

Press Releases: Remarks at the AIPAC Policy Conference

Remarks

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Secretary of State

Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Washington, DC

March 25, 2019

SECRETARY POMPEO: (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, everyone. It is truly wonderful to be here tonight.

I want to thank AIPAC President Mort Fridman, Board Chair Lillian Pincus, and your CEO Howard Kohr for inviting me to be a speaker here tonight.

And thanks to you for that incredibly warm welcome.

As some of you may have seen, my wife Susan, who's here with me tonight, and I just returned from a trip to Israel. (Applause.) And we made a little news. (Laughter.)

I've been to Israel many times, but it was the first time I had the privilege to visit our new embassy in the eternal capital of the Jewish people and the Jewish State, in Jerusalem. (Applause.) Thank you. It was incredibly moving to be there.

I also became the first American secretary of state to visit the Western Wall and the first – (applause) – and the first – the first high-ranking American official to do that with an Israeli prime minister. (Applause.)

I then traveled to Beirut to speak with Lebanese leadership about a big problem, the Iranian-backed threat of Hizballah, the threat to Lebanon and to Israel, and we minced no words. (Applause.)

And of course – and of course, it was a great honor to be on Israeli soil and to celebrate with Prime Minister Netanyahu at the very moment President Trump boldly recognized the Golan Heights for what it is: a part of Israel. (Applause.)

As most of you would have seen by now, just a short while ago, President Trump – alongside Prime Minister Netanyahu – signed a decree, a decree affirming Israel's sovereignty over the Golan. (Applause.) What a truly great two days for two great nations. (Applause.)

That recognition ties in with my own personal connection to Israel, and more importantly, to America's connection with Israel.

As a former West Point cadet and a former tank officer, I've had a chance – (applause). All right, for all you tank officers in the Army – in the audience. (Applause.) I had a chance – I had a chance both while I was on active duty and while I was a student to study the great and historic tank battles that took place on those very heights. And it was really lucky for my family, on my first visit I took them to the Golan Heights and I had my son stand in each of the positions so we could feel exactly what it looked like to those soldiers on that day. My son reminds me it was muddy and wet and his clothes were dirty, but he'll never forget the walkabout that we all took on the Golan Heights.

I mentioned this in my press conference that night with Prime Minister Netanyahu that Susan, Nick, and I had had a chance to gaze out of the Golan into the "Valley of Tears," named for the vicious fighting that took place there in 1973. We saw what those brave Israelis soldiers would have seen.

On the morning of October 9th, Commander Avigdor Kahalani and the 7th Tank Brigade had been fighting for three days.

They were totally exhausted. They were totally outnumbered. They didn't know what would happen next. Syrian tanks were indeed on the cusp of breaking through their lines. Yet they held on. Just when it looked like all was lost, a miracle took place – tanks, reinforcements swooped in and the Syrians retreated. (Applause.)

As the dust settled – as the dust settled, the voice of General Kahalani crackled through the radio. "You have saved the people of Israel."

(Applause.)

How can you – how can you not be completely awed by these brave men, their defense of the Golan Heights, and their commitment to the country?

(Applause.)

And how – and how can we also not be proud here in America, proud to know that their relentless defense of Israel – of Zion – was aided by the United States of America? (Applause.)

In Israel's hour of need, in support of these great battles, America launched Operation Nickel Grass. It provided Israel with tanks, with artillery, with munitions, and all the other supplies that were needed to continue the defense of the homeland.

Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir later said, "For generations ... all will be told of the miracle of the immense planes from the United States bringing in the materiel that [brought] life to our people." (Applause.)

Without that battle at that valley, the Battle at the Valley of Tears, and without the American support of Israel, there would not have been an Israel to recognize as the proper sovereign over the Golan Heights. (Applause.)

And this relationship from Truman to Trump is a tradition of supporting Israel deeply, and I think about that every day as I serve as America's Secretary of State. (Applause.)

But I want to talk to you tonight about something that I am very worried about. Indeed, I am deeply worried about an old threat that is re-emerging to Israel and Jews all around the world: the threat of anti-Semitism.

It's a cancer metastasizing in the Middle East, in Europe, and indeed, sadly, here in the United States as well.

In Britain, the Labour Party's tolerance of anti-Semitism in its ranks is a national disgrace. And France's Jews are under attack. The incidence of anti-Semitic attacks in Germany is also on the rise.

Indeed, hate crimes against Jews in this country have risen by one-third since 2017.

And we don't have to go far, but to consider attacks on the Orthodox Jewish community in Crown Heights, Brooklyn over the past year.

And none of us, none of us, will ever forget the 11 Americans murdered while praying one Shabbat morning at the Tree of Life synagogue. May their memories be a blessing to all of us. (Applause.)

Every – every – decent human being has the responsibility to fight anti-Semitism. It's an affront to religious liberty. It denies the rights of Jews to worship their God. It attacks what it means to be Jewish, ethnically and religiously.

But Americans – Americans have a special responsibility to combat this scourge, because religious freedom sits at the core of our founding. It's in our Bill of Rights as the very first freedom.

It's the essential freedom upon which all others that we enjoy here in America are built.

And it's because I'm a champion of that religious freedom, and because I'm an American, that I am here today to tell you: The United States stands with the Jewish people and Israel in the fight against the world's oldest bigotry. (Applause.)

This bigotry is taking on an insidious new form in the guise of "anti-Zionism." It's infested college campuses in the form of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction movement. It's discussed in our media. It's supported by certain members of Congress, I suspect none of whom are here tonight. (Laughter.)

