

Press Releases: Interview With Chris Mitchell of Christian Broadcast Network

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Cathedral of the Nativity
Cairo, Egypt
January 11, 2019

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thanks for joining us on CBN News. (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Hi, and it's great to be with you.

QUESTION: You just had a tour of this cathedral. It was given as a gift by President al-Sisi to the church. Why is this so important?

SECRETARY POMPEO: This is a very special place just recently opened. We are sitting in the heart of Cairo, the heart of Egypt, and we have this cathedral demonstrating that every place in the world can have religious freedom – opportunity for individuals to worship in the way they see fit, and here a chance to praise the Lord in Cairo. It's a pretty special place. It's an enormous, wonderful, beautiful cathedral.

QUESTION: Why is religious freedom so important to the Trump administration?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Because it's at the heart of all the freedoms that every individual should have, right? Every human being has the dignity that comes with their life and religious freedom is a central element to that. For individuals to be able to worship in the way they want or if they choose not to worship, so be it. To have that in this place too is so special, a place which isn't everywhere here in the Middle East. For President Sisi to have done this is really special and, I think, important to Cairo, to Egypt, and to the world.

QUESTION: You mentioned him in your speech as well. Do you see him as a model of a leader here in the Middle East?

SECRETARY POMPEO: He has really taken to heart the ideal of religious freedom and he's done so with great power and great courage, and he is to be lauded

for that.

QUESTION: You just had a major speech about the Middle East, and 10 years ago, another major speech was given here in Cairo. Would it be fair to say that your speech was “America is back and it’s a force for good?”

SECRETARY POMPEO: Absolutely. I want people throughout the Middle East and the world to know that America’s involvement in the Middle East is absolutely a force for good. We come here with no intention to oppress or to dominate, but rather to free, to create opportunities for every individual throughout the Middle East to live their life, to have the freedoms that we are all so blessed to have in the United States.

QUESTION: One of your themes of the trip is about Iran and the danger to the Middle East. Do you see nations aligning up with the United States against the influence of Iran?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So our team has done good work. We built an enormous coalition that ranges from Asia to North Africa, certainly to the Middle East, countries from all across the world, understanding that the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran is real and continuing and ought not to be tolerated.

QUESTION: A few hours ago you met with leaders in Erbil about the Kurds and yet there’s dangerous talk coming out of Turkey. What’s your message to Erdogan if he goes ahead and invades the Kurds?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, our message is straightforward. The work that the Kurdish forces did with us alongside in Syria has been important. It took down a caliphate, 99 percent of the real estate that was held by ISIS. We remember people sitting in cages being burned. Seems like a long time ago, but frankly, it’s the good work that the United States did with a big coalition. And we’ll work with the Turks to make sure that there’s security for them as well and that the Kurdish people in Syria are indeed protected.

QUESTION: Two final questions, one about the Christians in the region: They have an appeal that they won’t be eradicated, that Christianity won’t be eradicated. What’s your message to those Christians?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That America is with them. Christianity is at the heart of the history of this place here in the Middle East. All you got to do is grab a Bible and read the places and the names. Christians have been central to Middle East. We want to make sure that they continue to have opportunities and freedom and for Christian churches to grow alongside churches of other faiths as well. Our message is simple, is that we stand for religious freedom every place American diplomacy is at work.

QUESTION: And one final domestic question: BDS, there’s an act proposed right now in the Senate. It’s not being passed because Democrats are refusing to vote for it. It’s by Senator Rubio. What’s your position on that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The good news is I don’t do politics anymore, U.S. domestic politics, but I’ll say this: Israel too ought to have the respect and dignity

that comes with that great democracy here in the Middle East as well.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Great. Thank you very much, sir.

QUESTION: Okay.

SECRETARY POMPEO: You have a good day.

