

President Trump: The Nations of the Middle East Will Have to Decide What Kind of Future They Want

The first stop on President Donald Trump's first overseas visit was Saudi Arabia over the weekend, where he spoke to leaders from several Arab countries at a summit aimed at coming together to address radical Islamic terrorism and peace in the Middle East.

Saturday, he gave the following speech at the summit:

I want to thank King Salman for his extraordinary words, and the magnificent kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting today's summit. I am honored to be received by such gracious hosts. I have always heard about the splendor of your country and the kindness of your citizens, but words do not do justice to the grandeur of this remarkable place and the incredible hospitality you have shown us from the moment we arrived.

You also hosted me in the treasured home of King Abdulaziz, the founder of the kingdom who united your great people. Working alongside another beloved leader—American President Franklin Roosevelt—King Abdulaziz began the enduring partnership between our two countries. King Salman: Your father would be so proud to see that you are continuing his legacy—and just as he opened the first chapter in our partnership, today we begin a new chapter that will bring lasting benefits to our citizens.

Let me now also extend my deep and heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of the distinguished heads of state who made this journey here today. You greatly honor us with your presence, and I send the warmest regards from my country to

yours. I know that our time together will bring many blessings to both your people and mine.

I stand before you as a representative of the American people, to deliver a message of friendship and hope. That is why I chose to make my first foreign visit a trip to the heart of the Muslim world, to the nation that serves as custodian of the two holiest sites in the Islamic Faith.

In my inaugural address to the American people, I pledged to strengthen America's oldest friendships and to build new partnerships in pursuit of peace. I also promised that America will not seek to impose our way of life on others, but to outstretch our hands in the spirit of cooperation and trust.

Our vision is one of peace, security and prosperity—in this region and in the world.

Our goal is a coalition of nations who share the aim of stamping out extremism and providing our children a hopeful future that does honor to God.

And so this historic and unprecedented gathering of leaders—unique in the history of nations—is a symbol to the world of our shared resolve and our mutual respect. To the leaders and citizens of every country assembled here today, I want you to know that the United States is eager to form closer bonds of friendship, security, culture and commerce.

For Americans, this is an exciting time. A new spirit of optimism is sweeping our country: in just a few months, we have created almost a million new jobs, added over \$3 trillion of new value, lifted the burdens on American industry and made record investments in our military that will protect the safety of our people and enhance the security of our wonderful friends and allies—many of whom are here today.

Now, there is even more blessed news I am pleased to share with you. My meetings with King Salman, the crown prince and the deputy crown prince, have been filled with great warmth, good will and tremendous cooperation.

Yesterday, we signed historic agreements with the kingdom that will invest almost \$400 billion in our two countries and create many thousands of jobs in America and Saudi Arabia.

This landmark agreement includes the announcement of a \$110 billion Saudi-funded defense purchase—and we will be sure to help our Saudi friends to get a good deal from our great American defense companies. This agreement will help the Saudi military to take a greater role in security operations.

We have also started discussions with many of the countries present today on strengthening partnerships and forming new ones to advance security and stability across the Middle East and beyond.

Later today, we will make history again with the opening of a new Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology—located right here in this central part of the Islamic world. This groundbreaking new center represents a clear declaration that Muslim-majority countries must take the lead in combating radicalization, and I want to express our gratitude to King Salman for this strong demonstration of leadership.

I have had the pleasure of welcoming several of the leaders present today to the White House, and I look forward to working with all of you.

America is a sovereign nation and our first priority is always the safety and security of our citizens. We are not here to lecture—we are not here to tell other people how to live, what to do, who to be or how to worship. Instead, we

are here to offer partnership—based on shared interests and values—to pursue a better future for us all.

Here at this summit, we will discuss many interests we share together. But above all we must be united in pursuing the one goal that transcends every other consideration. That goal is to meet history's great test—to conquer extremism and vanquish the forces of terrorism.

Young Muslim boys and girls should be able to grow up free from fear, safe from violence and innocent of hatred.

And young Muslim men and women should have the chance to build a new era of prosperity for themselves and their peoples.

God's help, this summit will mark the beginning of the end for those who practice terror and spread its vile creed. At the same time, we pray this special gathering may someday be remembered as the beginning of peace in the Middle East—and maybe, even all over the world.

But this future can only be achieved through defeating terrorism and the ideology that drives it.

Few nations have been spared its violent reach.

America has suffered repeated barbaric attacks—from the atrocities of September 11th to the devastation of the Boston bombing, to the horrible killings in San Bernardino and Orlando.

The nations of Europe have also endured unspeakable horror. So too have the nations of Africa and even South America. India, Russia, China and Australia have been victims.

But, in sheer numbers, the deadliest toll has been exacted on the innocent people of Arab, Muslim and Middle Eastern nations. They have borne the brunt of the killings and the worst of the destruction in this wave of fanatical violence.

Some estimates hold that more than 95 percent of the victims of terrorism are themselves Muslim.

We now face a humanitarian and security disaster in this region that is spreading across the planet. It is a tragedy of epic proportions. No description of the suffering and depravity can begin to capture its full measure.

