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CHAPTER 17

International Conflict Resolution and Avoidance

A. MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

The Middle East “Quartet”—represented by the United States Secretary of State, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, the UN Secretary General, and the EU High Commissioner—met in Munich on February 12, 2016. The Quartet’s principals issued a statement, released as a State Department media note, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252441.htm>, and excerpted below.

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The Quartet condemned all acts of terror and expressed its serious concern over the continuing violence against civilians. Reiterating its call for restraint, the Quartet called upon all parties to reject incitement and actively take steps to de-escalate the current tensions.

The Quartet expressed its serious concern that current trends on the ground—including continued acts of violence against civilians, ongoing settlement activity, and the high rate of demolitions of Palestinian structures—are dangerously imperiling the viability of a two-state solution. The Quartet reiterated that unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of a negotiated solution.

The Quartet underlined its commitment to achieving a negotiated, comprehensive, just and enduring resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The Quartet reiterated that the status quo is not sustainable and that significant steps, consistent with the transition contemplated by prior agreements, are urgently needed to stabilize the situation and to reverse negative trends on the ground. It noted that the continued absence of such steps was leading to further deterioration, to the detriment of both Israelis and Palestinians. The Quartet underscored that both sides must swiftly demonstrate through policies and actions, a

genuine commitment to a two-state solution in order to rebuild trust and avoid a cycle of escalation.

It emphasized that a robust Palestinian economy and enhanced governance capacity will serve as cornerstones of a Palestinian state, and that genuine Palestinian unity, on the basis of democracy and the PLO principles, is essential to reuniting Gaza and the West Bank under one legitimate, democratic Palestinian authority.

The Quartet urged an immediate focus on accelerating efforts to address the dire situation in Gaza, emphasized the importance of increased access through legal crossings, and called on all international partners to expedite the disbursement of their pledges made at the Cairo Conference in October 2014.

The Quartet will remain engaged with the parties in order to explore concrete actions that both sides can take to demonstrate their genuine commitment to pursuing a negotiated two-state solution.

The Quartet reaffirms its commitment to act in coordination with key stakeholders, including regional countries and the UN Security Council, to stabilize the situation and to actively support a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In that regard, the Quartet will prepare a report on the situation on the ground, including recommendations that can help inform international discussions on the best way to advance the two-state solution.

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The Quartet issued another statement on September 23, 2016, which is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/09/262344.htm>.

* * * *

The Quartet Principals were joined by the Foreign Ministers of Egypt and France during the second part of the meeting to brief on their work to support Middle East peace. All agreed on the importance of close and continuing coordination of all efforts to achieve the common goal of the two-state solution.

The Quartet reiterated its call on the parties to implement the recommendations of the Quartet Report of 1 July 2016, and create the conditions for the resumption of meaningful negotiations that will end the occupation that began in 1967 and resolve all final status issues.

The Quartet recalled its findings from the Quartet Report and expressed concern about recent actions on the ground that run counter to its recommendations. In particular:

The Quartet emphasized its strong opposition to ongoing settlement activity, which is an obstacle to peace, and expressed its grave concern that the acceleration of settlement construction and expansion in Area C and East Jerusalem, including the retroactive “legalization” of existing units, and the continued high rate of demolitions of Palestinian structures, are steadily eroding the viability of the two state solution.

The Quartet expressed serious concern for the continuing dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, exacerbated by the closures of the crossings as well as for the illicit arms build-up and activity by militant Palestinian groups, including rockets fired towards Israel, which increase the risk of renewed conflict. In addition, advancing Palestinian national unity on the basis of the PLO platform and Quartet principles remains a priority.

The Quartet condemned the recent resurgence of violence and called on all sides to take all necessary steps to de-escalate tensions by exercising restraint, preventing incitement, refraining from provocative actions and rhetoric, and protecting the lives and property of all civilians.

The Quartet stressed the growing urgency of taking affirmative steps to reverse these trends in order to prevent entrenching a one-state reality of perpetual occupation and conflict that is incompatible with realizing the national aspirations of both peoples.

The Quartet acknowledged certain practical steps and agreements by Israel and the Palestinian Authority that could improve conditions for the Palestinian people, while stressing the importance of full and timely implementation. The Quartet also noted the importance of a political horizon and reiterated its call for significant policy shifts consistent with the transition to greater Palestinian civil authority contemplated by prior agreements and called for in the Quartet Report.

The Quartet underlined its commitment to achieving a negotiated, comprehensive, just and enduring resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The Quartet expressed appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Special Coordinator. It directed the Quartet Envoys to continue engaging with the parties and key stakeholders and to keep the Principals apprised on implementation of the Report's recommendations.

