

Press Releases: Death of Iranian Political Prisoner and Human Rights Activist Vahid Sayadi-Nassiri

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 13, 2018

We are deeply saddened by the reports of the unconscionable death of Mr. Vahid Sayadi-Nassiri, a human rights activist who the Iranian regime arbitrarily detained and who died in prison. Mr. Sayadi-Nassiri went on a hunger strike to protest his arbitrary arrest and detention in Qom, where he had no access to legal counsel, was held in inhumane conditions, and was charged with spurious national security offences such as “insulting the Supreme Leader.” Mr. Sayadi-Nassiri languished in prison without his voice able to reach the outside world and he is just one of many more unjustly detained prisoners held at the mercy of the Iranian regime’s whims.

The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms the Iranian regime for its unceasingly flagrant human rights violations. We demand that the regime stops subjecting Iranians who are peacefully voicing their opinions to brutal conditions and slow deaths and that it release all those unjustly imprisoned; such as Dr. Farhad Meisami – who is also on hunger strike, and Nissrin Satoudeh. How many more people will die because of the Iranian regime’s disregard for human life and dignity? Ayatollah Khamenei recently said “No one in Iran is prosecuted or placed under pressure for criticizing the government, and if any one claims they have been, he or she has lied.” Who is the liar?

We offer our sincere condolences to the family of Mr. Sayadi-Nassiri and we demand that the regime give the Iranian people the respect and rights that they deserve.

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Press Releases: Conclusion of Yemen Consultations in Sweden

Press Statement
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
December 13, 2018

The United States commends participants from the Yemen consultations in Sweden for making progress on key initiatives, including a cease-fire and withdrawal of forces in Hudaydah, prisoner exchanges, and opening humanitarian corridors to the city of Taiz. Although many details remain subject to further discussion, these consultations between the Republic of Yemen Government and the Houthis marked a pivotal first step. All parties have an opportunity to build upon this momentum and improve the lives of all Yemenis. Moving forward, all must continue to engage, de-escalate tensions, and cease ongoing hostilities. This is the best way to give these and future consultations a chance to succeed. The United States thanks UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths for his leadership on these efforts, continued optimism, and ability to inspire reconciliation. We also thank the Government of Sweden for hosting, as well as the governments of Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the many others that helped facilitate and support the consultations. The work ahead will not be easy, but we have seen what many considered improbable begin to take shape. Peace is possible. The end of these consultations can be the beginning of a new chapter for Yemen.

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Press Releases: Joint Statement Regarding the Inaugural United States- Greece Strategic Dialogue

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 13, 2018

The text of the following statement was released by the Governments of the United States of America and Greece on the occasion of the U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue.

Begin Text:

The Governments of the United States and Greece held the inaugural U.S.-Greece Strategic Dialogue in Washington, D.C. on December 13, 2018. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Greek Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs George Katrougalos launched the Dialogue, which included high-level interagency representation from both countries.

The Strategic Dialogue builds on a year of intensive engagement, highlights the strength of the bilateral relationship, and confirms the mutual commitment of the United States and Greece to deepen cooperation in the areas described below.

Regional Cooperation

The United States and Greece shared views of the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkans, noting their common vision for a peaceful and prosperous region, the need to integrate the countries of the Western Balkans into European and transatlantic institutions, according to the choice of their people, and the aim of further linking partners in the Eastern Mediterranean in a framework of political and economic ties. The two countries underlined the importance of respect for international law and the peaceful resolution of differences, as a guiding principle to good neighborly relations and as a means to resolving problems and addressing tensions. The United States lauded Greece's leadership and vision in promoting regional stability and cooperation, in particular, Athens' initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans

to facilitate common regional economic and security benefits, as well as in reaching the Prespes Agreement with Skopje and working towards its implementation. The two sides also reviewed investment and infrastructure development in the Western Balkans. Greece emphasized the continued challenges related to refugees and migrants in Europe, and the two governments discussed the possibility for U.S. support in this area. Greece discussed its trilateral partnerships in the Eastern Mediterranean and the United States expressed interest in increasing its support for the Greece-Israel-Cyprus trilateral discussion, as invited.

Defense and Security

The United States and Greece discussed common security concerns, such as international terrorism and instability in the Eastern Mediterranean region and reaffirmed their commitment to further enhance their strategic defense and security partnership, which promotes stability and prosperity in the region and contributes to the strength of NATO. The two governments also expressed their desire to modernize and expand their multifaceted defense relationship in order to better meet the needs of both countries and to more effectively address regional and global security challenges, citing recent successes in combined joint training and security exercises, and an increase in our joint activities.

Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism

Both sides emphasized the importance of their cooperation on law enforcement and counterterrorism issues that has led to many important successes in the areas of convictions, seizures of weapons and many-hundred kilogram quantities of illicit narcotics, repatriation of antiquities, and disruption and dismantling of transnational criminal organizations. The United States highlighted Greece's participation in the Visa Waiver Program and the positive progress Greece has made toward fulfilling the commitments of the 2016 Joint Statement. The two governments committed to enhance law enforcement cooperation, including in the areas of information exchange, border security cooperation, and countering illicit activity.

Trade and Investment

Building on the positive momentum from the Thessaloniki International Fair, Greece, and the United States committed to boosting bilateral trade and investment, including in key sectors such as energy, defense, IT, entertainment, and infrastructure. The United States congratulated Greece on its exit from financial support programs and on opening a new economic chapter, while acknowledging the challenges Greece still faces as it continues on the path to recovery. The United States highlighted the increasing role of Greece as an energy, transport, and commercial hub in the region, and the two countries committed to cooperate in further strengthening this role. The United States and Greece committed to work together to strengthen intellectual property rights protection in Greece. The United States reaffirmed its support for Greek efforts to make the necessary reforms to improve competitiveness, with the two sides committing to continued engagement through the Trade and Investment Working Group.

Energy

The two governments noted the need to improve Europe's energy security and diversification, highlighting the recent spot purchase of U.S. LNG and ongoing negotiations for a long-term supply agreement. The United States commended Greece's progress on energy projects to expand regional interconnectivity to include the enlarged Revithoussa LNG terminal, the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, and the Greece-Bulgaria Interconnector, and supports additional infrastructure designed to diversify routes and supplies, to include the proposed LNG terminal in Alexandroupolis and the Eastern Med pipeline, where commercially feasible. The two sides also discussed cooperation on renewables and clean and efficient coal technologies. The United States supports Greece's joining the Three Seas Initiative and related efforts to strengthen Europe's North-South interconnectivity.

People-to-People Ties

Both sides recognized the strong people-to-people ties connecting the two countries and the vital role these ties play in fortifying the bilateral relationship. The two governments discussed ways to increase cooperation between museums, student exchange programs and English language programs, and celebrated the summer 2019 launch of the FLEX exchange program. The United States announced the selection of Greece as the host for the first-ever Gilman Scholar Regional Summit, expected to take place in 2019. The two sides also reaffirmed their commitment to the Fulbright Program on its 70th anniversary.

The United States and Greece look forward to continuing these discussions throughout the coming year, with the aim of reviewing progress at the next Dialogue in Greece in 2019.

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[Press Releases: Deputy Secretary Sullivan's Meeting With Austrian Secretary General for Foreign Affairs](#)

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Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 13, 2018

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:□

Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan met today in Vienna with Austrian Secretary General for Foreign Affairs Johannes Peterlik. During the meeting, Deputy Secretary Sullivan reaffirmed the importance of U.S.-Austrian bilateral relations and thanked him for Austria's contributions to security cooperation in Afghanistan and the Western Balkans. The Deputy Secretary also emphasized the need to counter the malign activities of the Iranian regime such as its ballistic missile program and the importance of maintaining sanctions on Russia.

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Press Releases: Press Availability at the United Nations

Press Availability
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

United Nations
New York City

December 12, 2018

SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon, everyone. We had a productive Security Council meeting where the United States made clear that Iran's ballistic missile activity is out of control and that they are defying the UN Security Council 2231 in numerous ways.

Iran has been testing – on a testing spree and a proliferation spree and this must come to an end. We want to work with all members of the Security Council to reimpose tougher restrictions on the Iranian ballistic missiles. The restrictions that were in place under UNSCR 1929 are the place that the world needs to be today. This threat is real and upon us. We clearly see that the JCPOA didn't succeed in stopping this malign activity. This Security Council has a responsibility to protect citizens in the Middle East, Americans traveling through the Middle East, Europeans who are now at risk from Iranian missiles, and we called upon every member of the Security Council to undertake actions that would achieve that.

With that, I'm happy to take a couple of questions.

