

# Press Releases: Statement on the Continued Success of Operations to Defeat ISIS in Syria

Press Statement  
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC  
July 22, 2018

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We congratulate the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on their successful operations to liberate al-Dashisha, Syria, from the scourge of ISIS. Dashisha since 2013 has been a key stronghold and transit route for ISIS fighters, weapons, and suicide bombers between Syria and Iraq. The SDF now controls the area, with Iraqi Security Forces controlling the Iraqi side of the border. This is a significant milestone.

The SDF ground offensive cleared over 1,200 square kilometers in the Dashisha area. The offensive was part of our Coalition-backed effort to clear the last pockets of ISIS-held territory in the Middle Euphrates River Valley and the Iraq-Syria border region.

We commend the bravery and sacrifice of the Syrian Democratic Forces. We also commend the significant efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces to ensure that ISIS could not flee into Iraq and the artillery and air support provided during key moments of the operation.

The liberation of Iraq and ISIS's losses in Syria are major achievements but our mission is not complete. Destroying ISIS continues to be an urgent priority for President Trump and the Administration. Last week, I convened 53 members of our Coalition to Defeat ISIS to discuss the next phase of the campaign and the imperative for coalition burden sharing, particularly with respect to stabilizing liberated areas.

We are grateful for the significant contributions received to date, and look for these contributions to accelerate as our partners in the SDF prepare for the next phase of operations against the few remaining ISIS strongholds in Syria.

In parallel, we will work with the United Nations and our partners to forge a lasting settlement of the Syrian conflict that includes full representation

for all Syrians, including the people of northeast Syria now recovering from the ISIS occupation.

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## **Press Releases: Evacuation of the White Helmets From Southwest Syria**

Press Statement  
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 22, 2018

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The United States welcomes the safe evacuation of more than 400 members of the Syrian Civil Defense, otherwise known as the White Helmets, and their families from southwest Syria. We are glad that these brave volunteers, who have saved thousands of lives, are now out of harm's way.

The United States and our international partners asked the United Nations to take the central role in this critical humanitarian operation. In response, the UN organized entry into Jordan for these members of the White Helmets and their families, who are fleeing violence in southwest Syria. The White Helmets have consistently been targeted by the Assad regime. Members of the group, more than half of which are children, were allowed entry into Jordan on a transit basis, until UNHCR completes procedures for their resettlement in third countries.

We deeply appreciate Israel's role in facilitating the transit of the White Helmets and their family members. We commend Jordan's generosity in supporting their processing by UNHCR and the commitment of the United

Kingdom, Canada, and Germany to provide the White Helmets and their families with permanent homes.

We renew our call on the Assad regime and Russia to abide by their commitments, end the violence, and protect all Syrian civilians, including humanitarians such as the White Helmets, in areas formerly part of the southwest de-escalation zone and throughout Syria.

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## **[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Call With Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov](#)**

Readout  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 22, 2018

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The following is attributable to Spokesperson Heather Nauert:

On July 21, Secretary Pompeo spoke with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. They discussed a broad range of issues, some of which were following up from the meeting between President Trump and President Putin. Among the topics discussed was the fact that Russia had violated its commitment in southwest Syria. The two also discussed how to implement ideas on counterterrorism process coordination and the mutual goal of establishing business-to-business dialogue between private, non-governmentally controlled entities in each of our two countries. The need for Russia to provide equal diplomatic access to the United States, at a level that is fair and reciprocal, was also discussed.

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## **Press Releases: Remarks With Permanent Representative to the United Nations Nikki Haley**

Remarks  
Michael R. Pompeo  
  
Secretary of State

UN Headquarters  
New York City  
July 20, 2018

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**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Good afternoon, everyone. First I want to commend my good

friend Ambassador Haley and her excellent team here at the United Nations. Her leadership in advancing American interest on North Korea and many other issues has been evident here this morning, and she's got a great team behind her helping. So thank you, Nikki.

The main reason I came here today was to meet with members of the UN Security Council – South Korea and Japan as well – to convey details of my work on the trip to North Korea earlier this month and the progress that was made there. I also had the opportunity to meet with UN Secretary-General Guterres to discuss the topic and other topics as well.

