

Comparing Texts: Bush and bin Laden debate United States Air Strikes in Afghanistan

A Statement by United States President George W. Bush

The following is an edited version of a videotaped statement by President George W. Bush explaining United States air strikes in Afghanistan, Oct. 6, 2001. Source: *NYT*, Oct. 7, 2001, B6.

The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people. And we are the friends of almost a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith. The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name.

Today we focus on Afghanistan. But the battle is broader. Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril.

I'm speaking to you today from the Treaty Room of the White House, a place where American presidents have worked for peace. We're a peaceful nation. Yet as we have learned so suddenly and so tragically, there can be no peace in a world of sudden terror. In the face of today's new threat the only way to pursue peace is to pursue those who threaten it.

We did not ask for this mission. But we will fulfill it. The name of today's military operation is "Enduring Freedom." We defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.

The battle is now joined on many fronts. We will not waver, we will not tire, we will not falter and we will not fail. Peace and freedom will prevail. Thank you. May God continue to bless America.

A Statement by Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden

The following is an edited version of a videotaped statement by Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden in response to United States air strikes in Afghanistan, Oct. 6, 2001. Source: *NYT*, Oct. 7, 2001, B7.

What America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted. Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more than 80 years, of humiliation and disgrace, its sons killed and their blood spilled, its sanctities desecrated.

A million innocent children are dying at this time as we speak, killed in Iraq without any guilt. We hear no denunciation, we hear no edict from the hereditary rulers. In these days, Israeli tanks rampage across Palestine, in Ramallah, Rafah and Beit Jala and many other parts of the land of Islam, and we do not hear anyone raising his voice or reacting.

In a nation at the far end of the world, Japan, hundreds of thousands, young and old, were killed and (they say) this is not a world crime. To them it is not a clear issue.

I swear to God that America will not live in peace before peace reigns in Palestine, and before all the army of infidels depart the land of Mohammed, peace be upon him.

God is the Greatest and glory be to Islam.

Questions

1. President Bush states that America is a friend to the Afghan and Islamic people around the world. In your view, why is he making this point?
2. President Bush claims "We defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear." In your view, is this a legitimate claim?
3. Osama bin Laden claims that what "America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted." In your opinion, what does he mean?
4. When bin Laden says Islamic people have faced "humiliation and disgrace" for more than 80 years, he is referring to the period just after World War I. In your opinion, why does he trace the start of this conflict back to that era?
5. What are bin Laden's conditions for peace between the United States and the Islamic world?

Both Bush and bin Laden call on God for strength and support. How do you respond to their invocation of God for their causes? Explain.