

Press Releases: Remarks With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Remarks

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PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU: Secretary Pompeo, Mike, it's good to see you –

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's good to be with you

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU: – in Jerusalem, back in Jerusalem. I have to say that we meet in every holiday. We met on Hanukkah and now we meet in Purim, and these are all celebrations of our history, and part of it is the tremendous alliance between Israel and the United States. And I know you've been an extraordinary champion of the U.S.-Israel alliance, and I want to thank you and President Trump for everything that you've been doing to support this partnership which I think is exceptional.

First of all, I think it's supported by the broad swath of the American people. We appreciate that, the fact that we have a broad base of support in the United States, but we also know that our alliance in recent years has never been stronger. It's an unbreakable bond that's based on shared values of liberty and democracy and shared interest to fight the enemies of democracy, the enemies of our way of life, the terrorists that plague – that prowl our airspace and prowl our countries. And I think that working together, we've been able to achieve an enormous amount.

Under President Trump, that alliance has also brought a historic recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the moving of the American embassy to Jerusalem. David doesn't have to travel up a – the traffic jams from Tel Aviv, which we're trying to un-loose – loosen up anyway. But I think also the unequivocal commitment to Israel's security, the support that you give us in international forums, all of that is deeply appreciated.

I think that no less historic is the President's decision to walk away from the disastrous nuclear deal with Iran. He said he would do it; he did. And he said that he would reimpose tough sanctions on Iran, and he did. And what we see is that this pressure is working. We need to increase it; we need to expand it. And together, the United States and Israel are working in close coordination to roll back Iranian aggression in the region and around the world. Secretary and I just spent the first part of our meetings discussing exactly how to do that, and I think there are ways that will intensify the pressure even more. Rolling back Iran is in the interest of peace and security and stability for Israel, for our neighbors, and for the world.

I also appreciate the fact that the United States gives Israel the full backing to defend ourselves against Iranian aggression. I want to use this opportunity and say that we will continue to take action as needed against the attempts of Iran to entrench itself militarily with dangerous weapons in Syria. There is no limitation to our freedom of action, and we appreciate very much the fact that the United States backs up our actions as we do them.

Just last week, we uncovered efforts by Hizballah, an Iranian proxy, to build a terror network in Syria on the Golan Heights. And I can say that all of you can imagine what would have happened if Israel were not in the Golan. We would have Iran on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. I think – for this reason, and for many more – I think it's time that the international community recognize Israel's stay in the Golan, the fact that the Golan will always remain part of the state of Israel.

Mr. Secretary, you're a stalwart defender of the truth, and I appreciate your important statement last week regarding the International Criminal Court. We share the concern of the U.S. and many other states that this court has lost its way. Instead of dealing with mass atrocities, the court engages in unwarranted and politicized efforts to target the states that are committed to the rule of law and that have not joined the court. It's exact opposite of what it should be doing. And therefore, the fact that you spoke out against this, I think, is – against this, I think, is of stellar importance. I thank the United States for taking the moral and necessary steps to protect the citizens of both our countries against this outrageous distortion of

international law.

Israel has no greater friend than the United States, and the United States has no greater friend than Israel. I look forward to our discussions, and I look forward to my visit next week to Washington, where I will meet with President Trump. And I believe that we can carry this relationship even stronger – it's getting stronger and stronger and stronger, and may we continue to do so. Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. You know that Israel has no greater friend than the United States of America. The Israeli people can have confidence that President Trump will maintain this close bond. I know that you and the President have an outstanding working relationship. He sent me here to build upon that and to represent him here. Israel has a special place in my heart as well. My very first trip as Secretary of State included a visit here. I'm proud to be here again not only as America's top diplomat, but also as a man of faith that is always newly inspired when I get the chance to travel to Israel.

Now to the business at hand. In just a few minutes, the prime minister and I will participate in a meeting with Greece and Cyprus to promote energy security and diversification in the Eastern Med. I will also discuss our efforts to counter Iran, Russia, and China. We had a chance to talk about those a few minutes ago as well.

This meeting is part of our effort to continue to build out the regional alliances. Last month, representatives of more than 60 countries met in Warsaw and had a historic conference, which the prime minister attended. Arab and Israeli leaders discussed ways to end the war in Yemen, to manage refugee crises, to confront radical Islamic terrorism, and to stop Iran's regional rampage. We're working to build the Middle East Strategic Alliance and to enhance cooperation on economic, energy, and security matters.

It's fundamentally our view that this region needs a candid dialogue and open exchanges of ideas, especially as we seek to make progress towards a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Mr. Kushner and Mr. Greenblatt recently met with regional leaders to find ways to provide economic opportunity for those regions.

I know today that at sundown, right about now, the Jewish people will begin the celebration of Purim, a commemoration of when Queen Esther saved the Jewish people from destruction centuries ago. I wish the prime minister and all who are celebrating a happy Purim.

Of course, I remember when he addressed the joint session of Congress right before Purim. I was there sitting in the auditorium almost exactly four years ago. On that day, you spoke about the grave threat that the Jewish people face, the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran, which seeks the absolute destruction and annihilation of Israel. The ayatollahs have spent four decades spewing hatred, supporting terrorist violence, and pursuing nuclear

weapons for a war against a neighbor that wishes nothing more than to live in peace. The ayatollah has declared that the annihilation and destruction of Israel is his primary goal.

With such threats, a daily reality of Israeli life, we maintain our unparalleled commitment to Israel's security and firmly support your right to defend yourself. Under the 10-year MOU that we signed in 2016, we provide \$3.8 billion annually for security assistance to Israel. And with Israel threatened by rockets and missiles from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere, we are proud to deploy the THAAD anti-missile batteries here.

The Trump administration, too, is dedicated to monitoring and combatting anti-Semitism. Our Special Envoy Elan Carr was recently here to discuss how we could deepen our commitment to battle this odious prejudice and all other forms of intolerance. With the dark wave of anti-Semitism rising in Europe and in the United States, all nations, especially those in the West, must go to the barricades against bigotry. Our challenge is especially urgent as the hot rhetoric of prejudice cloaks itself in the language of the academy or of diplomacy or public policy. Sadly, we in the United States have seen anti-Semitic language uttered even in the great halls of our own Capitol. This should not be.

Tomorrow, my wife Susan and I will take a full day of activities to get a deeper sense of Israel and its storied history. We'll visit our new embassy in Jerusalem, which we were proud to open last year. I'm eager to see more of the timeless country, and I thank the prime minister and the people of Israel for what I know will be a productive and memorable visit. Thank you.

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU: Thank you, Mike. Welcome.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU: Thank you.

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