MR PALLADINO: Let's start with CBS, Pam Falk.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. It's Pamela Falk from CBS. Do you envision any additional sanctions on either Iran or on the European Union given the fact that the SPV, according to Iran's chief of staff of the president, is about to go into effect in two or three weeks,

meaning avoiding U.S. sanctions given what you said today about the proliferation?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure. So I never get out in front of decisions that we make about sanctions. We have to evaluate the facts as they present themselves. But we've been unambiguous with respect to those things that are permissible and those that are not. Should it be the case that the Europeans develop an SPV, we'll look at it. There are humanitarian exemptions in the sanctions that have been put in place for foodstuffs and medicine. If the activity that is undertaken is consistent with that, we obviously won't emplace sanctions. But to the extent that there are violations of our sanctions, we intend to enforce them with great rigor against any party who is a participant in those violations.

MR PALLADINO: (Inaudible) BBC.

QUESTION: Right here. Right here. Thank you, Secretary. BBC. Good afternoon.

SECRETARY POMPEO: (Off-mike.)

QUESTION: Secretary, you heard your European allies expressing their continued support for JCPOA. You also – even the French ambassador talking about how pressure and sanctions might not change a dynamic much alone. If you're here exactly where we are one year from now, another 2231 meeting where your sanctions haven't changed the behavior of the Iranian regime, they are still adhering to the deal, and their missile activity or regional activity is (inaudible) less as where we are, what is next? I ask that because Mr. Hook standing here just two weeks ago talked about military option, and many of your critics are saying you're basically repeating the Iraq playbook and that this is all a pretense for war. What is the next step if your sanctions do not work a year from now?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So back to first principles. The first thing that didn't work was the JCPOA. All the ballistic missile activity, save for the last two that I spoke about today, occurred during the JCPOA. So if you're looking for an agreement that was unable to contain assassination efforts in Europe, the establishment of an equivalent of Lebanese Hizballah on the cusp of being achieved in Yemen, malign activity in Iraq by the Iranians, the missile activity to which we were debating today – if you're looking for bad activity, this all occurred during the JCPOA. So if you're looking for a failed agreement, I got a good one for you.

Now it's time for this Security Council to get serious about this real risk from proliferation from the Iranian regime. And it is our determination to do everything we can, everything within – as the President says, everything we can to make sure that we do the right thing. We're going to exert American leadership to build a coalition – and you heard today, you heard 11 members of the Security Council join the United States in expressing their concerns about the Iranian missile proliferation. We're going to work with a coalition to build out a set of responses that deliver deterrence against Iran and its continued proliferation of ballistic missiles and ballistic missile systems that have the potential to carry nuclear warheads.

MR PALLADINO: Fox News, Adam Shaw, please.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Adam Shaw, Fox News. We saw a lot of support for the JCPOA from the European countries today. We also saw a lot of criticism of Iran's destabilizing activities. Are you getting any sense that European countries are beginning to come around to your way of thinking on Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I'll let the European countries speak for themselves with respect to where they are, but this much is clear: We have a different view on the JCPOA, as we should – or we're not ambiguous when I speak with my European counterparts. We're very clear about that. They view it as the linchpin. I view it as a disaster and I think President Trump does as well.

Now the challenge is this: We continue to see the Islamic Republic of Iran behaving in ways that are inconsistent with keeping people safe all around the world, and we need to figure out how together we can build out a coalition to push back against that. There are lots of places that can occur. It can occur while the JCPOA is still in effect, that is, while they're still inside of it. But make no mistake, American leadership is determined to work not only with the Europeans – we think of Germany, France, and Britain, but many other European countries who share our concerns as well, countries throughout the Middle East, Asia, Africa all joining with the United States under our leadership to – first, as a first step, acknowledge the risk that Iran presents and then set up a response that will ultimately deter them.

MR PALLADINO: Last question. Al Jazeera, James Bays.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, James Bays from Al Jazeera.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: You were today in the chair that's normally occupied by Ambassador Haley. She said in an interview the – about responsibility for the death of Jamal Khashoggi, she said, "It was the Saudi Government, and MBS is the head of the Saudi Government. So they are all responsible and they don't get a pass." Do you agree that Mohammed bin Salman is responsible?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I think Ambassador Haley said something that's very consistent with what President Trump and I have both said, which is that we have already held accountable a large number of persons who were responsible for the heinous murder of Jamal Khashoggi, that we will continue to investigate and take the facts where they lead, and get to a place where we hold those responsible accountable. We'll do that.

At the same time, and I didn't hear these remarks by Ambassador Haley, but I'm confident that she would share my view that America's interests in the region are important. And our partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important one. It has delivered American security in important ways in President Trump's first two years in office, and we intend to continue to work with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to keep America safe.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you all.

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