

Press Releases: Commemoration of International Day of UN Peacekeepers

Press Statement
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
May 29, 2018

Today, on the annual International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, we mark 70 years of UN peacekeeping, and the service and sacrifice of thousands of uniformed and civilian personnel. UN peacekeepers serve under dangerous and uncertain circumstances, and too often pay the ultimate sacrifice. We honor in particular today the more than 3,700 peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of peace over the past seven decades.

As we mark the past and present of UN peacekeeping, the United States is committed to a future with better, smarter peacekeeping operations that more effectively and efficiently address conflicts, support political solutions, and meet the needs of people on the ground. That commitment includes remaining the world's top financial contributor to UN peacekeeping, as well as the leading provider of training and equipment to troop- and police-contributing countries.

Today we recognize the powerful role peacekeeping missions have played in supporting sustainable transitions to peace in countries from Sierra Leone to Cambodia, Timor-Leste to Namibia, Liberia to Cote d'Ivoire. As President Trump affirmed during remarks at last year's UN General Assembly, "I am confident that if we work together and champion truly bold reforms, the United Nations will emerge as a stronger, more effective, more just, and greater force for peace and harmony in the world."

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Release of the 2017 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom

Remarks
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

Press Briefing Room
Washington, DC
May 29, 2018

MS NAUERT: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the State Department. Thank you for coming in so early this morning for the unveiling of the [International Religious Freedom Report](#). I'd like to first introduce Secretary Pompeo, who will give some brief remarks and an announcement. And then Ambassador Sam Brownback, who is our global ambassador for religious freedom, will then unveil the report and take some of your questions. And I'll moderate, since we all know one another, so I'll call on you. And then we'll

have to wrap it up.

Thank you so much. Secretary Pompeo, go right ahead, sir.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thanks, Heather.

Good morning, everyone. It is my great privilege to join you this morning and to release the [2017 International Religious Freedom Report](#). This report is a testament to the United States' historic role in preserving and advocating for religious freedom around the world.

Religious freedom is in the American bloodstream. It's what brought the pilgrims here from England. Our founders understood it as our first freedom. That is why they articulated it so clearly in the First Amendment. As James Madison wrote years before he was president or secretary of state, quote, "conscience is the most sacred of all property," end of quote.

Religious freedom was vital to America's beginning. Defending it is critical to our future.

Religious freedom is not only ours. It is a right belonging to every individual on the globe. President Trump stands with those who yearn for religious liberty. Our Vice President stands with them, and so do I.

Advancing liberty and religious freedom advances America's interests. Where fundamental freedoms of religion, expression, press, and peaceful assembly are under attack, we find conflict, instability, and terrorism. On the other hand, governments and societies that champion these freedoms are more secure, stable, and peaceful.

So for all of these reasons, protecting and promoting global respect for religious freedom is a priority of the Trump administration. As our National Security Strategy so clearly states: "Our Founders understood religious freedom not as the state's creation, but as the gift of God to every person and a fundamental right for a flourishing society." We're committed to promoting religious freedom around the world, both now and in the future.

And Ambassador Brownback and I will talk about that today. We have underscored that commitment with his appointment. It's great to have a friend and a fellow Kansan up here with me today. International religious freedom deserves to be a front-burner issue, and Ambassador Brownback and I, with him leading the way, will ensure that it continues to be so.

The ambassador and our team in our Office of International Religious Freedom have been working tirelessly throughout the federal government and with our colleagues here at the department and in embassies overseas with NGOs, foreign partners to defend religious freedom in the farthest corners of the globe.

This report demonstrates the hard work of American diplomats to protect American and universal values. I'm proud of my team in completing this report. The release of the 2017 International Religious Freedom Report is critical to our mission to defend religious liberty. It brings to light the

state of religious freedom all over the world. It documents, across 200 countries and territories, reports of violations and abuses committed by governments, terrorist groups, and individuals so that we may work together to solve them.

I have a number of examples here. For the sake of time, I'm going to pass through them. But know that we are working in countries around the world to ensure that religious freedom remains the case, and where it is not, that it becomes so.

Governor – or excuse me, Ambassador Brownback will provide to you more details. But we are very excited^[1] to announce that later this year we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act, a law that reinforces America's commitment to religious freedom and to helping the persecuted. It is also the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN, which proclaimed the importance of human rights, including the right for religious freedom.

The world has made important strides, but we still have a lot of work to do. In that regard, I am pleased to announce that the United States will host the first ever Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom at the Department of State on July 25th and 26th of this year.

