PRESS CONFERENCE

held by

PRESIDENT ANWAR EL SADAT

in Kuwait

February 29, 1976

President Sadat, at the beginning of the conference, said: «I seize this opportunity to congratulate our kinsmen and brothers in Kuwait, people and Government, under the leadership of our brothers, Al Sabahs, on the occasion of the Kuwaiti Independence Day. I would have liked to participate personally were it not for a previous engagement, wishing for occasions of rejoicing and greater progress and prosperity, with God’s will.»

Question: There is an attempt to insinuate that the Arab Republic of Egypt has withdrawn from the battle. What is your comment on these insinuations?

President: As for their being insinuations, that is a fact, and not a new one at that. Try to remember that in December 1973, only a month after the battle, all that is happening now about the second disengagement, effected five days ago, had taken place then, in December 73, but in a worse picture.

The Syrian Foreign Minister visited Emir el Sabah and Saudi Arabia. Then one day, I was surprised to receive a visit from the Minister Abdel Aziz Hussein with a letter from Prince El Sabah, and God have mercy upon his soul, El Sakkaf brought me a letter
from King Feisal commenting on what Syria had said... This talk was in December '73, and implied that Egypt had withdrawn from the battle. All you are hearing at present is a repetition and has been said before. Throughout '74, '75 and '76 it was the topic of letters. Prince Sabah and King Feisal were stunned because they had been told that Egypt and walked out of the battle and had come to terms with America; that Egypt would be going to Geneva merely to announce the agreement, and many other things that no honourable man would say.

I replied to Prince Sabah and King Feisal. And we went to the Geneva Conference on December 21. But nothing happened, concerning our announcement of any agreements with the United States. Then January came and the first disengagement was effected and they repeated the same operation (talk about Egypt withdrawing out of the battle) Six months later Syria effected a first disengagement—a good thing. Then came the second disengagement (and the ensuing talk) in other words endless recurrent attempts to which we attach no importance.

As for Egypt's commitment to the Arab cause, you can trace it through history. Egypt has a commitment to its nation and a position to uphold therein. Egypt faithfully observes its national responsibilities.

With regard to the Palestine Cause, please go over my recent visit to the United States. In my speech before the U.N. General Assembly, I proposed a resolution that secured 101 votes in its favour, so that Palestine would attend all the meetings concerning the Middle East cause, my purpose was specifically, Geneva.

Also in my speech before the U.S. Congress I expounded the Palestine cause in a manner consistent with Egypt's national obligation. I believe no one could have expounded the cause the way I did, from my feelings here in Cairo, or from the heart of what Egypt believes in the Palestine cause.

Quoting regarding the existence of the Palestinians, who are living the nightmare of the Liberation, how can we attend these meetings when there is no case of us sending our delegations which will be acceptable?

President Sadat, we exist. Both the Palestinians and non-Palestinians, which is just the right thing, stand.

But the Palestinians exist.

For the sake of the Geneva Conference, which we have ever since we had entered into, we must send a delegation to Geneva, and not any delegation immediately and not out of the blue; otherwise it will not be heard.

Try to read these speeches, we should be consistent, and it is the U.S. system and not that of the U.S. system, so as not
did, from our point of view, in all the press conferences and meetings held there. I wish you would follow up in order to be aware of what we are doing for our national responsibilities and the Palestine cause.

**Question**: Mr. President, you have declared your attitude as regards the Geneva Conference and the presence of the Palestinians, while Syria and Jordan announced a contrary attitude, favouring the non-attendance of this Conference. Previously, the Palestine Liberation Organisation had also announced that it would not attend the Conference; why these contradictory attitudes? In the case of the non-attendance of Jordan, Syria and Palestine, what will be the attitude of Egypt?

**President**: Unfortunately, this contradiction in attitudes does exist. But as I say the difference is one of tactics in movement, and not one concerning the strategy we had agreed upon in Rabat which is: no ceding of a span of Arab land and no compromise over the rights of the Palestinian people.

But some people fancy sensationalism and the limelight.