The countries of the Security Council are united on the need for final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea, as agreed to by Chairman Kim. Strict enforcement of sanctions is critical to our achieving this goal.

Members of the UN Security Council, and by extension all UN member-states, have unanimously agreed to fully enforce sanctions on North Korea, and we expect them to continue to honor those commitments. When sanctions are not enforced, the prospects for the successful denuclearization are diminished. Right now, North Korea is illegally smuggling petroleum products into the country at a level that far exceeds the quotas established by the United Nations. These illegal ship-to-ship transfers are the most prominent means by which this is happening.

These transfers happened at least 89 times in the first five months of this year and they continue to occur. The United States reminds every UN member-state of its responsibility to stop illegal ship-to-ship transfers, and we urge them to step up their enforcement efforts as well.

We must also crack down on other forms of sanctions evasion, including the smuggling of coal by sea, smuggling by overland borders, and the presence of North Korean guest workers in certain countries. North Korean cyber thefts and other criminal activities are also generating significant revenues for the regime, and they must be stopped.

President Trump remains upbeat about the prospects of denuclearization of North Korea. So do I, as progress is happening. It is the Trump administration's hope that one day the DPRK could be in our midst here at the United Nations – not as a pariah, but as a friend. Imagine UN Security Council meetings in which the DPRK nuclear and missile programs were not the agenda time and time again. We'll be able to focus our energy on so many urgent problems that face our world.

I believe this reality is possible, and so does President Trump. But it will take full enforcement of sanctions for us to get there. It will also take Chairman Kim following through on his personal commitments that he made to President Trump in Singapore. The path ahead is not easy; it will take time. But our hopes for a safer world for all of us and a brighter future for North Korea remains our objective, and that hope endures.

Thank you. Ambassador Haley.

**AMBASSADOR HALEY:** Thank you so much. And I'm very grateful to my friend, Secretary Pompeo, for coming out and meeting with the Security Council today.

This is what we know. Eighteen months ago when I came in, our biggest concern was North Korea. Everyone was wondering when that new test was going to happen, everyone was wondering when the new threat would occur, and the entire international community knew something had to happen. It was a herculean task by the Security Council to pass three massive sanctions packages, getting rid of all exports, 90 percent of their trade, 30 percent of their oil, expelling all labor workers and scheduling that down, making sure all joint ventures stopped. All of that combined with the international community coming together and expelling diplomats and stopping communication, and with the President's tough stance, all of that was really the combination that brought North Korea to the table.

Now, North Korea and the U.S. have started to have talks. And as those things are happening, we and the Security Council and the international community have to support those talks. And the best way we can support those talks is to not loosen the sanctions. And what we have been seeing is certain countries wanting to do waivers, certain countries saying, "Let's lift sanctions," certain countries wanting to do more. And what – I appreciate Secretary Pompeo coming up and what we continue to reiterate is we can't do one thing until we see North Korea respond to their promise to denuclearize. We have to see some sort of action. And so until that action happens, the Security Council's going to hold tight, the international community – we ask you to hold tight as we go forward.

The problem that we are encountering is that some of our friends have decided that they want to go around the rules. You saw that there was violations of the oil ban. We have, as Secretary Pompeo said, seen 89 times where that has happened. We have photographs of proof of ship-to-ship transfers. And our friends, what we decided was let's come together and let's make sure that this stops. So the U.S. put yesterday a halt to all additional refined petroleum shipments to North Korea. China and Russia blocked it.

Now for China and Russia to block it, what are they telling us? Are they telling us that they want to continue supplying this oil? They claim they need more information. We don't need any more information. The sanctions committee has what it needs. We all know it's going forward. We put pressure today on China and Russia to abide and be good helpers through this situation and to help us continue with denuclearization.

