

Press Releases: Remarks With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu After Their Meeting

Remarks
Mike Pompeo

Secretary of State

Tel Aviv, Israel
April 29, 2018

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU: Good afternoon. Secretary Pompeo, Mike, it's wonderful to welcome you. This is your first visit to Israel as Secretary of State. I think it's significant that you chose, as did the President, to include Israel on this important itinerary. I think it's symbolic of our friendship, which is deep, and getting even deeper and stronger. We've known each other for some time, I followed your activities in Congress and then as CIA, now as Secretary of State. You're a true friend of Israel, a true friend of the Jewish people, and I look forward to working with you in your new role. We've just had very productive, very focused conversations on our common interests and how to defend our common value.

I want to thank again President Trump for his historic decision on recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. We look forward to welcoming the American delegation to celebrate the relocation of the embassy with you, Ambassador Friedman. I must tell you that the bold decision by President Trump has prompted other countries – there are quite a few now who are planning to move their embassy to Jerusalem as well. It says something about American leadership and about the forthright way in which simple truths are being put forward and the effect this has on the international scene.

Mr. Secretary, I think the greatest threat to the world and to our two countries and to all countries is the marriage of militant Islam with nuclear weapons, and specifically, the attempt of Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. We've had a very productive talk today on this subject as well. I appreciate the President's leadership and your position on stopping Iran from ever acquiring nuclear weapons. I appreciate the President's and your position on stopping Iran's aggression in the region. That aggression has grown many-fold since the signing of the Iranian deal. If people thought that Iran's aggression would be moderated as a result of signing the deal, the opposite has happened, and Iran is trying to gobble up one country after the other.

Iran must be stopped. Its quest for nuclear bombs must be stopped. Its aggression must be stopped. And we're committed to stopping it together.

I was very much encouraged, once again, by the steadfast support of the United States for Israel and for this common effort, which encompasses many other countries, as you know – as you well know, Mr. Secretary. But our bond is special. It's based on shared values of democracy, freedom, the quest for security and peace, and I can say that today America and Israel are closer than ever before. And I have no doubt that our alliance will grow even closer in the years ahead.

So I want to welcome you back to Israel, Mr. Secretary. It's a pleasure to see you and I wish you the best of luck in your important mission. Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Well, good afternoon. It is a great honor to be here on my first trip as Secretary of State. I've been the Secretary for a handful of hours. As I was saying earlier, I haven't been to my office yet.

As you said, this relationship's never been stronger, and I think we should both be proud of that. We had fantastic conversations today on difficult issues facing each of us. We are incredibly proud to be opening the new embassy on May 14th, well ahead of the original timetable. This step comes as Israel celebrates its 70th anniversary of independence and 70 years of recognition as steadfast support for Israel from the American people as well. By recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the seat of its government, we're recognizing reality. I also stress, as President Trump has said in December, the boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem remain subject to negotiations between the parties, and we remain committed to achieving a lasting and comprehensive peace that offers a brighter future for both Israel and the Palestinians.

Many of our conversations today, Mr. Prime Minister, as you said, centered on Iran. Strong cooperation with close allies like you is critical to our efforts to counter Iran's destabilizing and malign activity throughout the Middle East and indeed throughout the world. We remain deeply concerned about Iran's dangerous escalation of threats to Israel and the region, and Iran's ambition to dominate the Middle East remains. The United States is with Israel in this fight and we strongly support Israel's sovereign right to defend itself.

Regarding the JCPOA, President Trump's been pretty clear. This deal is very flawed. He's directed the administration to try and fix it, and if we can't fix it, he's going to withdraw from the deal. It's pretty straightforward. Unlike the past administration, President Trump has a comprehensive Iran strategy that is designed to counter the full array of threats emanating from Tehran.

As part of the President's comprehensive Iran strategy, we are also working to counter the broad set of non-nuclear threats: Iran's missile systems, its support for Hizballah, the importation of thousands of proxy fighters into

Syria, and its assistance to the Houthi rebels in Yemen. We look forward to working closely with strong allies like Israel in countering these threats and rolling back the full range of Iranian malign influence.

Regarding Syria, where the barbaric Assad regime is propped up by Iran, the United States' top priorities are to defeat ISIS, de-escalate violence, deter the use of chemical weapons, and ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid and support an ultimate political resolution to the conflict. Our strategy to do that remains unchanged. We strongly support the UN-led efforts in Geneva to bring an end to the Syrian conflict, which has gone on for far too long.

We know there are many challenges ahead and we look forward to being your partner in resolving each of them. The United States and Israel I know together can achieve that. It's great to be back.

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU: Thank you.

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.