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On October 5, 2016, the State Department issued a press statement condemning Israel's approval of a new West Bank settlement. The press statement follows and is available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/10/262795.htm>.

* * * *

We strongly condemn the Israeli government's recent decision to advance a plan that would create a significant new settlement deep in the West Bank.

Proceeding with this new settlement, which could include up to 300 units, would further damage the prospects for a two state solution. The retroactive authorization of nearby illegal outposts, or redrawing of local settlement boundaries, does not change the fact that this approval contradicts previous public statements by the Government of Israel that it had no intention of creating new settlements. And this settlement's location deep in the West Bank, far closer to Jordan than Israel, would link a string of outposts that effectively divide the West Bank and make the possibility of a viable Palestinian state more remote.

It is deeply troubling, in the wake of Israel and the U.S. concluding an unprecedented agreement on military assistance designed to further strengthen Israel's security, that Israel would take a decision so contrary to its long term security interest in a peaceful resolution of its conflict with the Palestinians. Furthermore, it is disheartening that while Israel and the world mourned the passing of President Shimon Peres, and leaders from the U.S. and other nations prepared to honor one of the great champions of peace, plans were advanced that would seriously undermine the prospects for the two state solution that he so passionately supported.

Israelis must ultimately decide between expanding settlements and preserving the possibility of a peaceful two state solution. Since the recent Quartet report called on both sides to take affirmative steps to reverse current trends and advance the two state solution on the ground, we have unfortunately seen just the opposite. Proceeding with this new settlement is another step towards cementing a one-state reality of perpetual occupation that is fundamentally inconsistent with Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state. Such moves will only draw condemnation from the international community, distance Israel from many of its partners, and further call into question Israel's commitment to achieving a negotiated peace.

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On December 12, 2016, delegations headed by Palestine Liberation Organization ("PLO") Executive Committee Secretary General Saeb Erakat and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Stuart E. Jones met in Washington for the U.S.-Palestinian Political Dialogue. The joint statement resulting from the dialogue is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/12/265183.htm>.

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Both delegations strongly condemned terrorism and its supporters in the region and worldwide. The delegations agreed on the threat presented by ISIL, sharing the deep concern that ISIL has dramatically undermined regional stability, particularly in Iraq and Syria, and continues to commit gross, systemic abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law.

Both delegations also discussed the significance of the PLO's long-standing commitment to non-violence and reiterated their commitment to a negotiated two-state outcome, which is the only way to achieve an enduring peace that meets Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty, end the occupation that began in 1967, and resolve all permanent status issues. They also agreed on the crucial role of civil society, and the need to create economic and political opportunity for the next generation of Palestinians, noting the relevance of last May's Economic Dialogue in Ramallah and last October's Higher Education Dialogue in Washington to these issues.

Both delegations affirmed that the dialogue underscored the strength of the U.S.-Palestinian relationship and look forward to continuing the Political Dialogue in 2017, as an important forum to study and address the serious issues facing the United States, the Palestinians, and the region, including in the fields of trade, investment, youth, women's rights, human rights, religion, agriculture, sports, and more.

* * * *

On December 23, 2016, Secretary Kerry issued a press statement on the vote in the UN Security Council on Resolution 2334, condemning violence and settlement activity obstructing peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Secretary Kerry's statement is excerpted below and available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/12/266070.htm>.

* * * *

Today, the United States acted with one primary objective in mind: to preserve the possibility of the two state solution, which every U.S. administration for decades has agreed is the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Two states is the only way to ensure Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state, living in peace and security with its neighbors, and freedom and dignity for the Palestinian people. That future is now in jeopardy, with terrorism, violence and incitement continuing and unprecedented steps to expand settlements being advanced by avowed opponents of the two state solution. That is why we cannot in good conscience stand in the way of a resolution at the United Nations that makes clear that both sides must act now to preserve the possibility of peace. While we do not agree with every aspect of this Resolution, it rightly condemns violence and incitement and settlement activity and calls on both sides to take constructive steps to reverse current trends and advance the prospects for a two state solution. And it does not seek to impose on the parties a solution to the conflict. It preserves the ability for the parties to negotiate the end of conflict.

As a lifelong friend of Israel, I have taken every opportunity to speak out, or cast a vote, to protect its security and the chance for a peaceful future. This Administration is proud of what Israel's leaders have called its unparalleled record of support for Israel's security, including the largest military assistance package in history, defending Israel against any efforts to undermine its security or legitimacy in international fora, and steadfastly opposing boycotts, divestment campaigns and sanctions targeting the State of Israel. It is that very commitment to Israel's long term security that we are standing up for today. We hope the parties will see this as a moment to urgently advance the peaceful and prosperous future they each deserve.