QUESTION: You too.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

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[Press Releases: U.S. Condemns Deadly Houthi Drone Attack in Yemen](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 11, 2019

The United States strongly condemns the January 10 Houthi drone attack on Republic of Yemen Government officers at a military parade at Al-Anad Air Base in Lahij. This attack contravenes the spirit of the Hudaydah ceasefire and the progress made last month at the UN-led talks in Sweden. We urge all sides to honor the commitments they made in Sweden to their fellow Yemenis by refraining from violence and provocative acts.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Amal Roushdy of Egyptian State Television](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Cairo, Egypt
January 11, 2019

QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, I appreciate your time, and let me first start very quickly and briefly with your feedback about your visit to Egypt, including the meetings you held here.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, thanks. It's great to be with you. We had a very productive time here in Cairo. We achieved a great deal in the partnership between the United States and Egypt. We talked about a range of issues, about economic growth and prosperity here in Cairo and in greater Egypt as well as security issues in the region.

QUESTION: How will you transform your support to Egypt into tangible procedures in the coming time?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, so there's lots of things, and we've already done good work. We've done good work supporting Egypt's need for counterterrorism assistance. We've done good work with American businesses coming here. Each of these things will be built upon in the days and weeks ahead. Had a good conversation too once more confirming the important partnership between our two countries.

QUESTION: You also visited the cathedral and mosque this morning. What's your feedback on this visit?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it was a remarkable visit to those two beautiful places

of worship, and they are a hallmark for the whole region. These are beacons of religious freedom demonstrating that here in the heart of the Middle East you can have Christians and Muslims all worshiping in their own way, in their own unique way, but do it in the sense where there is security and tolerance for each of those religions. It was important. It was a great visit, and I thank the imam and the bishop for hosting me.

QUESTION: Along your strategic relationship with Egypt, do you see a need now for an upgrade for the military assistance to meet with the current threats from the terrorist groups?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So there is always work to do. Indeed, the remarks that I gave yesterday focused in good part on this threat from extremism. The Egyptians have been great partners in that. We now have work to do not only here but all across the region to create the conditions where the threats that come from the world's largest state sponsor of terror country in the world, Iran, threats that come from Daesh, each of those threats can be handled in a comprehensive way, so people in the Middle East can live in peace and harmony and live their lives the way that they want to.

QUESTION: Why are you still not designating or reluctant to designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist group when you personally cosponsored the Congress designation bill in 2015? President Trump talked about this and his willingness among other U.S. officials who also pointed on this issue.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it's something we look at constantly. There has been no nation that rivals what the United States has done in terms of applying security pressure, financial pressure, economic pressure, on all of those elements, whether it be al-Qaida or HTS, any extremist group. The United States is leading the effort to push back against them. We understand that absent a comprehensive effort against extremism the world will be a less safe and prosperous place, and Egypt will suffer from that as well.

QUESTION: Yes, but do you share the same views expressed by former Secretary of State Tillerson June 2017, when he stated that it is a problematic issue to designate the MBs because some of them are already occupying posts in government, like in Turkey for example?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So you saw what I did when I was a member of Congress.

QUESTION: Yes, I did.

SECRETARY POMPEO: We need to build a broad consensus in the United States on all issues related to sanctions. We're working to do that.

QUESTION: Okay. President Trump announced a full defeat of Daesh, however reports stated that regional countries are the main funding streams. There must be also – there must be always a funding channel for the terrorist groups. President Trump pointed or called on Qatar once. The administration called another time on Qatar when – to stop funding through Iranian militias, many of them regarded, of course, as terrorist organizations by Washington. How are you going to deal with that – the countries, the regional countries

who are accused of supporting terrorist groups in the area and abroad as well?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's a great question. We are working to cut off funding for terror groups wherever the source of those funds. We have now put in place the largest sanctions in history against the Islamic Republic of Iran, a place from which much terror is generated. But make no mistake about it, the United States is equal opportunity when it comes to pushing back against terror finance. Whether that terror finance stems from Qatar, from Saudi Arabia, from the Emirates, from Egypt, from anyplace in the world, we are diligent. Your point is exactly right. Absent the financial capacity to fuel this extremism we can reduce the risk, and so that is certainly one of the central aims of this administration, to cut off the financial ties to terror that emanate frankly not only from the Middle East but from all across the world.

