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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS IMPROMPTU PRESS GAGGLE IN ADVANCE
OF TRIP TO ISRAEL**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Up front, I'm looking forward to my trip to Israel. This will be the fourth trip I've made to Israel. Look, it's a very sensitive moment right now in Israel. The trip was planned to talk about anti-Semitism and the problem that we're seeing in a lot of western nations with anti-Semitic attacks and what governments have to do to address that. But obviously, it's taken on extra meaning now because of the crisis in Israel. I think it's very important to stand in solidarity with Israel, and I'm proud to be going in a moment when Israel is in need and where friends need to stand and be counted.

So, you know, we're looking forward to what's obviously going to be a sober environment and a difficult environment, but I look forward to meeting with my fellow Israeli mayors and mayors from around the world who stand in solidarity with Israel, and obviously meeting with Israeli officials about the security situation as well.

Question: Can you talk about whether you're going to meet with some Palestinian school children and what message you hope that sends?

Mayor: Look, obviously this is a region that needs peace deeply, and peace is elusive. One of the ways we foster peace is through inclusion. And our hopes have to be with the young people at this point. The previous generation hasn't managed to find a path to peace. So, this school brings together Palestinian students and Israeli students in commonality, in common cause. And it's a hopeful sign, so I wanted to experience it. The way forward has to be through inclusion. This is true in all societies. So, I'll be in solidarity with Israel, but I also think it's important to encourage youth on all sides to work together.

Question: Did you consider at all meeting with Palestinian officials during your stay?

Mayor: No, I think, especially given what's happening, that's not appropriate. But I do think it's very appropriate to meet with these young people, who I think offer a sign of hope.

Question: Are you concerned or worried at all with all of the violence that is going on there?

Mayor: No, I believe – look, I'm concerned for the people of Israel. Let me separate me from them. I'm concerned about what's happening to the people. I'm obviously deeply troubled by the attacks on innocent Israelis and the atmosphere there. And I think the fact is it's a moment that really causes a lot of heartbreak – that innocent lives are being taken. But in terms of my own safety, I believe that, you know, Israeli security forces obviously know what they're doing and NYPD knows what it's doing and I'm very comfortable with that.

Question: Mr. Mayor, the Center for Constitutional Rights sent you a letter yesterday. They are criticizing the way that your trip is being paid for. They say that it makes you beholden to this individual in the future. Can you respond to that?

Mayor: No, the individual – you know, the way this works is this – the individual literally contributes to the city treasury of New York to pay for the trip. It's absolutely appropriate, absolutely legal. This is a way of making sure the taxpayers are not burdened. But it's an important trip, and it means something very important to a lot of people in this city because of our very close ties to Israel. So, I think this is appropriate and I do not feel beholden at all.

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