We all understand that reversing these disturbing trends on the ground will not itself bring an end to the conflict. That is why, over the past four years, I have spent countless hours engaged with the Israelis and Palestinians, countries in the region, and key stakeholders around the world, to explore and advance the prospects for peace. In the coming days, I will speak further to the vote in the Security Council today and share more detailed thoughts, drawn from the experience of the last several years, on the way ahead.

* * * *

Ambassador Power delivered the U.S. explanation of vote at the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2334 on the Situation in the Middle East on December 23, 2016. Her statement is excerpted below and available at <https://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7621>.

* * * *

Let me begin with a quote: “The United States will not support the use of any additional land for the purpose of settlements during the transitional period. Indeed, the immediate adoption of a settlement freeze by Israel, more than any other action, could create the confidence needed for wider participation in these talks. Further settlement activity is in no way necessary for the security of Israel and only diminishes the confidence of the Arabs that a final outcome can be freely and fairly negotiated.”

This was said in 1982 by President Ronald Reagan. He was speaking about a new proposal that he was launching to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While ultimately, of course, President Reagan’s proposal was not realized, his words are still illuminating in at least two respects.

First, because they underscore the United States’ deep and long-standing commitment to achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. That has been the policy of every administration, Republican and Democrat, since before President Reagan and all the way through to the present day.

Second, because President Reagan’s words highlight the United States’ long-standing position that Israeli settlement activity in territories occupied in 1967 undermines Israel’s security, harms the viability of a negotiated two-state outcome, and erodes prospects for peace and stability in the region. Today, the Security Council reaffirmed its established consensus that settlements have no legal validity. The United States has been sending the message that the settlements must stop—privately and publicly—for nearly five decades, through the administrations of Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and now Barack Obama. Indeed, since 1967, the only president who had not had at least one Israeli-Palestinian-related Security Council resolution pass during his tenure is Barack Obama. So our vote today is fully in line with the bipartisan history of how American Presidents have approached both the issue—and the role of this body.

Given the consistency of this position across U.S. administrations, one would think that it would be a routine vote for the U.S. to allow the passage of a resolution with the elements in this one, reaffirming the long-standing U.S. position on settlements, condemning violence and incitement, and calling for the parties to start taking constructive steps to reverse current trends on the ground. These are familiar, well-articulated components of U.S. policy.

But in reality this vote for us was not straightforward, because of where it is taking place—at the United Nations. For the simple truth is that for as long as Israel has been a member of this institution, Israel has been treated differently from other nations at the United Nations. And not only in decades past—such as in the infamous resolution that the General Assembly adopted in 1975, with the support of the majority of Member States, officially determining that, “Zionism is a form of racism”—but also in 2016, this year. One need only look at the 18

resolutions against Israel adopted during the UN General Assembly in September; or the five Israel-specific resolutions adopted this year in the Human Rights Council—more than those focused on any other specific country, such as Syria, North Korea, Iran, or South Sudan—to see that in 2016 Israel continues to be treated differently from other member states.

Like U.S. administrations before it, the Obama Administration has worked tirelessly to fight for Israel's right simply to be treated just like any other country—from advocating for Israel to finally be granted membership to a UN regional body, something no other UN Member State had been denied; to fighting to ensure that Israeli NGOs are not denied UN accreditation, simply because they are Israeli, to getting Yom Kippur finally recognized as a UN holiday; to pressing this Council to break its indefensible silence in response to terrorist attacks on Israelis. As the United States has said repeatedly, such unequal treatment not only hurts Israel, it undermines the legitimacy of the United Nations itself.

The practice of treating Israel differently at the UN matters for votes like this one. For even if one believes that the resolution proposed today is justified—or, even more, necessitated—by events on the ground, one cannot completely separate the vote from the venue.

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It is because this forum too often continues to be biased against Israel; because there are important issues that are not sufficiently addressed in this resolution; and because the United States does not agree with every word in this text, that the United States did not vote in favor of the resolution. But it is because this resolution reflects the facts on the ground—and is consistent with U.S. policy across Republican and Democratic administration throughout the history of the State of Israel—that the United States did not veto it.

The United States has consistently said we would block any resolution that we thought would undermine Israel's security or seek to impose a resolution to the conflict. We would not have let this resolution pass had it not also addressed counterproductive actions by the Palestinians such as terrorism and incitement to violence, which we've repeatedly condemned and repeatedly raised with the Palestinian leadership, and which, of course, must be stopped.

Unlike some on the UN Security Council, we do not believe that outside parties can impose a solution that has not been negotiated by the two parties. Nor can we unilaterally recognize a future Palestinian state. But it is precisely our commitment to Israel's security that makes the United States believe that we cannot stand in the way of this resolution as we seek to preserve a chance of attaining our long-standing objective: two states living side-by-side in peace and security. Let me briefly explain why.