QUESTION: Let's move quickly to your pullout strategy from Syria. I don't want to repeat the same questions you've been asked, but along the strategy that you are going to reveal in the coming days, how are you going to: one, secure the Kurds from Turkish violations; and how do you react to the Turkish demands of refusing your military bases, especially the one on the borders of Iraq at al-Tanf?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, you ask an important question. So the President's decision to withdraw our 2,000 uniformed military personnel from Syria has been made. We will do that, but we'll do so in a way that makes sense, that is orderly, that does everything we can to ensure the security of those who fought alongside us defeating the caliphate inside of Syria, but importantly also permits us to continue the counter-ISIS campaign. We know – we fight against ISIS in West Africa, in Asia – it is a global phenomenon. It's not simply in Syria. It's certainly in Iraq as well. We have a duty to continue that campaign, and President Trump is deeply committed to that.

QUESTION: How do you react to your Turkish counterpart just two days ago his latest accusation of the U.S. reluctance to withdraw from Syria due – this is what he said – due to your coordination with the terrorist elements?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I'll speak with my Turkish counterpart today. Conversations with them continue. We will come to a place where there is a common understanding about how it is we're going to execute this decision that President Trump made in a way that is orderly and productive.

QUESTION: Last question. You postponed your announcement of your suggested peace plan known for "the deal of the century." How do you think or expect consensus on your peace plan when you pressured the Palestinian, one side of the conflict, twice – when you ended all funding to the UNRWA and, second, when you shut the Palestinian mission in Washington?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So we'll move forward on the peace plan, as is appropriate. There's been a lot of work done. Consultations with countries, including Egypt, in the region continues even this month. Lots of conversations about how not to just unveil a plan but how to actually achieve something that's

been struggled – that the people have struggled with for decades.

With respect to the Gaza Strip that you referred to, make no mistake about it, the disaster, the difficulties there in that region, are the result of Hamas and the terror that they have inflicted on the Palestinian people there in the Gaza Strip. America is a force for good throughout the Middle East, and our peace plan will demonstrate that we can be a force for good in the resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestinian – the Palestinians as well.

QUESTION: Now Russia is calling for an international peace conference as long as – as well as the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. Will you be part of any discussions or results of this peace – international peace conference if it happens?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Goodness, I don't know. We are involved in Syria in enforcing UN Security Council Resolution 2254. I wish the Russians were being cooperative there and moving towards a political resolution of the conflict in Syria. We ask for their assistance there. Make no mistake about it, when countries are looking to establish stability and peace in this region, it is the United States which is almost always leading and in the forefront of that.

QUESTION: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, thank you very much. Appreciate your time. Thank you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. You have a great day.

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[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Call With Venezuelan National Assembly President Juan Guaidó](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 10, 2019

The below is attributable to Deputy Spokesperson Robert Palladino:□

Secretary Pompeo spoke by phone today with Juan Guaidó and congratulated Mr. Guaidó on his recent swearing-in as Venezuela's new President of the democratically elected National Assembly. The Secretary reinforced the U.S. commitment to the National Assembly, the only legitimate and last democratically elected institution in Venezuela, and the re-establishment of democracy in Venezuela. The two reaffirmed their desire to work together closely on a broad range of issues throughout the year to bring about a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future for the Venezuelan people.

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[Press Releases: The Provisional Election Results in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)

Press Statement
Robert Palladino

Deputy Spokesperson

Washington, DC
January 10, 2019

The United States takes note of the National Independent Electoral Commission's announcement of the provisional results of December 30 elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). We congratulate the millions of courageous voters who went to the polls across DRC to cast their ballots after two years of delay. Many of these voters waited long hours for the chance to make their voices heard. Many other voters were unable to vote due to challenges with the organization of polling stations, missing election materials, or the cancellation of elections in the Ebola affected areas of Beni and Butembo, yet still found creative, peaceful, and inspirational ways to express their desire for a more peaceful and prosperous Congo. The United States stands with the people of Congo at this historic moment and it is they who should determine their country's future.

The United States also notes the importance of President Joseph Kabila's decision to abide by his constitutionally mandated term limits and transfer power to a successor. The National Independent Electoral Commission has announced provisional results, but we await clarification of questions which have been raised regarding the electoral count. The United States notes that stakeholders have the option to request a review of the announced provisional results to ensure they reflect the will of the Congolese people as expressed through the ballot box. We urge all stakeholders to remain calm as the process continues. Violence is unacceptable, and the U.S. Government will hold accountable those who perpetrate election-related violence or impede the democratic process.

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