

immediate cessation of all acts of violence and to cooperate fully with the US Special Envoy Zinni. Minister Jaswant Singh told Deputy Prime Minister Peres that by incarcerating President Arafat "by virtually imprisoning" him, Israel was compounding difficulties rather than lessening them, making the task of bringing peace that much more difficult.

6. The External Affairs Minister conveyed to President Arafat that India considers him to be the symbol of Palestinian nationhood and was concerned about his safety and well-being. The situation needed to be contained and controlled. Already, a large number of innocent civilians on both sides had been killed and this needed to be stopped. The situation was distressing and not acceptable that it had come to such a pass. India stood by the people of Palestine in their hour of need. The External Affairs Minister conveyed to both President Arafat and Deputy Prime Minister Peres that India stood ready to do anything to bring peace back in West Asia.

Mr. President,

7. Special Envoy of President Yasser Arafat, Hani Al-Hassan, called on Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee this morning in New Delhi. President Arafat conveyed his appreciation for India's consistent support to him and to the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people. Prime Minister Vajpayee expressed concern about President Arafat's health and well-being. He stressed that India is deeply troubled at the current situation, and stands ready to do whatever it can to work for peace in the region.

Mr. President,

8. In conclusion, I would like to quote from Hon'ble Jaswant Singh's statement made in Shanghai on April 1 during his recent visit to China. Referring to the situation in the Middle East, the External Affairs Minister said and I quote "... President Arafat represents the authority of the Palestinian people; to subject President Arafat to this treatment is to denude the Palestinians of the sense of their nationhood. This must stop. What must also stop are acts of terrorism. Violence begetting violence is not an answer. UNSC Resolution 1397 enjoins on Israel and Palestine to maintain peace. That is mandatory. Equally, all other agreements in this regard - the Tenet Plan, the Mitchell Report, UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 and Land for Peace can bring the peace process on the rails. This is not just a concern for the Middle East, but a much larger global concern." Unquote. To this, I would only add the immediate and effective implementation of Resolution 1402 adopted in the early hours of the morning of March 30. We call upon the Security Council to work together with the parties concerned in order to bring an end to violence and work towards immediate resumption of dialogue and negotiations so as

to achieve lasting peace and security for all in the region.

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