

Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Lebanese Forces Party Leader Samir Geagea

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 22, 2019

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo met in Beirut today with Lebanese Forces Party Leader Samir Geagea. They discussed a number of issues, including the Lebanese government's continued work to strengthen security and stability in the country and to address the needs of the Lebanese people. The Secretary also reiterated U.S. concerns regarding the destructive role Hizballah plays both domestically and abroad, and the risks the terror organization poses to the Lebanese people.

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Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Meeting With Leader of Lebanon's Druze Community Walid Jumblatt

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
March 22, 2019

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:

Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo met in Beirut today with Walid Jumblatt, leader of Lebanon's Druze community. They discussed a number of issues including the positive steps the recently formed government of Lebanon should take to address Lebanon's economic and security challenges. The Secretary and Jumblatt also discussed regional issues, including the Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon, and the need for their safe and voluntary return as soon as conditions permit.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Chris Mitchell and David Brody of Christian Broadcasting Network](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

David Citadel Hotel
Jerusalem
March 21, 2019

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, thanks for doing this. Appreciate it.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's great to be with you. Great to be with you both.

QUESTION: The Western Wall – was there with you. What was that experience like and how impactful was something like that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I've been there before, but this was incredibly special. To be there with the Israeli prime minister and ambassador from the United States to Israel was really an important moment. It was special for me as a Christian. It was special I think to show the commitment the United States has to this democracy, this Jewish nation of Israel.

QUESTION: Speaking of that, you talked yesterday – you talked about being a man of faith. We know you're a man of faith. You talked about that yesterday, and I'm wondering about that apex between Israel and Christianity, and the Bible coming alive in this land. Can you talk about that a little bit and what that's all about, the relationship between the two?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So here we are in Jerusalem, the city that's so important to all three Abrahamic religions. Certainly today I was at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as well. I got to see that; was the second time I had a chance to do that in my life. As a Christian, to go to that place that is so fundamental to the things you believe is just a very special thing. And at the same time, I'm the Secretary of State, tasked with defending the Constitution, supporting the President in his mission to keep our nation safe and to keep Israel safe. It's really quite something to be here and have this opportunity to travel to a place like the Western Wall, with all its history. We had a chance to go down and see some of the tunnels, the excavation that's been done there as well. That history reminds you of the history of the Jewish people here on this land; it reminds you of all of the rich religious traditions here in this place and how special Jerusalem really is. It makes you even more proud of the decision President Trump made to designate this and to show that this is truly the capital of Israel.

QUESTION: And that happened just over a year ago when –

SECRETARY POMPEO: It seems like a long time ago.

QUESTION: I know. And making history, and a lot of evangelicals and Israelis were ecstatic about moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, but some are concerned about what might happen or what price they might pay in the peace plan that's upcoming right now. So they're concerned about that. What can you do to allay their fears of something like dividing Jerusalem in the upcoming peace plan?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I've seen the details of the plan as it stands now. I'm sure there'll be things moved just a bit as time goes on, but evangelicals of the world should know that this is a vision for what might ultimately lead to this resolution of this conflict. I think we all want a better life for the Palestinian people; we want a path where the Palestinians and the Israelis aren't in conflict. That would be good for the region, good

for Jerusalem, good for the world, and I think this plan presents a vision for that but doesn't sacrifice any of these core principles, frankly, of any of the faiths.

QUESTION: As we do rapid fire, let's move to the United States for a moment and anti-Semitism and the Democrats. They seem embroiled in this. There was a – I don't want to say a veiled shot, not that it was a shot, but at Ilhan Omar about the bigotry and anti-Semitism inside the halls of Capitol Hill. What – how concerned are you about the rise of not just anti-Semitism around the world but in that Democrat Party as well?

