

Press Releases: Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback Travels to Ukraine, Poland, and Uzbekistan

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 10, 2018

In Ukraine, Ambassador Brownback will meet with government officials and religious leaders to discuss efforts to protect and promote religious freedom.

In Poland, Ambassador Brownback will attend the 2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as part of the U.S. delegation. He will participate in discussions about repressive measures against peaceful members of ethnic and religious groups. This annual meeting brings together hundreds of civil society representatives and government officials from North America, Europe, and Central Asia for talks to advance human rights and fundamental freedoms. Ambassador Brownback will also participate in a host of bilateral meetings with government officials and religious leaders to discuss religious freedom issues.

Ambassador Brownback will also tour the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he will participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Auschwitz Wall of Death and a candle-lighting ceremony at the International Monument at the conclusion of the tour.

In Uzbekistan, Ambassador Brownback will meet with senior government officials to discuss Uzbekistan's recent positive steps on religious freedom policies and encourage legislative reforms that ensure Uzbekistan upholds its international obligations on freedom of religion or belief.

Please contact DRL-Press@state.gov for more information and follow along with Ambassador Brownback's trip on Twitter [@IRF_Ambassador](https://twitter.com/IRF_Ambassador).

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Press Releases: Assistant Secretary Mitchell Travel to Tbilisi and Skopje

Media Note
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Washington, DC
September 10, 2018

Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs A. Wess Mitchell will travel to Europe from September 11 to 14.

On September 11, he will arrive in Tbilisi, Georgia, where he will meet with senior officials, other political leaders, and civil society representatives to discuss U.S.-Georgian cooperation on a range of global issues. He will also address the 2018 Tbilisi International Conference to reinforce U.S. support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, continued democratic development, and aspirations to integrate into Western institutions.

Assistant Secretary Mitchell will then travel to Skopje, Macedonia on September 13, where he will meet with Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and other senior officials to discuss U.S. support for the Prespa Agreement between Macedonia and Greece and the upcoming September 30 referendum. He will also meet with business leaders and members of parliament to exchange views and underscore our support for the country as it moves forward to take its place in the Western family.

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Press Releases: Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Andrea L. Thompson Travels to Tbilisi, Georgia

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 10, 2018

Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Andrea L. Thompson will travel to Tbilisi, Georgia September 10-12, 2018. Under Secretary Thompson will meet with senior officials to discuss bilateral issues, regional security, and how the Department's "T Family" – the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance; the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation; and the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs – contribute toward long-term security and stability in a critical region.

Additionally, Under Secretary Thompson will join the Georgian Minister of Defense on a panel at the 2018 Tbilisi International Conference to discuss Global Security. Finally, Under Secretary Thompson will visit with officials at the Richard G. Lugar Center for Public Health Research.

Follow the Under Secretary's travels on Twitter at @UnderSecT, as well as @StateDeptPM, @StateISN, and @StateAVC. Follow on Facebook at @UnderSecT.

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[Press Releases: Public Designation of Nikola Spiric Under Section 7031\(c\) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Act of 2018](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 10, 2018

The Department is publicly designating Mr. Nikola Spiric, a member of the House of Representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, under Section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Act of 2018, due to his involvement in significant corruption. Section 7031(c) provides that, in cases where the Secretary of State has credible information that foreign officials have been involved in significant corruption or gross violations of human rights, those individuals and their immediate family members are ineligible for entry into the United States. Mr. Spiric engaged in and benefited from public corruption, including the acceptance of improper benefits in exchange for the performance of public functions and interference with public processes, during his tenure as a member of the House of Representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The law also requires the Secretary of State to publicly or privately designate such officials and their family members. In addition to the designation of Mr. Spiric, the Secretary is also publicly designating Mr. Spiric's spouse, Nada Spiric, his son, Aleksandar Spiric, and his daughter, Jovana Spiric.

For more information, please contact INL-PAPD@state.gov.

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Press Releases: Closure of the PLO Office in Washington

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 10, 2018

The Administration has determined after careful review that the office of the General Delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington should close. We have permitted the PLO office to conduct operations that support the objective of achieving a lasting, comprehensive peace between Israelis and the Palestinians since the expiration of a previous waiver in November 2017. However, the PLO has not taken steps to advance the start of direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel. To the contrary, PLO leadership has condemned a U.S. peace plan they have not yet seen and refused to engage with the U.S. government with respect to peace efforts and otherwise. As such, and reflecting Congressional concerns, the Administration has decided that the PLO office in Washington will close at this point. This decision is also consistent with Administration and Congressional concerns with Palestinian attempts to prompt an investigation of Israel by the International Criminal Court.

The United States continues to believe that direct negotiations between the two parties are the only way forward. This action should not be exploited by those who seek to act as spoilers to distract from the imperative of reaching a peace agreement. We are not retreating from our efforts to achieve a lasting and comprehensive peace.

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