

Press Releases: Interview With Tony Perkins of FRC Radio

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Via Telephone
July 19, 2018

QUESTION: Welcome back to Washington Watch. I'm your host, Tony Perkins. So glad to have you with us. Wednesday, we had one of my fellow commissioners from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Kristina, join us from Turkey with the news that American pastor Andrew Brunson was not going to be released from prison in Turkey, where he has been held for the last two years.

Now, Pastor Brunson's case is reflective of a growing threat to religious freedom and the spread of religious persecution around the globe that really has reached historic proportions, so much so that the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has called for the first-ever Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, which will take place next week. The three-day event will bring together government officials, representatives of international organizations, religious leaders, rights advocates, and members of civil society organizations from around the world, and I'll be there as well.

With us now is the host of the event, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Secretary, welcome to Washington Watch.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Tony, it's great to be back on with you.

QUESTION: It's been a while. And it's great to have you on in this new capacity. And let me first just commend you for one of your first actions as Secretary is to call for this gathering of international leaders to discuss religious freedom.

I want to start with the obvious question: Why?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Tony, it's incredibly important in our administration, in President Trump's administration, to make the case and sound the clarion call for religious freedom all around the world. You mentioned Pastor Brunson. There are many countries in which religious freedom is not available. And we believe that by gathering citizens from around the world – we'll have over 80

delegations from different countries; forty-plus of my counterparts at the foreign minister level will be in attendance – and religious leaders like yourself all brought together to highlight the central nature of religious freedom, and it's important to individuals and countries.

We believe that religious freedom is important for every citizen around the world and we want to bring everyone together to discuss how all faiths have the right – people, individuals have the right to worship in the way that they choose, or if they choose not to. And every country ought to honor that.

QUESTION: Now, Mr. Secretary, you and I have been around government for quite some time. And a lot of times there's a lot of meetings and there's not always tangible outcomes. I know you're a man of action. What do you hope will be the tangible outcomes of this gathering?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We expect, Tony, this to be far more than just talk. We do believe that just putting people together from all across the world in a room and talking about this topic will empower them to go back to their home country and advocate for religious freedom as well. It's difficult, Tony, as you know, in many countries to even speak about religious freedom. And so we hope to provide a support system and a basis for some of them to head back to their own countries.

But we'll announce a number of initiatives. The Vice President will be speaking; Ambassador Brownback will be speaking there. And we will be laying out a path where we are hopeful that the State Department here in the United States can lead a process where religious freedom is raised as a priority for the citizens of every country. And we will have our teams in the subsequent weeks and months in the field talking about religious freedom on a continued basis. We'll have just three days here, but this will be a mission of the State Department every day.

QUESTION: Now, Secretary Pompeo, this is the first ever, and I don't want this to be lost on our listeners. As you pointed out, this issue of religious freedom, both domestically and from a foreign policy standpoint, is a priority for this administration. This is much more than lip service. I mean, this administration takes this serious.

SECRETARY POMPEO: You've seen that with President Trump very clearly. Look, we want people of all faiths – Christians, Muslims, Jews, people of all different faiths – we think that this forum will reinforce for countries that enjoy that religious freedom and encourage those that are on the cusp, who are in a place where it's more challenging, will help provide them a courage to continue to make religious freedom a priority for the citizens of their own countries as well. This was laid out in the President's National Security Strategy, which is unique and different from previous administrations. We do place a high priority on religious freedom and we can – we will continue to fight for it every place that we travel.

QUESTION: What has been the response from your counterparts around the globe?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's been remarkable. I literally, as I was traveling this

past week – I think I was in six or eight different places – I had foreign ministers say, “I’m going to be there,” and I hadn’t seen the list. They’re excited to come be around others who believe religious freedom is important. I was in Muslim countries; I was in places with religions very different than my own Christian faith. But every one of those leaders was excited about the opportunity to gather with likeminded individuals who share the desire, the quest for every individual to be able to practice their faith in their country in the way that they wish to do.

QUESTION: And I know from my role at USCIRF that there’s actually countries that are on a waiting list. There’s people wanting to get to the –

SECRETARY POMPEO: (Laughter.) It is indeed oversubscribed, Tony, which we consider an enormous blessing.

QUESTION: It is.

SECRETARY POMPEO: And we’re going to do our best to accommodate each and every one of them so that they can come be part of this. And it bodes well for continuity for a program like this as well, not just these three days but to make sure that there are real actions that follow from this event.

QUESTION: One final question for you, Mr. Secretary. I know you’ve got a busy schedule. What can the average American do to bring greater awareness to this issue of religious freedom? Not just as an American right, but as the State Department and the United States Government recognizes this is a human right. What can we be doing?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It is deeply a human right. I think we can do a number of things. I think those of us who believe in faith and prayer can pray. I think it’s important for every individual to demand of their elected officials that they consider religious freedom among one of their priorities as they seek to lead and to be part of government service. And then I just think it’s important that groups – we have dozens and dozens of NGOs that will be attending this – to support groups like that and nongovernmental organizations that are prepared to help fight for religious freedom all around the world.