SECRETARY POMPEO: To see this from a member of Congress like Congresswoman Omar is – I talked about this being dark. The rise of anti-Semitism in the United States and in Europe and in, frankly, all across the world is something that is deeply troubling, and to see someone – a duly elected congressman – behave in that way, to speak about anti-Semitism in that way, is of great concern. It's a great concern to me. This administration speaks the truth, and anti-Semitism is unacceptable in any form from anyone, but to see it come from one of America's leaders is just abhorrent.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, back here in the Middle East, you're heading to Lebanon, the last leg of your trip, and yet Lebanon is dominated in many ways by Hizballah, with maybe more than 100,000 rockets, building tunnels into the Northern Galilee, and setting up a military infrastructure on the Golan Heights or trying to, anyway. What can you do and the U.S. do to reduce this threat to Israel and to Lebanon itself?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's a great question, and that's certainly part of my mission when I travel to Lebanon. It's unfortunate. For the last decade, the previous administration, Hizballah was permitted to grow – to grow its capabilities, to grow its resources almost unchecked, and to seep its way into Lebanese politics. The Lebanese people don't want that. They deserve better. This is a nation with a rich, deep tradition, and so our mission – the reason I'm going there – is to show them what America is prepared to do to help to push back against the threat from Hizballah; to tell them that getting anywhere near Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizballah, is of great risk to their nation; and then to work on some of the security aspects of the relationship as well to make sure they understand the threat that Hizballah's military power inside of Lebanon poses to that entire country.

QUESTION: Staying here in the Middle East, northeast Syria's been in the news a lot in the last couple of months, and you know there's a new democracy there that represents all the people, protects religious freedom and Christians, and even puts a priority on the role of women. What can you tell those people, that new government and many of the Christians there, about what the U.S. will do to protect that new democracy, even as it's surrounded by many countries that are threatening that area?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So when we think about Syria in the Trump administration, we think about the entire region, right, extending from Iraq all the way to the Mediterranean. We were just talking about Lebanon. The challenges in Syria remain. The United States intends to remain. We are close to the

destruction of the caliphate. It will be completed very, very soon. But the threat from radical Islamic terrorism continues. And so there will be a required continued effort from the United States to push back against ISIS in the region.

But the work that's been done in Iraq – we forget the days when there were prisoners in cages and beheadings on the beach. It seems distant, but it took enormous work from this administration to take the caliphate down, and now it's in its final throes. There's real work to develop democracy in Iraq, to work to develop an independent, sovereign nation there. We are hard at that, and I am confident that the nations of the region, the Gulf states will all work to make sure that Iraq has an opportunity – an opportunity to be independent from Iran, free and sovereign nation.

QUESTION: Are you encouraged by that new democracy?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. But these things take work. They take work everywhere, and to put that – have that take root here in the Middle East is always a challenge, but we're determined to put our shoulder to the task.

QUESTION: From foreign policy to the Dr. Phil portion of the interview – I can roll in a couch if you like – your faith is very important to you. Can you take me back to West Point? I know there was a time in your life where there was a decision point for you about just following Christ, and our audience would be very interested to hear a little bit more on that.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I grew up going to church on Sundays, but frankly it wasn't a priority in my life growing up. I went off to West Point, and as a young cadet, during my freshman year there were two young men who were juniors who were true men of faith. And they held these little Bible study/cookie klatches on Sunday afternoons. And they invited all the cadets to see – it was purely voluntary. And I started showing up, and – truly remarkable. I started going to church every weekend on my own, because I wanted to be there to learn and to grow, and at some point during that first year I really did come to have an understanding of Jesus that was different than the one that I had before. It fundamentally changed my life.

QUESTION: And now, as Secretary of State – really before that, as a – well, you called yourself a backbencher from Kansas. It wasn't me earlier. But –

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's a fair description. (Laughter.)

QUESTION: Okay. Look where you are today. But your faith has informed your views, clearly. And not only that, but you're not shy to talk about it. And I'm wondering about how that – how that really manifests in your life.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So of course my mission as a Secretary of State, the thing I rose my – raised my right hand to do, I swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. And I've done that now a handful of times – first as a soldier, then as a member of Congress, then as the director of the CIA, now as Secretary of State. But in each of those missions, the task that I have is informed by my understanding of my faith, my belief in Jesus

Christ as the savior. It doesn't drive answers and outcomes every day; we all as Christians are searching. But it does inform how I try to treat every human being with dignity and respect in ways that Christians ought to. I don't always live up to that standard, but it does inform the way I think about the world. I think that makes a real difference, and so I want people to know. It's why I talk about it from time to time. I want folks to know the perspective that I am bringing to the challenges in the job that I face, and it also requires me to try to hold myself to the standards that Christians hold themselves out for.