For instance when in December we said that we will go to Geneva because we are not afraid of Geneva but rather Israel is... since we dare to say «ay or nay» in fact, it is in our interest to go to Geneva and expose Israel before the entire world, to draw attention, they said «No» in Syria, in opposition to me. They immediately sent messages to the Gulf claiming that Egypt had walked out of the battle and had come to terms with America... All you are hearing at present started then and in contradictory positions. Try to remember, that in my speech before the U.N. I said that we should make 1976 the Palestine Year. Why 1976 when this year is the U.S. Presidential election year and when according to the U.S. system, the U.S. President refrains from taking any decisions, so as not to commit the next President to any obligation?
Because we must keep up the momentum of the cause, Egypt's policy in this and other causes is to maintain the driving power. The initiative we wrested from the hand of Israel after 27 years, has been in our hands since the October War.

Egypt's strategy is never to give Israel any respite. For this reason let the U.S. call 1976, before the U.N. and the world at large, the Palestine Year. Palestine should join the conference with us, then all the parties concerned should attend for final settlement since the step-by-step policy is no longer applicable. The present trend should be towards an over-all settlement that would ensure peace.

This solution, without the Palestinians, is unattainable since the gist of the problem is neither Sinai nor the Golan but Palestine. This is why I said that 1976 should be the Palestine Year, during which we should prepare ourselves for a final settlement.

Then after the U.S. elections we will proceed. Why do I say that we should await the presidential elections? Because, as I said and as it has been proved true, America has a main role in settling this problem. If we ignore it, we will be fooling ourselves and our people.

This proved to be right in the recent interval during the hardest times of the U.S. President, with the conflict in America over Vietnam and the difference between the Government and the Congress. Still, despite all this, the second disengagement was effected, he is ready to conduct a similar disengagement on the Syrian front.

But some people have a flare for the limelight. We have no objection to seeking the limelight or those who seek it. What we are concerned about is our cause and we are not prepared to give in to blackmail or to outbidding.

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Question: You said that 99% of the cards of the game were in the hands of the United States. Now that the picture is somewhat revealed, you said the U.S. has a principal part. The principal part is different from the cards of the game. Has a change occurred in the cards or are they still in the hands of America?

President: No never, not possibly, I may be using different expressions but I still maintain that 99% of the cards of the game are held by America. Thus is correct. America being the party that supplies bread and butter as well as guns and «Phantoms» to Israel.

Only the United States can exert influence on Israel, as long as Israel has the support of the United States, it pays no heed to the Security Council, the United Nations or any other power. Israel seeks only America’s support.

But when America adopts a certain attitude, like the one adopted by the U.S. President, and the one regarding the second disengagement, Israel cannot but respond.

My words should not be interpreted to mean that we have no part. This is our cause and we should respect our intelligence. Unless we are prepared, attending and vigilant to our responsibility, neither America nor any one else can do anything for us. We are the principal factor.

Question: The observers talk of the possibility of an outbreak of a new war during the coming month of May, would you tell us what will become of the Sinai agreement should war break out between some Arab countries and Israel?

President: Whether war would break out this coming May, or not, it is a matter which first and foremost concerns those who claim it. What I want to say is that despite the nonsense that took place, and is still taking place, since December 73, despite it all, I
have maintained the battle, I never deserted it. Later on, they said that Egypt had concluded secret agreements. I say ‘Yes’, we did really sign three secret agreements. When I sent the Vice-President to visit your country, Syria and all the Arab countries, he showed these three secret agreements to you. You ask me what they were?

The first was an agreement stipulating that America guarantees that Israel would not attack Syria. The second is concerned with America’s pledge to bring about a second disengagement agreement, similar to the first one, on the Golan front, after a second disengagement agreement on the Egyptian front had been reached. Whilst the third agreement is one wherein the U.S. pledges to exert every possible effort towards the participation of the Palestinians in any settlement to be reached. These are the three secret pledges I obtained but did not announce. I would have possibly made a hero of myself had I then publicly declared these pledges, as others did. But we differ from them in that we are people who respect our minds and others, in that we do not broadcast such news but keep them secret. But time has come to announce them before you all. As to whether there might be war or not, it is one of two things: I have—as I mentioned—a pledge from the U.S. that would prevent Israel from attacking Syria, but what will the situation be like should Syria resort to its former attitude of embarrassment just as it did with the war of attrition in 1974, and what did this war of attrition lead to; that was the line of which I informed President Hafez El Assad and obtained for him, the starting line plus the Kuneitra. Thus, there was truly no need for launching the so-called war of attrition.

