aviv in Arab artillery range would be an open invitation for the Arabs to attack the country at some point in the future?

President: Well, this is not correct, because they are trying to exploit the whole situation for their expansion. Let me tell you this: on the 10th of October, 1973 and at the climax of our battle with Israel in the October War, I told the Israelis and the whole world that I have my ground-to-ground missiles directed at three main cities in Israel, and if Israel hit any city or any place in the depth of my country, I shall be hitting in the depth of Israel. Well, at that time, as I told you, and the Israelis know this fact, well what is the use of a few kilometres on the borders or a
few kilometres here or there, while from the Western Bank and even behind the Western Bank my missiles can reach them. There is no logic in this. Another thing I must tell you: During the October War, the Israelis on the second or third day I don’t remember, closed Eilat on the Red Sea to navigation. They occupy Sharm El Sheikh, the Egyptian Sharm El Sheikh to ensure free navigation. On the second or third day, they closed Eilat to navigation, why? Well, the occupation of Sharm El Sheikh didn’t secure any navigation because from Bab el Mandab, thousands of kilometres south, I cut it, and they knew we hit ship belonging to them. We didn’t announce this and they didn’t announce it. But they issued a statement closing Eilat to navigation until we agreed on the first disengagement agreement in which I agreed to end the siege of Bab el Mandab, then they opened Eilat, and in all this they were occupying Sharm El Sheikh to ensure free navigation in the Aqaba gulf, well the logic of borders and kilometres of borders here and there, is not logic at all after what has happened, and considering the new weapons today.

**Question**: How would you respond, Sir, to those Israelis who charge that the current Arab peace offensive is a tactical manoeuvre, to those Israelis who argue that it was only 10 years ago when the Arabs were talking of driving the Jews into the sea.
President: Well, I have already answered this to some of the congressmen who visited me lately. My initiative is genuine, and they always misunderstand me. You know, the October War would not have happened at all if they had agreed to my initiative that I issued in 1971. We would have had no October War, if they had agreed, and they said the same thing you are saying now: «It is a tactical move or so.» Well, let the facts ...

Question: Getting back to the Palestinian problem which everyone seems to agree as the core, the central problem of the Middle East, do you expect to make progress when the Israelis are refusing even to discuss the issue?

President: Well, I think this a negotiating position that they are taking now, because they can't face the whole world, especially after the United States has declared that the Palestinians should have a homeland. I think it is a negotiating position that they are taking, a bargaining position that they are taking, or they do not intend to reach peace in the area.

Question: Do you think they'll accept your formula for a Palestinian representation at Geneva, the idea of having an American Palestinian at the head of a delegation of West Bank mayors and officials?

President: Well, the answer to this, until this moment, is a nervous one, which I read
today. At first, they refuse, and then after
that, they said «No, we shall give our idea
about this, after we know the name.» It ap-
ppears that they are very nervous, and I don't
know what their attitude will be. But, before
the whole world, I don't think anyone can op-
pose this.

Question : How essential, in your view, is
it that Israel recognizes the P.L.O. ?

President : The P.L.O. is a fact, and is re-
cognized by the United Nations and the whole
public opinion of the whole world. Well, some
times, they make some nervous moves. At one
time, the old lady, Mrs. Meir, declared that
there has never been in history the word «Pale-
estine,» and she was a teacher in Milwaukee,
in the United States. I said they never should
have given her a license to teach, because
Palestine is in the history. So, they are very
nervous, and let us hope that, after solving
the psychological problem, all the things for
them will be clear.

Question : The Israelis have also said
that they won't even countenance the idea of
a mini-Palestinian state on the West Bank and
Gaza. Do you now see the only solution of the
Palestinian problem as being an autonomous
Palestinian area within a federal Jordan ?

President : I had declared this. I have de-
cclared this and I insisted that a certain con-
nection should take place between the new
Palestinian state and Jordan — neither it is confederation, or it is federation or a united Arab state, or any other form the two parties agree to, and I'm insisting that this should take place before Geneva convenes. In principle, both sides agree with me, King Hussein and the P.L.O. The only difference between me and the P.L.O. is that they say: «Let us postpone this until the Palestinian state is created, and then after that we'll negotiate this with King Hussein.» But, I still insist that there should be an official connection, declared and known before Geneva convenes.

**Question:** But aren't all these proposals pipe-dreams, as long as the Israelis, as they are, are saying they don't budge an inch from the West Bank of the Jordan.

**President:** Well, I remember before the October War, how their attitude was, and their arrogance also, and I think lots have been changed after the October War. Let us hope that, by this peace campaign, that they come to reason again, and this is one of my important motives in putting my last initiative, and visiting the Knesset and discussing the whole thing with them. They should see the real facts, if they want to live in this area as a state — they should recognize the facts in this area and they shouldn't adopt such arrogant policies.

**Question:** You've largely pinned your
hopes, Sir, on the American peace effort in bringing Israel to the conference table at Geneva. Isn’t this unrealistic, given the power and influence of the Jewish lobby in the United States and the fact that even President Carter has said that he is not prepared to withdraw any aid to Israel as a method of bringing them to the conference table?