QUESTION: And you also mentioned a Bible story last night when you had your statements with the prime minister. Today's being Purim, a celebration. Jews worldwide and here in Jerusalem are talking about the fact that Esther 2,500 years ago saved the Jewish people with God's help from Haman. And now 2,500 years later there's a new Haman here in the Middle East that wants to eradicate the Jewish people like just like Haman did: the state of Iran. Could it be that President Trump right now has been sort of raised for such a time as this, just like Queen Esther, to help save the Jewish people from the Iranian menace?

SECRETARY POMPEO: As a Christian I certainly believe that's possible. It was remarkable – so we were down in the tunnels where we could see 3,000 years ago, and 2,000 years ago – if I have the history just right – to see the remarkable history of the faith in this place and the work that our administration's done to make sure that this democracy in the Middle East, that this Jewish state remains. I am confident that the Lord is at work here.

QUESTION: Very nice. Secretary Pompeo, thanks so much for doing this.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

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[Press Releases: Remarks With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

Before Dinner

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Prime Minister Netanyahu's Residence

Jerusalem

March 21, 2019

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU: Secretary Pompeo, Mike, Susan, Ambassador David Friedman, I'm so excited. And we're so excited, Sara and I, to have you here, but especially on this evening. This is the eve of Purim, and we have a miracle of Purim. We call it *nes Purim*.

President Trump has just made history. I called him. I thanked him on behalf of the people of Israel. He did it again. First he recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved the U.S. embassy here. Then he pulled out of the disastrous Iran treaty and re-imposed sanctions. But now he did something of equal historic importance. He recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and he did so at a time when Iran is trying to use Syria as a platform to attack and destroy Israel. And the message that President Trump has given the world is that America stands by Israel.

We are celebrating Purim when, 2,500 years ago, other Persians, led by Haman, tried to destroy the Jewish people. They failed then. And today, 2,500 years later, again Persians, led by Khamenei, are trying to destroy the Jewish people and the Jewish state. They are going to fail again.

We are deeply grateful for the U.S. support. We are deeply grateful for the unbelievable and unmatched support for our security and our right to defend ourselves and everything that you do on behalf of Israel and for the state of Israel in so many forms. So it is a distinct pleasure to welcome you and Susan to our home at any time, but especially today.

And let me add another word about that. We had a moving visit today to the wall. I can't resist repeating this, but I'm going to. I said to the Secretary that the last time Pompeo visited Jerusalem didn't end that well, but this is a different time. Rome and Jerusalem clashed over values. We had a great tragedy for the Jewish people. But the new Rome, the United States, views itself as a new Jerusalem.

We visited the original city on the hill. We visited the hill. There is no greater friendship than the one between Israel and the United States, and no

one represents it better than Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. You and Ambassador Friedman and your delegation are exceptional champions of our lives. I've called you so many times on so many things that this evening I just want to say one word – two actually: Thank you. Thank you, Mike Pompeo. Thank you, President Trump. And thank you, America.

To the people of Israel, I say: (In Hebrew, via translation) We have a miracle of Purim on our hands tonight. President Trump made history. He recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, at a time when Iran is trying to use the Golan Heights as a platform for the destruction of Israel. We are commemorating the miracle of Purim, when, 2,500 years ago, the Jewish people triumphed over the other Persians who tried to exterminate it. They will fail today, as they failed then, amongst other things thanks to the immense support of the United States and a president that is the greatest friend Israel ever had in our entire history. Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you. I'll be very brief tonight. It's been a great visit. Susan and I had a chance to visit some of the Holy Sites today. As a person of faith, it's always inspiring to drive through the winding streets of the Old City. We had a chance to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And then the incredible privilege to visit the Western Wall with the prime minister of Israel as the American secretary of state was truly moving, important, and I think indicative of the remarkable relationship between our two countries.