If the matter is one of outbiddings meant to involve our peoples in those outbiddings, as well as in an attempt to claim heroism, if so, no, and then we shall have more to say on this question. Whereas if Israel were to attack Syria, this would be a violation
of the American pledge, and consequently a violation of the entire agreement.

But if the process is one of imaginary heroics and the arrogance of which we frequently hear, then let its advocates bear its responsibility and the consequences.

I say that following the war of attrition in 1974, the Syrians made a disengagement agreement comprising exactly what I cited to President Hafez El Assad 6 months before, in the presence of President Boumediene who was then a witness. The Syrians lost 4 of their positions in Gabal El Sheikh as a result of the war of attrition, but through the first disengagement agreement, these positions were restored to them. In fact, it means a national commitment by which Egypt will always and forever abide, without clamour, and without yelling or buffoning. No further embarrassment should be allowed. Each of us must be held responsible for his actions.

**Question:** Mr. President, do you visualize the situation should the Geneva Conference fail for one reason or another?

**President:** As I have often told you before, we always have to maintain the momentum. This is Egypt's strategy, particularly after we snatched the initiative from Israel, and after we recovered the world's faith in us and our self-confidence as well. We have to keep up this initiative, i.e. to constantly spur on the cause in the direction of a political solution, which, if it were to fail, will leave us with no choice but to resort to fighting. Since I assumed power and since 71, I have been repeating the above-mentioned fact but no one was convinced of it, not one single Arab in the Arab world, not even in Egypt, even believed me. However, I endured, then came 1973, and I declared my intention to fight if no peaceful solution could be reached. Today we are in the process
of thinking out a peaceful solution which, since we are not dealing with each other alone but with the entire world as well—should be given every possible opportunity of success. Once we fail in finding the desired solution, there will be, undoubtedly, no substitute for war.

**Question:** Mr. President, you mentioned to the newspapers that you have submitted valuable proposals aimed at bridging the gap of Arab differences. Would it be possible to give us an idea as to the response you received from your brothers in the Emirates, Abu Dhabi, the Sultanate of Oman, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia?

**President:** Until yesterday, I've been meeting our brothers here. We are on good terms, and I found them agreeing, and understanding the necessity that the Arab atmosphere should be cleared. Talks were marked by complete and profound understanding. I also informed them of the completion of the second disengagement agreement, being put into effect in Egypt 5 or 7 days ago. We, then, moved to the next stages, discussed the accurate economic situation in Egypt, the question is not, as interpreted by a few news agencies, one of collecting money, no, it is something bigger than that. The truth about it is that Egypt is suffering at present a difficult, unsettled economic position and it was imperative to explain it, in all its details, to the Arab brothers. We have actually discussed all this in a spirit of fraternity as well as in perfect agreement on everything.

**Question:** Mr. President, you proposed war as an alternative solution if the Geneva conference should fail. Are Egypt and the whole Arab nation prepared militarily, politically and internationally to go through such war? Is the volume of the financial aid recently offered by the Arab oil-producing countries enough for the preparations for such a war? Doesn't the nature of the current
Soviet-Egyptian relations affect the volume of Egyptian armament and the effectiveness of Soviet-Egyptian arms?

**President**: I previously said that once the road to peace becomes inaccessible, there will be no other way before us but to resort to war. As to whether the Arab nation is ready for a second battle, this same question had long been posed and repeated before 1973, and still nobody believed it. Ever since the battle came to a stop, and the cease-fire being put into force, and up to the present day we have been sparing no effort in reinforcing our armed forces, notwithstanding the fact that the U.S.S.R. did not replace a single piece of arms used up in war, meanwhile, they compensated Syria for every weapon lost even before the cease-fire. Despite this, we have earnestly embarked upon the consolidation of our armed forces. Syria has actually replaced all the arms lost in the battle. since the time of the cease-fire and up to this very minute, a torrent of arms has been descending on Syria from the Soviet Union. This does not upset nor bother us, for Syria’s weapons are ours, but it does raise a strange question "Is there an Arab cause in Syria and not in Egypt?" I would like to note that for 14 months, the Soviet Union had not sent us any thing except for the tanks purchased by President Boumedienne.