And so I think this was a day of very frank talk between the Secretary, the foreign minister of South Korea, our Japanese friends as well, as well as the Security Council to say: If we want to see success, we have to see a response from Chairman Kim, and we have to continue to hold the line until that happens. And so very successful day, again, promising that the Security Council has remained united and continuing to put pressure on our members to not fall through on that process. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Mr. Secretary –

**MS NAUERT:** Three quick – three quick questions. Rich Edson, Fox News.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Mr. Secretary, UN Ambassador Haley mentioned that Russia isn't being all that helpful to sanctions enforcement. The President mentioned after his meeting with President Putin that President Putin was going to help on North Korea. Is Russia reneging on an agreement that it made with the President? And is – what else did the two presidents agree to when they met?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** So enforcement of sanctions is a continuing process. There are many places where the Russians have been helpful. Certainly since the very beginning of the time of the UN Security resolutions the Russians have done many things to enforce these sanctions, and we're deeply appreciative of that. What we need now, though, is we need to continue that. We need to make sure that the world doesn't begin to see this – this is not an American demand for the North Koreans to denuclearize; it is the world's demand and we need the world to continue to participate.

And so where we find issues where any country, whether it's Russia or another one, not doing their part to enforce it, we're going to make sure that we provide the information to them so they can all see it and the world can see it, and we're going to demand that every country in the world do their part.

**MS NAUERT:** Kylie from CBS News.

**QUESTION:** Just following up, Mr. Secretary, on a question about Russia, because that's kind of what everyone in Washington is talking about today. Why is it a good idea for the President to invite Vladimir Putin to the White House? What does the U.S. have to gain from that visit?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Yeah, I'm happy that the two leaders of two very important countries are continuing to meet. If that meeting takes place in Washington, I think it's all to the good. Those conversations are incredibly important. We have our senior leaders meeting all across the world with people where we have deep disagreements with. It is incredibly valuable to the people of the United States of America that President Putin and President Trump continue to engage in dialogue to resolve the difficult issues that our countries face between each other. I think this makes enormous sense, and I'm very hopeful that that meeting will take place this fall.

**MS NAUERT:** And final question, Michelle from Reuters.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Mr. Secretary, what concrete steps do you need to see North Korea take now to show that they are committed to denuclearization? And on Russia, the Russian defense ministry said this morning that they've sent proposals to Washington about the return of millions of Syrian refugees. They said it's based on an agreement that was reached by President Putin and President Trump. Have you seen those proposals, and what is this agreement that they've reached?

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** So I'll take the second one first. So lots of discussion taking place. There was a discussion between President Trump and President

Putin about the resolution in Syria and how we might get the refugees back. The President shared with me the conversations that they'd had. It is important to the world that at the right time, through a voluntary mechanism, these refugees are able to return to their home country. It's what we've all been working on. It's what the UN has been working on with Staffan de Mistura working on that very same problem set. And President Putin and President Trump did discuss that. There's lots of work to do to figure out how to implement that, but the United States certainly wants to be part of help achieving that resolution in Syria, make no mistake about it.

Your first question was about what we need to see. It's really pretty straightforward, right? And it's not my – it's not my description of what needs to take place. Chairman Kim made a promise. Chairman Kim told not only President Trump, but President Moon that he was prepared to denuclearize. The scope and scale of that is agreed to. The North Koreans understand what that means. There's no mistake about what the scope of denuclearization looks like.

So what do we need to see? We need to see Chairman Kim do what he promised the world he would do. It's not very fancy, but it's the truth.

**MS NAUERT:** All right. Thank you. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** One more – one more question, Mr. Secretary?

**MS NAUERT:** Thank you, everyone.

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## [Press Releases: Ambassador Deborah L. Birx Travel to Amsterdam](#)

Media Note  
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC  
July 20, 2018



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Ambassador Deborah L. Birx, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and U.S. Special Representative for Global Health Diplomacy, is on travel to Amsterdam, The Netherlands from July 20-27, leading the U.S. delegation to the 22nd International AIDS Conference.

While in Amsterdam, Ambassador Birx will provide several keynote addresses at the conference and meet with key partners of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), including senior officials from governments, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society.

For further information, contact [SGACPublicAffairs@state.gov](mailto:SGACPublicAffairs@state.gov). Follow the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief at [@PEPFAR](https://twitter.com/PEPFAR) and [www.pepfar.gov](http://www.pepfar.gov).

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