

Press Releases: Interview With Chris Mitchell of Christian Broadcast Network

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Cathedral of the Nativity
Cairo, Egypt
January 11, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thanks for joining us on CBN News. (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hi, and it's great to be with you.

QUESTION: You just had a tour of this cathedral. It was given as a gift by President al-Sisi to the church. Why is this so important?

SECRETARY POMPEO: This is a very special place just recently opened. We are sitting in the heart of Cairo, the heart of Egypt, and we have this cathedral demonstrating that every place in the world can have religious freedom – opportunity for individuals to worship in the way they see fit, and here a chance to praise the Lord in Cairo. It's a pretty special place. It's an enormous, wonderful, beautiful cathedral.

QUESTION: Why is religious freedom so important to the Trump administration?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Because it's at the heart of all the freedoms that every individual should have, right? Every human being has the dignity that comes with their life and religious freedom is a central element to that. For individuals to be able to worship in the way they want or if they choose not to worship, so be it. To have that in this place too is so special, a place which isn't everywhere here in the Middle East. For President Sisi to have done this is really special and, I think, important to Cairo, to Egypt, and to the world.

QUESTION: You mentioned him in your speech as well. Do you see him as a model of a leader here in the Middle East?

SECRETARY POMPEO: He has really taken to heart the ideal of religious freedom and he's done so with great power and great courage, and he is to be lauded

for that.

QUESTION: You just had a major speech about the Middle East, and 10 years ago, another major speech was given here in Cairo. Would it be fair to say that your speech was “America is back and it’s a force for good?”

SECRETARY POMPEO: Absolutely. I want people throughout the Middle East and the world to know that America’s involvement in the Middle East is absolutely a force for good. We come here with no intention to oppress or to dominate, but rather to free, to create opportunities for every individual throughout the Middle East to live their life, to have the freedoms that we are all so blessed to have in the United States.

QUESTION: One of your themes of the trip is about Iran and the danger to the Middle East. Do you see nations aligning up with the United States against the influence of Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So our team has done good work. We built an enormous coalition that ranges from Asia to North Africa, certainly to the Middle East, countries from all across the world, understanding that the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran is real and continuing and ought not to be tolerated.

QUESTION: A few hours ago you met with leaders in Erbil about the Kurds and yet there’s dangerous talk coming out of Turkey. What’s your message to Erdogan if he goes ahead and invades the Kurds?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, our message is straightforward. The work that the Kurdish forces did with us alongside in Syria has been important. It took down a caliphate, 99 percent of the real estate that was held by ISIS. We remember people sitting in cages being burned. Seems like a long time ago, but frankly, it’s the good work that the United States did with a big coalition. And we’ll work with the Turks to make sure that there’s security for them as well and that the Kurdish people in Syria are indeed protected.

QUESTION: Two final questions, one about the Christians in the region: They have an appeal that they won’t be eradicated, that Christianity won’t be eradicated. What’s your message to those Christians?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That America is with them. Christianity is at the heart of the history of this place here in the Middle East. All you got to do is grab a Bible and read the places and the names. Christians have been central to Middle East. We want to make sure that they continue to have opportunities and freedom and for Christian churches to grow alongside churches of other faiths as well. Our message is simple, is that we stand for religious freedom every place American diplomacy is at work.

QUESTION: And one final domestic question: BDS, there’s an act proposed right now in the Senate. It’s not being passed because Democrats are refusing to vote for it. It’s by Senator Rubio. What’s your position on that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The good news is I don’t do politics anymore, U.S. domestic politics, but I’ll say this: Israel too ought to have the respect and dignity

that comes with that great democracy here in the Middle East as well.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Great. Thank you very much, sir.

QUESTION: Okay.

SECRETARY POMPEO: You have a good day.

QUESTION: You too.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

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