When Brezhnev’s trip was cancelled in January 76, he sent us only one part of the deals due for delivery in 73, 74 and which had been suspended, whilst he refrained from sending the rest. Then, a whole year elapsed, and until this moment, he has sent me but one ship carrying things of no great use. All this shall be disclosed for I intend to reveal the whole of it to our people and to the entire Arab nation in the near future, God willing.

As to whether the Arab nation is ready or not, I say that it inevitably has to be at all times. When you come to inquire about
support, I certainly admit that we, the Arabs, must unify ourselves in order to confront the responsibilities ahead of us since they now include a grave civilizational aspect namely that Israel claims that we are a group of people who were living in the Middle Ages, but the October War substantially proved that we could assimilate modern technology. We are only in need of money and in need of funds, a matter which is not difficult for us, as Arabs, to handle, and I do appreciate all the help they offered up to the present day.

Though we may be facing a difficult economic situation, yet we are striving to find a way out of it. Throughout this process, we never forget at any moment or will we ever do the fact that not for a single minute did we desert the battle. Thus, work is in progress and so are our plans.

**Question**: What in your view, Sir, are the true reasons behind the standing disagreement between Egypt and Syria, considering that you fought side by side in October, and both your regimes are the same now as before?

**President**: Now you wish to know the real reason for the disagreement, well, I honestly don't know the reason; I am perplexed myself. I used to tell our brothers in Abou Dhabi and Qatar that we, Arabs, seem to be damned. Just before I come here, I happened to see a film about World War II — England, America, France, Canada and Poland. The free people of Poland made up of different nationalities, all assembled to fight the same war. Later on, their worst enemy, the U.S.S.R., joined in, they fought together to overcome their common enemy, Nazism. When the battle came to an end, they began to vent their differences.

We are in the very midst of the battle and yet some of us insist on abiding by the saying «differ and you shall be known», perhaps you know. I do not know the reason, because it is between the two countries, and perhaps the government in Cairo has instructed him and me to do this hand in hand.

I put this question to put him to question, do not forget it. I put it to him and me. But, if Hanafi, would you put it to me?

He answered: Now you wish to know, the war was not a war for us, it was a war for us; we were fighting because we were a nation which was not free, which was not free to which we are free today.
perhaps it is a matter of fighting over leaderships, I really don't know—it is a sort of damnation—I really have no idea what the cause of misunderstandings tending with Hafez El Assad is. You all know the loyalty I have for him, since we are people who live by values and principles, and politics to us, like anything else, should be governed by morals, and not devoid of them. My feelings towards him are that of brotherhood and devotion, because he put his hand in mine against the will of the two super-powers.

I well know that the Russians warned him against me, yet he put his hand in mine and we fought the war together. I can never forget or ignore this fact; that is why I cannot answer back, even if Hafez does wrong.

He was mistaken when he declared to the Newsweek that the war was a performance staged by Sadat, America and Israel. I was much distressed. I was asked to answer back, but I refused, because I respect my brains and the brains of the Arab nation, which has now become aware. They are capable of judging as to whether it was a staged performance or not.

As for the disagreement, it started right after the cease-fire decision; the outhiddings started then, and Syria asked the U.S.S.R., for a cease-fire 48 hours after beginning the battle. The Russian Ambassador passed this request to me but I declined to do so, and then I contacted Syria and they denied the whole matter. Now when the U.S.S.R. once more asserted that Syria had officially despatched a letter to the Soviet Command, confirming this request. I then informed that Syria had said «No» and I disregarded their claims altogether.

A third attempt was made, when the Soviet Prime Minister came and stayed for four days in Egypt trying to convince me that Syria had actually submitted three requests to which I should
consent. But I assured him that I would not involve myself in anything until I had reached the aims expected from the war and, accordingly, Kosygin left without having obtained my consent to the matter. I only accepted the cease-fire when I found myself fighting America all alone for ten days. The cable is still here, the one I despatched to Hafez El Assad on the dawn of 19-20 October, stating that I had been at war with America for ten days—something beyond my intentions. Despite my weariness, I stood all alone, ten days of war against America which I did not intend, and I repeat now, once more, I do not fight America.