The true toll of ISIS, Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas and so many others, must be counted not only in the number of dead. It must also be counted in generations of vanished dreams.

The Middle East is rich with natural beauty, vibrant cultures, and massive amounts of historic treasures. It should increasingly become one of the great global centers of commerce and opportunity.

This region should not be a place from which refugees flee, but to which newcomers flock.

Saudi Arabia is home to the holiest sites in one of the world's great faiths. Each year millions of Muslims come from around the world to Saudi Arabia to take part in the Hajj. In addition to ancient wonders, this country is also home to modern ones—including soaring achievements in architecture.

Egypt was a thriving center of learning and achievement thousands of years before other parts of the world. The wonders of Giza, Luxor and Alexandria are proud monuments to that ancient heritage.

All over the world, people dream of walking through the ruins of Petra in Jordan. Iraq was the cradle of civilization and is a land of natural beauty. And the United Arab Emirates has reached incredible heights with glass and steel, and turned earth and water into spectacular works of art.

The entire region is at the center of the key shipping lanes of the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, and the Straits of Hormuz.

The potential of this region has never been greater. 65 percent of its population is under the age of 30. Like all young men and women, they seek great futures to build, great national projects to join, and a place for their families to call home.

But this untapped potential, this tremendous cause for optimism, is held at bay by bloodshed and terror. There can be no coexistence with this violence.

There can be no tolerating it, no accepting it, no excusing it, and no ignoring it.

Every time a terrorist murders an innocent person, and falsely invokes the name of God, it should be an insult to every person of faith.

Terrorists do not worship God, they worship death.

If we do not act against this organized terror, then we know what will happen. Terrorism's devastation of life will continue to spread. Peaceful societies will become engulfed by violence. And the futures of many generations will be sadly squandered.

If we do not stand in uniform condemnation of this killing—then not only will we be judged by our people, not only will we be judged by history, but we will be judged by God.

This is not a battle between different faiths, different sects, or different civilizations.

This is a battle between barbaric criminals who seek to obliterate human life, and decent people of all religions who seek to protect it.

This is a battle between good and evil.

When we see the scenes of destruction in the wake of terror, we see no signs that those murdered were Jewish or Christian, Shia or Sunni. When we look upon the streams of innocent blood soaked into the ancient ground, we cannot see the faith or sect or tribe of the victims—we see only that they were children of God whose deaths are an insult to all that is holy.

But we can only overcome this evil if the forces of good are united and strong—and if everyone in this room does their fair share and fulfills their part of the burden.

Terrorism has spread across the world. But the path to peace begins right here, on this ancient soil, in this sacred land.

America is prepared to stand with you—in pursuit of shared interests and common security.

But the nations of the Middle East cannot wait for American power to crush this enemy for them. The nations of the Middle East will have to decide what kind of future they want for themselves, for their countries and for their children.

It is a choice between two futures—and it is a choice America cannot make for you.

A better future is only possible if your nations drive out the terrorists and extremists. Drive. Them. Out. Drive them out of your places of worship. Drive them out of your communities. Drive them out of your holy land and drive them out of this earth.

For our part, America is committed to adjusting our strategies to meet evolving threats and new facts. We will discard those strategies that have not worked—and will apply

new approaches informed by experience and judgment. We are adopting a principled realism, rooted in common values and shared interests.

Our friends will never question our support, and our enemies will never doubt our determination. Our partnerships will advance security through stability, not through radical disruption. We will make decisions based on real-world outcomes—not inflexible ideology. We will be guided by the lessons of experience, not the confines of rigid thinking. And, wherever possible, we will seek gradual reforms—not sudden intervention.

We must seek partners, not perfection—and to make allies of all who share our goals.

Above all, America seeks peace—not war.

Muslim nations must be willing to take on the burden, if we are going to defeat terrorism and send its wicked ideology into oblivion.

The first task in this joint effort is for your nations to deny all territory to the foot soldiers of evil. Every country in the region has an absolute duty to ensure that terrorists find no sanctuary on their soil.

Many are already making significant contributions to regional security: Jordanian pilots are crucial partners against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Saudi Arabia and a regional coalition have taken strong action against Houthi militants in Yemen. The Lebanese Army is hunting ISIS operatives who try to infiltrate their territory. Emirati troops are supporting our Afghan partners. In Mosul, American troops are supporting Kurds, Sunnis and Shias fighting together for their homeland. Qatar, which hosts the U.S. Central Command, is a crucial strategic partner. Our longstanding partnership with Kuwait and Bahrain continue to enhance security in the region. And courageous Afghan soldiers are making tremendous

sacrifices in the fight against the Taliban, and others, in the fight for their country.

As we deny terrorist organizations control of territory and populations, we must also strip them of their access to funds. We must cut off the financial channels that let ISIS sell oil, let extremists pay their fighters, and help terrorists smuggle their reinforcements.

I am proud to announce that the nations here today will be signing an agreement to prevent the financing of terrorism, called the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center—co-chaired by the United States and Saudi Arabia, and joined by every member of the Gulf Cooperation Council. It is another historic step in a day that will be long remembered.