President: Well, I have been through all this before in many meetings, they told me: «You are putting all your eggs in one basket and so», but it has been proved and, let me remind you of the communique that was issued 10 or 15 days ago, by the United States and the Soviet Union. My idea is this, I have always said that 99 per cent of the cards of this game are in hands of the United States. Why? The United States provides Israel with everything — from the loaf of bread to the Phantom — everything — the line of life: They should heed the United States. I’m not asking the United States to drop its special relations with Israel. On the contrary, they may have more than special relations with Israel. Much further than this, I said at one time that if the Israelis want to be assured or at rest and every Israeli has an aeroplane and a tank, we have no objection that the United States provides them with this, provided that the United States, which is the main supporter of Israel, tells them to use this to defend themselves in their own ter-
ritory and not use it for expansion in others' land by force. So, it is a fact, that the only party that can influence or do anything in this conflict is the United States, and it will be really a calamity if the United States doesn't resume its role as a big power responsible for peace, and as a special friend who provides Israel with the line of life. I am not asking the United States to wipe out Israel. I'm not asking them to drop their special relations — Not at all. I'm asking only that they convince the Israelis and put pressure on the Israelis for the sake of peace only.

**Question:** But President Carter, and again I bring up this point, has said categorically that the United States is not prepared to cut back on its military or other aid to Israel as a means of pressuring them towards Geneva.

**President:** Well, it is for President Carter to say what he likes, but the fact remains that, without the weight of the United States, nothing can be done in this issue, and I'm not asking Carter or the United States to stop their aid or to do anything what will harm the special relations between them and Israel. I'm only asking them to tell the Israelis that "peace built on justice will last forever, and is in the benefit of the Israelis themselves before it is in our benefit."
Question: Do you see any scope, for Canada, in the current Middle East peace-making process. There's been a lot of charges from Arab officials that our policy in the Middle East has not been as even-handed and balanced as it should be.

President: Quite right. Well, I had a very interesting discussion with the Canadian Foreign Minister, really, and I was very glad to find him acquainted with all the details of the whole problem. It was a long discussion and it was for the first time that I received the Foreign Minister of Canada, and I asked him to convey to Canadian Prime Minister my wish that Trudeau wish that Canada should share and take its role now, and in the next phases, and convincing Israel, as you are one of their friends, that peace built on justice is what all of us need in the world now. And I told your Foreign Minister also to tell Trudeau to try and find some way to take your share in any guarantees to be given in this peace agreement.

Question: Would you see Canada playing an enlarged peace-keeping role, should Geneva succeed?

President: I'm sure — I told your Foreign Minister this — I'm sure you can have a very active role, especially when, for instance, in the guarantees, there may be U.N. forces on the borders, after the agreement is signed.
I think Canada can do this marvellously and you are doing it now. He has visited your soldiers there in Ismailia, who are working on the logistics of the United Nations forces there. I think you can play a very good role. Mainly I want you to convince Israel that the arrogant policy will not be agreed upon in the world of today, and peace built on justice is what all of us need.

**Question**: What happens, Mr. President, if a Geneva peace conference breaks down or doesn’t even take place?

**President**: I must tell you this: It will be a very dangerous setback, and lots of misfortune... We can’t calculate tonight might happen. It is a crucial moment for reaching an agreement to establish peace here in this area and, as I told you, there has never been a time like this where the Arabs are ready for this. Let us hope that Israel also is ready for this.

**Question**: If there is no agreement, would another Arab-Israel war then become inevitable?

**President**: Why not? Why not, it may be but, let me use the British way: «Let us not cross the bridge until we reach it.» But any other alternative is horrible.

**Question**: Most experts are saying now that the military balance in the Middle East has never been as favourable to Israel as it
is now. Would a new war mean a devastating defeat for the Syrian and Egyptian armies?

President: A report was issued last week saying this. It said Israel has now more than 160 per cent more than it had in the October War. Syria also is 110 per cent and they said that I have only about 80 or 58 per cent of my power, because you know, the arms that I lost during the October War were not replaced, because the Soviet Union refused and is putting an embargo on arms supplies to me until this moment. But I must tell you, if you return back to the period before the October War, you will find that, Israel was superior also. In the air, it had supremacy but not superiority. On the third day (of the October War) they issued an order to their planes not to approach the Canal zone... So, I don't fear this at all, and whatever casualties they think they can inflict on us, we shall be inflicting double or triple on them. For that I am telling you, the alternative is horrible. We should work for peace now. But the alternative is horrible.

Question: Do you see a possible radicalisation of the Arab world in the event of the failure of the peacemaking process right now?

President: Well, here, with me maybe it is completely different. Whatever happens, we shall face it, we face whatever happens, with cool mind and with perfect calculation.
Question: But you've staked such of your own political fortunes on bringing about peace with Israel and improving the living standards of the people here. If you can't «deliver the goods», as they say in English, surely your own position here will become quite difficult.

President: I never calculate like this. And I told you: They gave me from 4 to 6 weeks after Nasser. I never do my calculation on the (presidential) chair that I am sitting on but I assure you of one fact: My people are 100 per cent behind me, or I wouldn't have dared to make such initiatives that I have made since 1971 until now, 1977.