What is the reason for the disagreement? Well, the reason might be that of our brothers who analyse in Syria have their own points of view; matters to which they do not consent, are simply labeled treason; they incite riots, speak of a staged performance and send people to attack our Embassy in Damascus. I too can easily break down the Syrian Embassy in Cairo if I wish, but you can see for yourselves how the Syrians flourished in the field of trade, in our country. They are free to open stores in our country and no one interferes in their business.

**Question**: News have been repeatedly spread about the new American initiative for the withdrawal of Israel from two thirds of Sinai and the essential part of Golan. It was also said that the American President will pay a visit to this region. How far are these news true, and are there any moves being undertaken at this level by the Arabs or on an international scale? A second question, is Mr. Mamdouh Salem’s visit to Kuwait still to take place?

**President**: The first question is related to the new American initiative which concerns Egypt, and that is the two-thirds of Sinai, I would like to affirm that there is no such move whatsoever. I would like to add for the information of our outbidding
brothers who claim that Egypt has withdrawn from the battle, that if I wished to disengage myself from the battle, Israel would then withdraw back to the boarder lines. It has been proposed that if I were to put an end to the state of war, I could obtain the complete withdrawal of Israelis from Sinai. I refused to continue fighting because I was not ready to indulge in a war and put to risk the national responsibilities of Egypt. This is an obligation, an honourable obligation, how was I to face my Arab brothers and colleagues otherwise? Besides, this is not the line that Egypt takes; there is not an ounce of treachery or treason in Egypt as such.

As for the offer made to Syria and to the Western Bank, well, I feel there is something cooking between Syria and Jordan — and they are the ones who should be questioned. I have no idea what it might be, and the same time I hate to anticipate events and to make haphazard accusations, as some do. I prefer to wait until matters become clear, then to comment on facts, for there is no need to widen the gap; I do not want to fight our brothers, the Arabs. Any way, we shall await the outcome of the Syrian-Jordan business.

As for Mamdouh Salem's visit it is still to take place. He did go to Saudi Arabia with me, but he had to come back because an official from the American Treasury was expected in Cairo to discuss the situation of the financial relations with America.

Question: You and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh both denied that the visit had to do exclusively with economic aspects. The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that it is within the framework of Arab strategic move, in addition to its economic aspects.
First of all, some observers note that your first trip to the region was either preceded or followed by the Sinai agreement, are there any existing plans, or perhaps plans for the near future, apart from the Geneva Conference, for securing peace in the Middle East region. And do you regard your present tour successful, politically and financially, despite rumours of a disappointment on the economic level. Thirdly, what is your estimate as to the sum to enter the Egyptian national budget from Arab aid? What is in proportion to the sum of four thousand million dollars, which you referred to as Egypt’s requirement?

President: There is more than one question. I can say that we have covered the political aspect during this trip, as it always happens when we meet with our brothers the Arabs, and we are in perfect agreement as to future plans.

I would like to say frankly, that whenever I pass by your country, something new is about to happen, but I assure you, there is nothing of the sort this time I say now that the next step to be taken is an overall solution to the problem of Palestine, in the presence of the latter. So much for the political aspect.

As for the financial aspect of the trip, just as our brother said, I have come across some comments in the foreign press stating that I was disappointed etc., etc., because I had not obtained the sum of money I wanted. But I did not come as a tax collector.

The economic situation in Egypt is rather difficult at present, and collecting money will not solve the problem. We are trying to run fresh and vigorous blood in Egypt’s veins in a proper economic method on which we can all agree.

The main objective was to bring the Arabs together, and experts, so that we could sit together and plan a «loans funds».
This is the essence of my visit and not that I am here for the purpose of collecting money. What I have in the safe is of no value in comparison with the real reason of my visit. I am here for a bigger purpose, and as long as our fellow brothers participate in the joint fund, they will always be in the picture. International organizations such as the International Bank, share in this project, and send experts to sit with us and assess the operation so as to reach the proper solutions.

That is what I truly came for and, thank God, it succeeded one hundred per cent. I can say that my trip was one hundred per cent successful because it achieved the true goal behind it, and not because of whatever amount of money I obtained.

Question: Mr. President, it was claimed that in a previous declaration you said that the Lebanese crisis did not start only these days. Do you still hold to that opinion following the recent development in the situation?