I also applaud the Gulf Cooperation Council for blocking funders from using their countries as a financial base for terror and designating Hezbollah as a terrorist organization last year. Saudi Arabia also joined us this week in placing sanctions on one of the most senior leaders of Hezbollah.

Of course, there is still much work to do.

That means honestly confronting the crisis of Islamist extremism and the Islamist terror groups it inspires. And it means standing together against the murder of innocent Muslims, the oppression of women, the persecution of Jews and the slaughter of Christians.

Religious leaders must make this absolutely clear: Barbarism will deliver you no glory—piety to evil will bring you no dignity. If you choose the path of terror, your life will be empty, your life will be brief and your soul will be condemned.

And political leaders must speak out to affirm the same idea: Heroes don't kill innocents; they save them. Many nations here today have taken important steps to raise up

that message. Saudi Arabia's Vision for 2030 is an important and encouraging statement of tolerance, respect, empowering women, and economic development.

The United Arab Emirates has also engaged in the battle for hearts and souls—and with the U.S., launched a center to counter the online spread of hate. Bahrain too is working to undermine recruitment and radicalism.

I also applaud Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon for their role in hosting refugees. The surge of migrants and refugees leaving the Middle East depletes the human capital needed to build stable societies and economies. Instead of depriving this region of so much human potential, Middle Eastern countries can give young people hope for a brighter future in their home nations and regions.

That means promoting the aspirations and dreams of all citizens who seek a better life—including women, children and followers of all faiths. Numerous Arab and Islamic scholars have eloquently argued that protecting equality strengthens Arab and Muslim communities.

For many centuries the Middle East has been home to Christians, Muslims and Jews living side-by-side. We must practice tolerance and respect for each other once again—and make this region a place where every man and woman, no matter their faith or ethnicity, can enjoy a life of dignity and hope.

In that spirit, after concluding my visit in Riyadh, I will travel to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and then to the Vatican—visiting many of the holiest places in the three Abrahamic Faiths. If these three faiths can join together in cooperation, then peace in this world is possible—including peace between Israelis and Palestinians. I will be meeting with both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Starving terrorists of their territory, their funding, and the false allure of their craven ideology, will be the basis for defeating them.

But no discussion of stamping out this threat would be complete without mentioning the government that gives terrorists all three—safe harbor, financial backing, and the social standing needed for recruitment. It is a regime that is responsible for so much instability in the region. I am speaking of course of Iran.

From Lebanon to Iraq to Yemen, Iran funds, arms and trains terrorists, militias, and other extremist groups that spread destruction and chaos across the region. For decades, Iran has fueled the fires of sectarian conflict and terror.

It is a government that speaks openly of mass murder, vowing the destruction of Israel, death to America and ruin for many leaders and nations in this room.

Among Iran's most tragic and destabilizing interventions have been in Syria. Bolstered by Iran, Assad has committed unspeakable crimes, and the United States has taken firm action in response to the use of banned chemical weapons by the Assad Regime—launching 59 tomahawk missiles at the Syrian air base from where that murderous attack originated.

Responsible nations must work together to end the humanitarian crisis in Syria, eradicate ISIS, and restore stability to the region.

The Iranian regime's longest-suffering victims are its own people. Iran has a rich history and culture, but the people of Iran have endured hardship and despair under their leaders' reckless pursuit of conflict and terror.

Until the Iranian regime is willing to be a partner for peace, all nations of conscience must work together to isolate Iran, deny it funding for terrorism and pray for the

day when the Iranian people have the just and righteous government they deserve.

The decisions we make will affect countless lives.

King Salman, I thank you for the creation of this great moment in history, and for your massive investment in America, its industry and its jobs. I also thank you for investing in the future of this part of the world.

This fertile region has all the ingredients for extraordinary success—a rich history and culture, a young and vibrant people, a thriving spirit of enterprise. But you can only unlock this future if the citizens of the Middle East are freed from extremism, terror and violence.

We in this room are the leaders of our peoples. They look to us for answers, and for action. And when we look back at their faces, behind every pair of eyes is a soul that yearns for justice.

Today, billions of faces are now looking at us, waiting for us to act on the great question of our time.

Will we be indifferent in the presence of evil? Will we protect our citizens from its violent ideology? Will we let its venom spread through our societies? Will we let it destroy the most holy sites on earth?

If we do not confront this deadly terror, we know what the future will bring—more suffering and despair.

But if we act—if we leave this magnificent room unified and determined to do what it takes to destroy the terror that threatens the world—then there is no limit to the great future our citizens will have.

The birthplace of civilization is waiting to begin a new renaissance. Just imagine what tomorrow could bring.

Glorious wonders of science, art, medicine and commerce to inspire humankind. Great cities built on the ruins of shattered towns. New jobs and industries that will lift up millions of people. Parents who no longer worry for their children, families who no longer mourn for their loved ones, and the faithful who finally worship without fear.

These are the blessings of prosperity and peace. These are the desires that burn with a righteous flame in every human heart. And these are the just demands of our beloved peoples.

I ask you to join me, to join together, to work together and to fight together—because united, we will not fail.

Thank you. God bless You. God bless your countries. And God bless the United States of America.

Watch the entire speech in the video clip above. {eoa}