As a cadet, I studied the battles of the Golan. There's a famous battle called the Battle of the Valley of Tears, and it was Israeli heroism at its most amazing, saving this great nation at a time of enormous challenge, a threat that came from east of the Golan, from Syria, a tank battle of epic and historic proportion, of amazing Israeli bravery.

Tonight President Trump made the decision to recognize that that hard-fought real estate, that important place, is proper to be a sovereign part of the state of Israel. President Trump made a bold decision to recognize that, an important decision for the people of Israel. It will truly be historic, and the people of Israel should know that the battles they fought, the lives that they lost on that very ground, were worthy and meaningful and important for all time.

We've had the chance on this visit to talk about lots of things. There are many threats to Israel and to the United States that we will work on together in the days and weeks and months ahead. I'll travel tomorrow to Lebanon to talk about the threat that Hizballah presents to the world and to the state of Israel and, frankly, to the people of Lebanon as well. We will redouble our efforts to make sure that we protect all that is important – all that is important to Israel, all that is important to America, and indeed, all that is important to the world. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU: Thank you, America. Thank you. Thank you.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Nadia Bilbassy of Al Arabiya](#)

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

David Citadel Hotel

Jerusalem

March 21, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you for your time.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's great to be with you. Thank you.

QUESTION: Let's start with Yemen. How are you going to force or convince the Houthis to come back to the table?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, as a first matter, they committed to withdrawing from Hodeidah in Stockholm. They entered into an agreement that said that they would depart. So every expectation is that they will do that. They've not done that yet, and so we are hopeful that they will honor the commitment they made. We will – hopeful that the pressure that we are putting on the Islamic Republic of Iran – who was the primary backstop for the Houthis, providing them not only resources but missile systems that have landed in places like Saudi Arabia – we're very hopeful that this pressure will convince the Houthis that they need to return to the political table, they need to have a discussion, they cannot win this militarily, and that we're determined to ensure that order is restored in Yemen.

QUESTION: Do you think the Iranians instructed them to withdraw from the Sweden agreement?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hard to know, but I imagine there's very little that the

Houthis do that isn't at the direction of the ayatollah or Qasem Soleimani.

QUESTION: Your next step is Beirut. You're going to meet with the president, President Aoun, and the foreign minister. They both said publicly that they're proud to be part of a government that Hizballah, which you consider a terrorist organization, as part of it. How do you square that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hizballah is clearly a terrorist organization, and we – in the Trump administration, we call them like they really are. My regret is that for the past decade the American administration hasn't done nearly enough, hasn't made clear our expectations.

Look, we want good things for the people of Lebanon. You know their tradition. It's a once truly proud, successful economic powerhouse. It can be that again. It can't do so with terrorists as part of their government. It can't be the case that terrorists can occupy places and put missiles that are aimed squarely at Israel. There are risks to Lebanon from that. And the Lebanese people, I think, know this. What they need is they need support from outside to help them, to make sure that there is support and clarity on these issues. And that's what I hope to share with them when I visit tomorrow and the next day in Lebanon.

QUESTION: Are you going to announce sanctions on Hizballah or the Iranian while you're there or here?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I never get out in front of announcements on sanctions. You'll see them when we announce them.

QUESTION: That's the expectation, that you will say something on this trip.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, we'll see.

QUESTION: Why you haven't declared or announced that the Revolutionary Guard – the Iranian Revolutionary Guard – on the State Department terrorist list? The Treasury put them on, but not the State Department.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. We're constantly looking at which groups we will designate, which ones we'll choose not to. In each case, we're trying to make a determination how we can best effectuate our policy. Remember the objective. The objective is to convince the Islamic Republic of Iran to support its people that don't want this. They don't want the country assassinating people in Europe; they don't want their country supporting Hamas; they don't want their money going for Hizballah and the Houthis. Our mission is we think about everything we do tactically, whether it's a designation or a sanction that we put in place. Our mission set is to convince the Islamic Republic of Iran to do what its people want and to behave like a normal nation.

