

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 3, 1978

To Prime Minister Begin

This is a private and personal letter, and I would appreciate your honoring its confidentiality. I want to express myself frankly and directly to you personally.

During the past year under your leadership of Israel we have made remarkable progress toward peace. The boldness and leadership qualities exhibited by you and President Sadat have contributed to a new and better relationship between Israel and Egypt which was not anticipated by the rest of the world. In my opinion you are the leader who, in the foreseeable future, can and must continue this progress. You have a strong hold on the government, loyalty among your associates, and the

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well deserved confidence of the people of your country.

It is imperative that every effort be made to capitalize on this unprecedented opportunity to consummate a definitive peace treaty between Israel and Egypt and then to match this achievement with other agreements between your nation and your other neighbors.

Although the recent discussions have produced minimal progress, broad areas of agreement do exist, providing a basis for sustained hope. Unless we take advantage of this opportunity now, however, those of us who presently serve as leaders of our respective nations may not again have such a chance to advance the cause of peace in the Middle East.

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After hours of detailed discussions on several occasions with both you and President Sadat, in private and in group sessions, I am convinced of your mutual desire for peace. That desire is obviously shared by the people of both nations. Nevertheless, the high hopes of last winter have now been dissipated, with potentially serious consequences.

It is time, therefore, for a renewed effort at the highest level. My hope is that during this visit by Secretary Vance to the Middle East progress and harmony will be indicated by positive statements and the avoidance of public disputes.

Then, as soon as is convenient, I would like to meet personally with you and President Sadat

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to search for additional avenues toward peace.

Secretary Vance can discuss with you the arrangements for a time and place. Unnecessary delay would be a mistake. I have no strong preference about the location, but Camp David is available. My hope is that the three of us, along with our top advisors, can work together in relative seclusion. Maximum direct contact between you and President Sadat is very important.

To create the best climate for our meeting, public statements should be constructive and positive, expectations should not be raised too high, and quiet and mutual preparation should lay a foundation for optimum progress.

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It is important that this proposal be kept completely confidential. President Sadat is being similarly approached. A time for announcement can be mutually set after we have fixed the date. Secretary Vance is familiar with my schedule, and I hope that through him you will send to me your ideas and advice.

I look forward to an early opportunity to consider with you again one of the most important and challenging issues ever decided by political leaders.

Please remember that you have my continuing friendship and personal best wishes as we work together as partners in a common search for peace.

Sincerely,
Jimmy Carter