Now, don't get me wrong, criticizing Israel's policies is an acceptable thing to do in a democracy. It's what we do. But criticizing the very right to exist of Israel is not acceptable. (Applause.)

Anti-Zionism denies the very legitimacy of the Israeli state and of the Jewish people.

Zionism reflects the determination of the Jews to live as a free people in their ancestral homeland. It grows out of the Jewish faith.

Zionism was born in the Old Testament, crystalized under Theodor Herzl in the 19th century, and was realized in May of 1948, when David Ben Gurion read aloud a declaration of independence proclaiming the establishment of the modern state of Israel. (Applause.)

And yet, and yet today, only one country at the 192-nation United Nations has its right to exist routinely questioned.

So, friends, let me go on record: Anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. (Applause.) The Trump administration opposes it unequivocally and we will fight for it relentlessly. (Applause.)

I want to talk about why anti-Semitism is on the rise. I have a few thoughts on the reasons.

First, Western civilizations – and our youth, in particular – are losing first-hand experience with the Holocaust and its survivors as the postwar generation dies out. I saw that clearly and thought about it on my most recent trip to Israel, when I visited Yad Vashem.

Second, professors teach our children that Israel is the epitome of imperialism.

Third, journalists, who help drive our public debate, don't always take the time to consider facts or think critically. And I'm being polite. (Applause.)

But frankly, worst of all, some politicians think anti-Semitism can actually win them votes.

And we have to correct the record. We all have an obligation to do so because Israel should be admired, not attacked; embraced, not vilified; and emulated, not ostracized. (Applause.)

President Trump has made the fight against anti-Semitism a top priority. You can see it in our actions.

In June, we left the fever swamp of the UN Human Rights Council, which since its creation has adopted more resolutions condemning Israel than all other nations combined.

At the State Department, I reinvigorated the position of special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, and we have a real fighter in that role, Elan Carr, who I'm so proud to have on our team. (Applause.)

Last year, it was my honor to host the first-ever religious freedom ministerial at the State Department. I'm proud to say we will do it again in July. (Applause.)

On March 15th, just a few days past, I took action to deter the lawless International Criminal Court from targeting Americans and Israelis alike. (Applause.)

And the Trump administration and my team at the State Department is confronting the world's number one proponent of anti-Semitism, the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Applause.)

You've seen it not just in promises the President made, in our actions. We pulled out of the incurably flawed Iran nuclear deal, which put more than \$100 billion in the pockets of the ayatollah and funded the Islamic Republic's violent quest for regional domination.

In its place, we've enacted the strongest pressure campaign in history against Iran and its proxies, and they are feeling the pain. (Applause.)

As I said a bit earlier, I was in Beirut less than 48 hours after – 48 hours ago. There, Hassan Nasrallah, Hizballah's terrorist-in-chief, recently begged for contributions from the very people in Lebanon that he and his Iranian masters have subjugated and terrorized. Hassan Nasrallah passing the tin cup is good news. (Applause.)

Meanwhile, we're supporting Israel's right to defend itself with current 10-year military support to the tune of \$38 billion a year, and more importantly, with the moral clarity that Israel deserves and demands. (Applause.)

The list is long. Just a few weeks ago, we deployed one of our most advanced anti-missile systems in Israel, and you've seen the work of Mr. Kushner and Mr. Greenblatt and our team, hard at work in devising a proposal to help Israelis and Palestinians find a just and lasting peace. (Applause.)

Importantly, too, my team is working to mobilize and rally nations all across the Middle East to find common ground.

In February, our Polish friends partnered with the State Department for a conference in Warsaw. Over 60 foreign ministers attended, and Arab leaders from all around the world sat with Israel's leaders.

It was truly historic. But uniquely, frankly, in spite of its historic nature, it didn't feel historic. It simply felt right. (Applause.)

Jews, Muslims, Christians working together to defeat Islamist terrorists, defeat the vociferous anti-Semites in Iran, and protect each of our nations was the right thing to do for each of those countries. (Applause.)

We live in dangerous times. We have to speak the truth. Anti-Semitism should and must be rejected by all decent people. Anti-Semitism – anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism, and any nation that espouses anti-Zionism, like Iran, must be confronted. We must defend the rightful homeland of the Jewish people. (Applause.)

We must see to it that the old dreams of Moses, of Herzl, of America's poet laureate Emma Lazarus – who wrote the verses inscribed on our Statue of Liberty – never fades. (Applause.)

Indeed, we're reminded of the consequences if we fall silent. As I close, I want to return to my visit to Yad Vashem.

At that memorial, those of you who have been there know, there is a list of people called the "Righteous Among the Nations." These are non-Jews, non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. (Applause.) Forty years ago this year, a man named Tibor Baranski was added to the list.

Tibor repeatedly risked life and limb to save 3,000 Jews in Hungary during World War II. (Applause.) He later immigrated to America, became a citizen. He passed away this January at the age of 96.

In the course of his heroic labors, a Nazi officer held a gun to Tibor's head and said the following: "Why do you, a Christian, help Jews?" Tibor answered, "You are either silly or an idiot. It is because I am Christian that I help the Jews." (Applause.)

Know with confidence that the Trump administration will not grow weary of the fight. To abandon it would mean to abandon our principles.

And as Secretary of State and as a Christian, I'm proud to lead American diplomacy to support Israel's right to defend itself. (Applause.) And I am proud to stand with the Jewish people and to champion the cause of religious liberty in Israel and in America. (Applause.)

These are special times, amazing times, and I want to thank each of you, and may God bless each of you, Israel, and the United States of America. Thank you. (Applause.)

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