QUESTION: Is this any backchannel between the United States and Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: If there was, would I tell you?

QUESTION: Well, we know later it happened with the Obama administration.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. Our mission set with respect to Iran is very, very clear.

QUESTION: You imposed biting sanction on the Iranians. You say the economy is in bad shape, yet they call the shot in Lebanon, in Yemen, in Iraq, and in Syria. Are you failing to confront their expansion?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, I don't think we are. We started in a really bad place. Remember, the previous administration's policy was very different. They entered into the JCPOA, which guaranteed Iran a path to a nuclear weapon. We pulled out of it. They sidled up to the Iranian regime. Most of what – most of the missile systems that you're seeing today, these are things that were developed under the JCPOA. Most of the terror that you've seen began and continued during the time of the JCPOA.

We've fundamentally shifted course. We're beginning our efforts. There's more work to do. I'm convinced that not only the United States but the coalition that we have built – right, our partners in the Gulf states, our partners here in Israel – I'm convinced that the coalition that we've built that understands the threat that the Islamic Republic of Iran presents to the world will ultimately convince them to do what the Iranian people richly deserve.

QUESTION: On Syria, sir, why you keeping 400 troops there? Is this any deal with the Russians?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, we're continuing the mission that we've had since the beginning of this administration, which is the defeat of the caliphate and ultimately pushing back against radical Islamic terrorism wherever we find it. Decisions on specific troop levels change. They change over time. Our footprint, how we confront that terrorism, changes. We conduct it differently in Asia and in Africa and in the Middle East over time. We try to bring the right tools to bear, the right instruments of power to bear, to achieve the outcome, which is soon the complete destruction of the caliphate and then the continued pressure on radical Islamic terrorism, whether it's al-Qaida or ISIS or anyone else.

QUESTION: You said Jerusalem is still a final status issue. Does that mean that East Jerusalem will be the capital of a Palestinian state in the future?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, we're not going to make any announcements about the plan. Soon enough, we will share our vision for how this intractable problem, now decades on, might be resolved.

QUESTION: So you're going to impose it on the Palestinians, even if they don't participate?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Stay tuned.

QUESTION: Okay. We're going to ask you about the self-autonomy. I mean, I have to try with this one. There is talk that –

SECRETARY POMPEO: All right. Keep trying.

QUESTION: – the Israelis – well, there’s some talks that actually you’re going have self-autonomy for the Palestinians, but not a Palestinian state. Is this something that we can consider?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, look, there have been lots of people talking about what’s in the vision that we’ll put out. What I think I can share with folks today, before the time that we introduce our vision, is we want a better life for the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people live next to Israel. This is going to be the case. We want each of them to have – be able to have a life for themselves and for their children and their grandchildren that is better than the one they have today, with a decreased risk of violence. And when you see the vision, when you see the plan that is presented, I think the whole world will see how America’s thinking about this. Ultimately, this will be resolved between the Palestinians and Israel, but America trying to put its vision forward I think will potentially break the logjam.

QUESTION: Two quick question on Israel. You said you don’t interfere with Israel election. You appear with Prime Minister Netanyahu and he’s meeting with President Trump on Monday. Is that a political statement?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, not at all. The pressing issues of the day, the issues that I work on nearly every day, don’t wait for election cycles. I remind people that Qasem Soleimani doesn’t care about your election. He’s continuing to challenge Israel today, tomorrow. He’ll do it on election day as well. These are not things that are timed against elections. These are important relationships between the United States and Israel, security efforts, economic relationships between the two countries, and they happen no matter who’s having an election, whether it’s here in Israel or in the United States.

QUESTION: Finally, will you allow Mr. Jonathan Pollard to come back with Mr. Netanyahu?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I don’t have anything to share with you on that today.

QUESTION: Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. It was wonderful to be with you.

QUESTION: Likewise.

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