QUESTION: Do you anticipate seeing movement in countries like Turkey, like North Korea? I mean, do you really think this – during this Trump administration that we’re going to see movement?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We’ve seen some already. A good case in point would be Uzbekistan that has begun to move in the right direction. Tony, you know this is a long march, but absent leadership, absent the State Department engaging in this as an important priority, we know that the likelihood of it happening is less so. So we’ll work in every place to raise the awareness of the centrality of religious freedom not only for individual human dignity, but for success of nations as well.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for coming back on Washington Watch in your new capacity, and I look forward to seeing you next week at the

ministerial.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Bless you, Tony. I look forward to seeing you next week as well. So long, sir.

QUESTION: All right. Thanks so much.

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[Press Releases: United States and India to Hold 2+2 Dialogue on September 6](#)

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
July 19, 2018

The United States is pleased to announce that the inaugural U.S.-India “2+2” Dialogue will be held in New Delhi, India, on September 6. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and Secretary of Defense James Mattis look forward to meeting with their Indian counterparts, Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and Minister of Defense Nirmala Sitharaman, to discuss strengthening strategic, security, and defense cooperation as the United States and India jointly address challenges in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

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Press Releases: Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Carl Risch Travels to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
July 19, 2018

Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Carl Risch will travel to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras July 23-27 to meet with counterparts to discuss a range of consular issues, including the importance of deterring and reducing illegal immigration. While in the region, the Assistant Secretary also plans to review consular operations at our U.S. Embassies in San Salvador, Guatemala City, and Tegucigalpa, and to meet with interagency partners.

The United States is committed to long-term partnership with El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to reduce insecurity and violence, enhance economic opportunity, and improve governance.

For press inquiries please contact CAPRESSREQUESTS@state.gov or (202) 485-6150.

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[Press Releases: Previewing Secretary Pompeo's Participation in the 2018 Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations](#)

Special Briefing
Senior State Department Official
Via Teleconference
July 19, 2018

MODERATOR: Thank you, and thank you, everyone. Good afternoon. Thank you for joining our second call today. We are very pleased to have with us a senior State Department official to discuss Secretary Pompeo's participation in the 2018 Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations in Palo Alto. For your reference purposes only and not for reporting, our speaker today – and we welcome him – is [Senior State Department Official]. From this point forward we'll refer to him as a senior State Department official. He will have brief remarks at the top, and then we'll take questions from you. As a reminder, this call is embargoed until the end of the call.

So with that, I'll turn it over to our speaker. Thank you.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thank you. And thanks, everybody, for listening in today. We will be holding the U.S.-Australian Ministerial meeting in Palo Alto, California on the 23rd and 24th of this month, next Monday and Tuesday. The Secretaries of State and Defense will be hosting Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop and Minister for Defense Marise Payne for this two-day program.

This is an annual event held in alternating capitals depending on the year. We are host this year. We picked San Francisco not just because it's a little change of pace but, in fact, it is the location where the ANZUS Treaty was signed in 1951. So there's a certain symbolic gesture there, and it's a fitting reminder of what close alliance partners we've been for all these years since 1951 and what a tremendous contribution we've made as partners in this alliance to the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

So of course, this year there have been a number of major kind of policy statements that have been issued. We put forth a National Security Strategy and our Indo-Pacific Strategy, and on the Australian side, of course, they issued their Foreign Policy White Paper back in November. And this event on Monday and Tuesday provides us with an excellent opportunity to just coordinate with Australia all of the relevant policies and programs that we will be using over the coming years under these programmatic guidelines to promote the rules-based order, effective governance, free and fair reciprocal trade, high-standard principles, infrastructure in the region, encouraging private-sector-led growth, and ensuring that we have appropriate development and connectivity projects throughout the region that meet high international standards.

Of course, we'll be discussing issues including the DPRK and ongoing talks that we have with the DPRK. We'll be discussing China, where, of course, we are seeking to advance a very pragmatic but principled relationship with China that takes into account their helpfulness on certain core international issues, including the DPRK, while still holding Beijing to account for violations of international law and norms when that occurs. We'll continue to be talking about how we promote trade that is free, fair, and reciprocal, specifically with regard to China, and make sure that we can do our best to ensure that China aligns itself with these fundamental principles that we have.

