

Press Releases: Interview With Niusha Boghrati of Radio Farda

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

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QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, so let's begin with what has happened right here, right now: an effort by U.S. administration in order to form a broad and international coalition against the Islamic Republic, as was reflected in Vice President Pence's remarks. Now, my question is that how feasible do you think that is, given the fact that EU countries seem to be sticking to their end of the deal when it comes to JCPOA? You know that recently they've put in place a tool in order to facilitate the trade with Iran.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the gathering was aimed at creating peace and stability throughout the Middle East. That's what 60-plus countries came together to talk about, to work on solutions to what have been intractable problems – problems in Yemen, problems in Syria, the security risks associated with the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. Each of those topics, that's what we came together for. It's the case that when you talk about Hizballah, you have to talk about Iran. When you talk about the Houthis' mischief in Yemen, you have to talk about Iran. Iran was certainly one of the things that was discussed.

But I will tell you that the coalition is strong. Not a single person, not a single country, denied that this threat from Iran is real, whether they were Arab countries or countries that were here from Asia or from South America or from the Middle East itself. All understood the threat that the Islamic Republic of Iran presents to their citizens. And so we worked on that.

There's clearly differences on how to attack the problem. The Europeans are wedded to the JCPOA. We've made a very different decision. We think any money that goes to the Islamic Republic of Iran will end up in the hands of Qasem Soleimani and be used for mischief and, most importantly, will be used to create real hardship for the Iranian people. And so we are determined to make sure that the Iranian people's voices are heard. We gathered people here today, we made our case, and I am confident that we came out of here today

more collectively able to deal with all of the threats that exist throughout all of the Middle East.

QUESTION: But going back to Iran, how those threats that you're mentioning are going to be dealt with? This conference is viewed by many as part of an ongoing effort on Washington's side in order to pave the way for a regime change in Iran. What do you think about that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, I have to say this was historic. You had the Israelis and the Arabs sitting together having a conversation about the threat that Iran poses. This wasn't a Washington-driven effort. We certainly have made clear our concerns about the Islamic Republic of Iran, and we have devoted substantial resources towards reducing those risks. We'll keep at that because we ultimately want the Iranian people to have their voices heard.

We want a change in the regime's behavior. We want them to act like a normal country. Back in May, I laid out 12 core things that the Islamic Republic of Iran needed to do to rejoin the community of nations. We are driving every day a set of policies that we hope will achieve that, and when we do, the entire Middle East and indeed the world will be a safer place.

QUESTION: About those conditions, the preconditions and the changing of behavior which has been mentioned numerous times by you and other figures in the administration, the thing is that the behavior that you have in mind is so integral with the identity of the Islamic Republic that changing them will basically be a sort of a regime change. I mean, if Iran would just abandon every single behavior that it has got throughout the Middle East, throughout the world, towards the people of Iran, then nothing is left of the Islamic Republic.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Ultimately, the how – how these behaviors will be changed – will be dealt with by the Iranian people. They'll make their voices heard. They'll assert their power. These are smart people, capable people, with a deep and rich history. They are entirely capable of managing the affairs of their nation. And so these behavioral changes that we are seeking are aimed at creating security throughout the Middle East and creating better lives for the Iranian people, and we are doing everything we can to support those Iranian voices inside of their country so that they can get a life that is the one that they want and one that doesn't pose a threat and a risk to people throughout the Middle East and the rest of the world.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you're aware that on Wednesday, a deadly attack happened in Iran against a bus which belonged to IRGC, killing 27 people. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iranian foreign minister, wrote in a tweet, and I quote, that, "Is it no coincidence that Iran is hit by terror on the very day that," quote/unquote, "Warsaw Circus begins?" Your reaction to that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, well, the Americans had nothing to do with this at all. I'll say this: Many countries, including European countries, meet with this man Zarif. He is actually headed to Munich, where many European countries will meet with him. I would ask those countries when they meet with Mr. Zarif to ask him why he would say such an outrageous thing. Sometimes he

is posited to be a moderate. It's not moderate to accuse the Israelis and the Americans of murder. That's not moderate. I think it shows the signs that Mr. Zarif and Mr. Rouhani are revolutionaries in the same way that the other leaders inside of Iran are as well.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you for your time today.

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