Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo Remarks (as prepared)
2020 AIPAC Policy Conference
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Thank you, thank you.

What a crowd!

My thanks to AIPAC President Mort Fridman, my friend Howard Kohr, and all the incredible AIPAC members and volunteers for putting this amazing event together.

I’ve been here plenty of times, but seeing so many people gathered together for the love of Israel never gets old, does it?

And there’s no President and no Administration that loves Israel more than President Trump and the Trump Administration!

Just think about what we’ve done since I was on this stage last year:

- We’ve declared the commonsense truth that Israeli West Bank settlements aren’t per se inconsistent with international law.

- We’ve released a groundbreaking Vision for Peace.

- And we’ve taken out one of the world’s worst anti-Semites, the terrorist Qasem Soleimani!

The previous administration used to say, “Osama bin Laden is dead, and GM is alive.”

I think we can do them one better: “Qasem Soleimani is dead, and Israel and the United States are alive.”
Nations of the Middle East and the world are recognizing just how enduring Israel is.

They are coming to recognize that the more the Middle East embraces Israel, the brighter its future will be.

That’s what I’d like to speak about with you today.

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Under President Trump, Israel is not a pariah, but a partner. Rightly so.

Our special nations share so much: A pioneering spirit; basic rights and freedoms, including religious freedom; pluralism, rough and tumble politics.

Israel loves democracy so much, today it’s holding its third election in eleven months! Can’t get enough of them!

And think of all the benefits Israel brings to the region: an example of pluralism and free speech; a robust, free-market economy where innovation and entrepreneurship are rewarded; a place where all can worship freely, without fear or favor;

These good things have ripple effects: A strong democracy sets an example for pluralism; a productive Israeli economy creates jobs; an Israeli society respectful of all faiths shows there’s nothing to fear from religious minorities.

Now, not every nation or institution is as supportive of a strong, free, democratic, and prosperous Israel – as we are.

But look closely around the world, and you’ll see that the nations of the world are increasingly embracing Israel – the nation-state of the Jewish people – as central to a bright future for the Middle East:
- In December, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced plans for his government to pass an anti-BDS law.

- That same month, French parliamentarians voted to declare anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism, as I said here last year.

- Greece and Cyprus have pursued new energy partnerships with Israel, as have Egypt and Jordan.

- Guatemala, Honduras, and Nauru have recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Brazil says it intends to do soon.

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And look at a budding trend in the Middle East: Israel’s Gulf neighbors warming to her.

- In 2018, Oman received Prime Minister Netanyahu for a visit.

- That same year, the UAE played the Israeli national anthem – “Hatikvah, The Hope” – at a judo tournament hosted in Abu Dhabi – not once, but twice.

- Last year, Bahrain allowed Israeli journalists to visit for the first time since 1994.

- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has said, “I believe the Palestinians and the Israelis have the right to have their own land.”

- Ambassadors from Oman, Bahrain, and the UAE attended the White House ceremony unveiling the Vision for Peace, where President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu both offered remarks.

Yes, these are just a few small glimpses of harmony. There’s still much more progress to be had between Israel and her neighbors.
But I think these anecdotes suggest a growing attitude shift among some of Israel’s neighbors.

And the more the Middle East embraces Israel, the brighter its future will be.

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As I said earlier, there are some around the world who still refuse to see Israel’s shining example, or respect Israel’s rights as a nation.

The number one state-sponsor of anti-Semitism in the world – the Islamic Republic of Iran – is undoubtedly the worst.

The regime stokes hatred of Jews to serve their own, corrupt ends… through classroom textbooks, state media propaganda, and the poisoned declarations of their unelected leaders.

How sad, given that Iranians gave sanctuary to Jews during the Holocaust, and helped Jewish families escape persecution in Iraq!

Let me be clear: the world knows that the noble Iranian people do not hate Israel, or Jews, or any other religious group. It’s the bigoted, intolerant regime that does.

It’s one reason Iran will never obtain a nuclear weapon on President Trump’s watch.

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Who else refuses to respect Israel? Some members of our own Congress, sadly.

In November, I received a letter from 106 members – all Democrats.
They criticized moving the embassy to Jerusalem, closing the Palestinian office in D.C., halting foreign assistance to the West Bank and Gaza, and rethinking the settlements issue.

They claim these decisions have:

- “discredited the United States as an honest broker between Israel and the Palestinian Authority”

- “severely damaged prospects for peace”

- “endangered the security of America, Israel, and the Palestinian people.”

You know what discredits the United States, what damages peace, what endangers security?

Denying the truth!

- Denying that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.

- Denying that the closing of the Palestinian office in Washington was 100% necessary following President Abbas’ 2017 remarks at the UN.

- Denying that Palestinian terrorism has been the real obstacle to peace, and that the Palestinian leadership has eschewed all attempts at peace talks.

- Denying that the settlement issue is a political dispute, not a legal puzzle. I’ll have more to say about that in a moment.

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Finally, there’s the UN’s so-called Human Rights Council, and the High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet.

The Council recently released a database of companies doing business in East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank.
This release only serves to facilitate the BDS movement and delegitimize Israel.

How sad! An organization that was set up to ensure no people ever again faced horrors like the Jews faced during the Holocaust is now anti-Semitic!

The Trump Administration was right to leave an international institution that has so grossly betrayed its mandate!

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But my friends, President Trump and his team aren’t standing for this nonsense.

We know that the more the Middle East embraces Israel, the brighter its future will be. That’s why we’ve taken action against those who would weaken Israel.

- We’ve enacted the strongest pressure campaign in history to deprive the Islamic Republic of Iran of diplomatic sanctuary, and money for terror.

- We’ve rallied nations in the Western Hemisphere and Europe to declare Hizballah a terrorist organization in its entirety.

- We’ve gotten nations to ban Mahan Air – the Ayatollahs’ airline of choice for moving weapons and fighters.

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- On the settlements issue, we’ve concluded that the Obama Administration’s wrong approach didn’t help the prospects for peace.

- We’ve disavowed the Hansell memo of the 1970s, which declared all civilian settlements beyond the Green Line illegal, just as President Reagan rejected the memo a few years after it was written.
And let me remind you that no less than Chuck Schumer said right here at AIPAC in 2018 that “it’s sure not the settlements that are the blockage to peace.”

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And further on the settlements issue – I know some American companies are wondering how to move forward in the wake of the UN Human Rights Council’s release of the database I just mentioned.

I’m proud to tell you that, earlier today, we at the State Department released official guidance on this subject.

Here’s what we said:

- We share your frustration with this release.

- Keep working with, trading with, and investing in Israel.

- Neither the Human Rights Council nor the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has the power to tell you where you can and can’t do business.

- Do not be intimidated. If you are being subjected to intimidation or harassment because of this database, tell us.

The United States will respond to actions taken against members of our business community.

We will stand for a strong, free, democratic, and prosperous Israel at the heart of the Middle East.

The more the Middle East embraces Israel, the brighter its future will be.

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Look, it’s quite simple: President Trump and the Trump Administration stand with Israel.

We stand for peace in the Holy Land.
We stand with the great Israeli people.

And we stand for the unbreakable bond between our two great nations, rooted in our shared traditions of freedom and equality.

That tradition goes back to a beautiful biblical teaching:

All human beings are created “b’tzelem Elohim,” “in the image of God.”

That’s what we here all believe in.
God bless AIPAC.

God bless Israel.

And God bless these United States of America.

Thank you.