I look forward to hosting my counterparts from likeminded governments, as well as representatives of international organizations, religious communities, and civil society to reaffirm our commitment to religious freedom as a universal human right. This ministerial, we expect, will break new ground. It will not just be a discussion group. It will be about action. We look forward to identifying concrete ways to push back against persecution and ensure greater respect for religious freedom for all.

The ministerial will also be my first to host as a Secretary of State, and that's very intentional. Religious freedom is indeed a universal human right that I will fight for, one that our team at the department will continue to fight for, and one that I know President Trump will continue to fight for. The United States will not stand by as spectators. We will get in the ring and stand in solidarity with every individual who seeks to enjoy their most fundamental of human rights.

Thank you all for your time. Ambassador Brownback, thank you for this putting this together. I look forward to working with you on it.

QUESTION: Sir, what about the religious prisoners in North Korea? Are you going to discuss that? Are you going to meet in New York?

QUESTION: Sir, do you plan to meet with Kim Yong-chol?

^[1] excited

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: United States Hosts First-Of-Its-Kind Chinese Study Visit To Observe Drug Prevention and Treatment Best Practices

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
May 29, 2018

Today, a senior-level Chinese delegation is beginning a first-of-its-kind study visit to observe drug prevention and treatment practices in the United States. This U.S.-China effort to reduce demand for narcotics complements recent productive cooperation to reduce supply, most notably by placing restrictive controls on synthetic opioids.

The study tour, featuring stops in the Washington D.C. area and New York City, will highlight the roles that U.S. federal agencies, private treatment centers, and non-government community coalitions play in helping Americans to fight substance use. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) worked with the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) in arranging the Chinese visit.

As addiction knows no national borders, and illicit drug use anywhere enriches transnational criminal drug traffickers, State Department efforts aim to reduce demand for illicit drugs around the world. The United States looks forward to sharing best practices in the areas of prevention and treatment, and further advancing productive U.S.-China counternarcotics cooperation.

For further information, please contact INL-PAPD@state.gov, and follow the

INL Bureau @StateINL on Twitter and Facebook.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Azerbaijan National Day

Press Statement
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
May 27, 2018

On behalf of the Government of the United States and the American people, it is my pleasure to congratulate the Government and people of Azerbaijan on their Republic Day.

2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which was the first Muslim-majority parliamentary republic, and one of the first countries in the world to grant women the right to vote.

Since the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has been a valued partner of the United States. We look forward to continuing our longstanding cooperation and deepening our work together on security, energy, and democratic governance and to further strengthen ties between our countries.

We also remain committed to finding a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and urge the parties to resume intensive negotiations as soon as possible.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Assad Regime Intentions in the Southwest De-escalation Zone

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
May 25, 2018

The United States is concerned by reports of an impending Assad regime operation in southwest Syria within the boundaries of the de-escalation zone negotiated between the United States, Jordan, and the Russian Federation last year and reaffirmed between Presidents Trump and Putin in Da Nang, Vietnam in November. The United States remains committed to maintaining the stability of the southwest de-escalation zone and to the ceasefire underpinning it. We also caution the Syrian regime against any actions that risk broadening the conflict or jeopardize the ceasefire. As a guarantor of this de-escalation area with Russia and Jordan, the United States will take firm and appropriate measures in response to Assad regime violations.

The Presidents of the United States and Russia agreed in Da Nang to de-escalate the conflict. This agreement must be enforced and respected. Russia has declared to the world and to the UNSC that it will “guarantee” ceasefires in its self-declared de-escalation zones. Unfortunately, the Assad regime, with the support of Russia and Iran, has repeatedly violated these de-escalation zones, most recently in its brutal assault on East Ghouta. The Assad regime and its allies continue to prolong the conflict by ignoring their own de-escalation agreements and stonewalling the Geneva process.

Russia is duly responsible as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to use its diplomatic and military advantage over the Assad regime to stop

attacks and compel the Assad regime to cease further military offensives. Russia has blocked UN Security Council actions that would have held Assad accountable for the use of chemical weapons and possibly saved innocent lives in Syria 11 times so far in this conflict. Six of those vetoes related to the use of chemical weapons, and others were providing humanitarian access and aid, and ceasing attacks against civilians. Russia should live up to its self-professed commitments in accordance with UNSCR 2254 and the southwest ceasefire, embodied in the Da Nang Statement issued by Presidents Trump and Putin.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.