Again, there is always a fairly large security element to the discussions that we have, and we will be looking at both threats and opportunities throughout the Indo-Pacific region and globally as well. So of course, with Australia, close alliance partners, we've been working closely in Iraq and Syria for some time now, where we seek the total defeat of ISIS. And we're going to use AUSMIN to coordinate closely on policies that can help us defeat that radical group and other means to intercept foreign terrorist fighters, counter violent extremism, at the same time while we work to help rebuild and stabilize vulnerable areas such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

So I think with that kind of general start, maybe we'll open it up for questions and see what we can do to elaborate a little bit.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, sir. We'll now move to our first question.

OPERATOR: Just a reminder, it is *1 if you'd like to queue up.

First up we have Conor Finnegan of ABC News. Your line is open. Mr. Finnegan, you may want to check a mute button.

QUESTION: Hey, yeah, I apologize. I was actually on the other call that I had dialed in. Sorry about that.

MODERATOR: Okay. We'll go to the next question, please.

OPERATOR: We have Lalit Jha of PTI. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hi, thank you for doing this. So I have a question about the quad. What aspects of quad you expect to be discussed during this ministerial?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: I think it will publicly come up in the course of the discussions. We've been encouraged by the two quad meetings that have taken place at the assistant secretary level to date, and we look forward to continuing holding these meetings. We believe it's a constructive way for likeminded nations in the region to have a chance to share views and to coordinate to the extent possible to ensure that we reach our mutual objectives in the region.

And as I said, you know that our fundamental objectives are laid out in our Indo-Pacific strategy, and I think whether it's Australia, the United States, Japan, or India, we all have some very close-held, very similar views on the fundamental importance of maintaining a rules-based system and international norms, our commitment to free and open markets, all these things. So naturally, we'll have a chance in the course of the bilateral to discuss a way ahead on continuing to ensure that the quad discussions remaining very useful and productive.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll move to the next question.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Once again, it is *1 to queue up here for us. Next we go to Cameron Stewart of *The Australian* newspaper. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hi, [Senior State Department Official]. Thanks for doing this. I wanted to ask you a bit more about China and trade, please, because obviously you talk about the free, fair, and reciprocal trade. Australia is not a fan of the tariff tensions currently at the moment. Where do you see a sort of meeting of the minds on this issue?

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Well, I think the meeting of the minds is that at the fundamental analytical level of what the problem is, and the fundamental problem with regard to China, is that it's kind of a neo-mercantilist approach. You can see it in its drive for creation of excess capacity which therefore flows out into the rest of the world and distorts the markets and creates significant problems for market-based systems. I think there is shared views on the importance of getting China to stop its theft and forced transfer of intellectual property and to get it to adhere to higher standards for the protection of intellectual property. This is a core concern for any advanced country, and it's certainly a core concern for Australia and the United States.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll take the next question.

OPERATOR: We have Owen Churchill of South China. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hi there, [Senior State Department Official]. Thanks for this. I wanted just to follow on from that last question, whether or not there will be, on the subject of resuming the talks with China with regard to the trade standoff, whether that will be addressed in next week's meetings.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Could you repeat that, please?

QUESTION: Hi there, yes. My question is just following on from the previous question regarding whether or not the subject of resuming trade talks with

China will be addressed next week during the meetings.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: I don't think we're specifically addressing trade in an in-depth way. We don't have trade ministers attending. So that – probably a more detailed discussion on that will probably be – take place between USTR and the relevant trade minister, Minister Ciobo. A separate event.

MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll go to the next question now.

OPERATOR: Certainly. Again, *1 if you have any questions for us. Next we have Peter Mitchell of Australian Associate. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hi, yeah. I was wondering if we can expect an announcement on the U.S. ambassador to Australia at AUSMIN next week.

SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL: Thanks for that question. I don't believe there will be an announcement. I'm not aware that there will be an announcement. What I can assure you is that the White House and the Department of State are working very assiduously on identifying an appropriate candidate for that position, and it's one of the top positions that the administration is focused on, on making sure we have the best candidate possible to fill that post as soon as possible.

MODERATOR: All right. Well, with that, I think we will conclude. There are no more questions in queue. And we thank you very much for joining us today. Thank you to our speaker, and the embargo is now lifted. Enjoy the rest of your afternoon. Thank you.

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[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Mattis Host AUSMIN at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University](#)

Notice to the Press

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
July 19, 2018

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and Secretary of Defense James Mattis will host Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop and Minister for Defence Marise Payne for this year's Australia-U.S. Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California on July 23-24, 2018.□

The camera spray prior to Secretary Pompeo's bilateral meeting with Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Bishop and the closing press availability are open to registered members of the press. All interested press who wish to attend these events in person should RSVP no later than Sunday, July 22nd at 5:00 p.m. (PDT) to Marlon H. Bateman at 650-723-0603 or bateman@stanford.edu. Stanford University will provide information on preset times and media credentials upon receipt of an RSVP.□

The Secretary's remarks will be streamed live on www.state.gov and at <https://www.hoover.org>.

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