Question: Will you be in a position to tackle Egypt's social and economic problems without a peace?

President: We are doing our best now. I have taken a risk for peace when Israel denied the United States the second disengagement agreement in its first phase. I took the risk after that, and I re-opened the Canal and returned the evacuees to the three cities in the Canal zone.

Question: You don't think that the Israeli perception of their position as being militarily superior at this point will make them less inclined to make concessions in negotiations?

President: Well, it has been said before that the United States, in trying to convince
them and to put them in a much more favourable mood for peace, has provided them with more sophisticated arms and a very big arsenal there. It is true, it is true. But look what is the result? The same report says that Israel can now make a war from 3 to 1 months without asking the United States to send anything to them. This means that they are defying the United States. For that I say: The responsibility lies on the United States President, Congress and people. They should know that they have provided Israel with all the weapons that make them defy the United States in the peace issue. I'm not asking for any other issue, peace issue only.

**Question:** If the current peace process bogs down, do you see the Arab oil states using the oil weapon as a means of pressuring the West and Israel?

**President:** Well, I must tell you quite frankly — I can't say this, because it is not for me to do this. I'm not an oil-producing country — I'm producing oil, yes, but a very small quantity for my requirements, and a very small margin for export. But it is for my fellow-colleagues there in the oil countries. Well, what do you think, when Israel adopts arrogance in the area, and insists on continuing to occupy our Arab land and deny the Palestinians any rights at all, what do you think? It may come to that. But it is not a
black-mail, when I say this, but it is mere facts. For that I tell you, I want to tell them in the Knesset: Here are the facts in the area. You intend to live here in this area as a country of this area, you should give head to the facts in the area.

**Question**: A lot of people seem to think that the situation here in Egypt is potentially explosive unless there is an improvement in living standards of the kind that only peace can bring. Would you agree with that assessment?

**President**: It is true that we are suffering economically, but two years ago, it was really a very tight position that we were in. We started, after that, straightening our economy. We are doing marvellously now. Our Arab colleagues are helping. They have donated 2 billion dollars this year and we have paid all our debts. I'm concentrating in the next two years on food and housing, but what I'm suffering here, the whole world is suffering. It is not something extraordinary, here. Even big nations like England, they are suffering much more than I'm suffering. Israel is suffering much more than I am suffering also, but it doesn't mean at all that we seek peace at any price. No, not at all. You don't know my people. No.

**Question**: But surely the level, Sir of poverty and illiteracy, of the housing problem
here is far worse here than any of the countries you've mentioned.

President: Not at all, not at all. We are much better than Israel, I assure you. In spite of the fact that they receive 2 billion dollars every year from the United States. But I'm not receiving 2 billion dollars every year, no, no. We shall not seek peace at any price, never.

Question: Do you see a danger of a recurrence of the food riots that took place here in Egypt earlier this year?

President: Well, it was pictured outside the world by those who don't know the real situation here, and wishful thinking from our enemy, because the only radio that said that this was a national uprising, was Moscow-Radio because, you know, my relations with them are strained until this moment. Well, the same thing happened in New York, when the electricity went out. «It was an uprising of robbers,» as I called it here, and I made a plebiscite here in my country, and 10,100,000 voted for me, and 5,600 against. Can you imagine this? It was an uprising of robbers, like I said it publicly all over the country here, and you can't imagine how my people were deeply irritated by this, even the very poor ones sent me donations to rebuild what had been destroyed during those riots. It was a
pure leftist movement that tried to exploit the riff-raff in the streets.

**Question:** What do you feel about the leftist charge that only a socialist economy can tackle the staggering problems that Egypt now faces rather than the liberal mixed economy that you, yourself, are introducing?

**President:** Well, we have here the exact example for the Third World, for the small nations, for everyone. We had this socialist system that you told me about, and now we are having this open-door policy. You can't compare at all and you may ask any man in the street, you can't compare at all.

**Question:** But isn't there a feeling that the open-door policy has benefited the rich more than it has the poor, and widened the gap between the two?

**President:** This is the Soviet propaganda, and the propaganda of the leftist here. Pure Soviet and leftist propaganda here against the regime. But, as I told you, there were 10 million voters (in favour) against 5,600.

**Question:** So, you don't see any threat to your position room, say, the left-wing, the Nasserites, and on the other side, the right-wing and the Moslem Brothers?

**President:** Why should I worry, if it was not right, would I have taken an initiative be
such as that I have taken two or three days ago? No one can do this, unless he is standing on solid ground and I'm supported by more 99 per cent of my people. When I say that 10 million voters were in favour against 5,600, this is quite obvious. It is the black propaganda against us that wants to show Egypt like this.

Question: Finally, Sir, have we, in your frank and realistic view, seen the last Arab-Israeli war?

President: I hope so. I hope so. That also is one of the motives that pushes me to go and discuss the whole thing with them (Israelis) in a very open and friendly way. And if they like to televise it and transmit it to the whole world I shall be very happy.

Question: Thank you very much, Mr. President.