President: We held a meeting last April in Riyadh; King Khaled, President Hafez El Assad and myself. I warned them and said that fire was smouldering under the ashes. I said let us discuss a solution for the problem.

I suggested that the Secretary General of the Arab Union, whom I had informed of the situation before leaving Egypt, should hold a meeting with President Franjieh and Yasser Arafat in order to solve the problem and to conclude an agreement to which all the Lebanese parties would agree. Then, no fighting was likely to take place.

They did not take my suggestion into consideration, and the crisis exploded. Fire broke out and was no longer smouldering under the ashes. The crisis lasted ten months and then all of a sudden it ended.
Syria claimed that its interference brought the end of the crisis. However, we all know that Syria gave weapons to the parties to use them in fighting one another. Syria used to give weapons to both Moslems and Christians.

I blame the Lebanese leaders, because they are all well aware of the facts. However, they are unwilling to declare the facts or to face them. Therefore, I say that the problem has not ended, because the crux of the matter has not yet been solved.

The Lebanese leaders are not at all frank. Each one is fawning the other. Moreover, they are aware of the fact that the presidential elections and the elections of the Assembly will take place this year. That is why I am blaming all the Lebanese leaders for the crisis.

The role of Syria in ending the crisis was just to stop the shipment of weapons, as a result the battle ended.

This is the whole situation. There must be a solution, but I think that the Lebanese are the ones to find it.

Question: Mr. President, it is said that Arab and foreign capital are keeping back from Egypt because of the chaos prevailing in economic planning and the bureaucracy. What do you think of that?

President: I think it is the freedom of the press in Egypt, when you read our papers here in Kuwait, you find them filled with criticism, right, left and centre. But they give a wrong impression. The actual situation is not at all like what is said.

Whoever comes to Egypt can see for himself the foreign and Arab capital which has been invested in Egypt following the open door policy. We concluded agreement on many projects, and some of them have begun this year.

As far as I am concerned, I admit that the bureaucracy is not as bad as it is said that it is. I remember that when I was Prime Minister of Egypt, all the business papers were blocked several times. We had to face the facts and the presidency took time to deal with the situation.

We had some difficulties, but we overcame them. We have some new laws and new regulations to improve the situation.

We have not worse problems than those of other countries. We have a good reason to be proud of our achievements.

Question: Mr. President, in view of the Jordanian-Palestinian conference or meeting, where will you be represented?

President: I believe that the Jordanian-Palestinian meeting is important for the peace and stability in the region. We have an inclusive government here in Kuwait, and I believe that all the leaders of the region should be represented in such meetings.

I have confidence in the Jordanian-Palestinian meeting, and I hope that it will lead to positive results and a new chapter in the Middle East peace process.
of them have actually begun to work. The free zones have also begun their activities.

As for bureaucracy and red tape in the governmental organs I admit their existence and the problems they cause. But if you remember my speech in America, I said to the capitalists there that they must be patient, and they must give us a chance to break all the bonds which we ourselves have established over the past twenty years. I asked them to give us a chance to redraft the laws and begin a completely new round; a matter which will need time.

We have actually redrafted the laws which were a delaying factor but implementation will need time.

We have made arrangements to solve the problems of investors and to enable them to accomplish their business without any trouble, and without having to run from one place to another.

We have no such thing as chaos, and in this respect we are not worse than other countries. Just like any other country, we have a government, there is work to be done, and we must expect some errors, but there are also positive aspects to be mentioned.

Question : Mr. President, do you think that the recent Syrian-Jordanian rapprochement will solve most of the pending problems?

President : We always speak the truth, whether here in this room, in the discussions with Sheikh Sabah, before a press conference or in Egypt... We do not change our statements from one place to another.

I have declared before, I say it again; the Syrian front is incomplete without the Jordanian one, and the Jordanian front is incomplete without the Syrian one. The existence and the unity of
the two fronts is essential for the welfare of the Arab cause and its national objectives.

Therefore, we sincerely welcome this unity. But we cannot approve of plans made at the expense of others. That is what we cannot condone.

The main thing is that the Syrian and the Jordanian fronts are vital at any stage of our struggle, because they are considered as one front.