The settlement problem has gotten so much worse that it is now putting at risk the very viability of that two-state solution. The number of settlers in the roughly 150 authorized Israeli settlements east of the 1967 lines has increased dramatically. Since the 1993 signing of the Oslo Accords—which launched efforts that made a comprehensive and lasting peace possible—the number of settlers has increased by 355,000. The total settler population in the West Bank and East Jerusalem now exceeds 590,000. Nearly 90,000 settlers are living east of the separation barrier that was created by Israel itself. And just since July 2016—when the Middle East Quartet issued a report highlighting international concern about a systematic process of land seizures, settlement expansions, and legalizations—Israel has advanced plans for more than 2,600 new settlement units. Yet rather than dismantling these and other settler outposts, which are illegal even under Israeli law, now there is new legislation advancing in the Israeli Knesset that would

legalize most of the outposts—a factor that propelled the decision by this resolution’s sponsors to bring it before the Council.

The Israeli Prime Minister recently described his government as “more committed to settlements than any in Israel’s history,” and one of his leading coalition partners recently declared that “the era of the two-state solution is over.” At the same time, the Prime Minister has said that he is still committed to pursuing a two-state solution. But these statements are irreconcilable. One cannot simultaneously champion expanding Israeli settlements and champion a viable two-state solution that would end the conflict. One has to make a choice between settlements and separation.

In 2011, the United States vetoed a resolution that focused exclusively on settlements, as if settlements were the only factor harming the prospects of a two-state solution. The circumstances have changed dramatically. Since 2011, settlement growth has only accelerated. Since 2011, multiple efforts to pursue peace through negotiations have failed. And since 2011, President Obama and Secretary Kerry have repeatedly warned—publically and privately—that the absence of progress toward peace and continued settlement expansion was going to put the two-state solution at risk, and threaten Israel’s stated objective to remain both a Jewish State and a democracy. Moreover, unlike in 2011, this resolution condemns violence, terrorism and incitement, which also poses an extremely grave risk to the two-state solution. This resolution reflects trends that will permanently destroy the hope of a two-state solution if they continue on their current course.

The United States has not taken the step of voting in support of this resolution because the resolution is too narrowly focused on settlements, when we all know ...that many other factors contribute significantly to the tensions that perpetuate this conflict. Let us be clear: even if every single settlement were to be dismantled tomorrow, peace still would not be attainable without both sides acknowledging uncomfortable truths and making difficult choices. That is an indisputable fact. Yet it is one that is too often overlooked by members of the United Nations and by members of this Council.

For Palestinian leaders, that means recognizing the obvious: that in addition to taking innocent lives—the incitement to violence, the glorification of terrorists, and the growth of violent extremism erodes prospects for peace, as this resolution makes crystal clear. ...

Our vote today does not in any way diminish the United States’ steadfast and unparalleled commitment to the security of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. We would not have let this resolution pass had it not also addressed counterproductive actions by Palestinians. ...

Our commitment to that security has never wavered, and it never will. Even with a financial crisis and budget deficits, we’ve repeatedly increased funding to support Israel’s military. And in September, the Obama administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide \$38 billion in security assistance to Israel over the next 10 years—the largest single pledge of military assistance in U.S. history to any country. And as the Israeli Prime Minister himself has noted, our military and intelligence cooperation is unprecedented. We believe, though, that continued settlement building seriously undermines Israel’s security.

Some may cast the U.S. vote as a sign that we have finally given up on a two-state solution. Nothing could be further from the truth. None of us can give up on a two-state solution. We continue to believe that that solution is the only viable path to provide peace and security for the state of Israel, and freedom and dignity for the Palestinian people. And we continue to believe that the parties can still pursue this path, if both sides are honest about the choices, and

have the courage to take steps that will be politically difficult. While we can encourage them, it is ultimately up to the parties to choose this path, as it always has been. We sincerely hope that they will begin making these choices before it is too late.

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On December 28, 2016, Secretary Kerry delivered remarks in Washington, DC on Middle East peace. His remarks are excerpted below and available at <https://2009-2016.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/12/266119.htm>.

* * * *

Today, I want to share candid thoughts about an issue which for decades has animated the foreign policy dialogue here and around the world—the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Throughout his Administration, President Obama has been deeply committed to Israel and its security, and that commitment has guided his pursuit of peace in the Middle East. This is an issue which, all of you know, I have worked on intensively during my time as Secretary of State for one simple reason: because the two-state solution is the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. It is the only way to ensure Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state, living in peace and security with its neighbors. It is the only way to ensure a future of freedom and dignity for the Palestinian people. And it is an important way of advancing United States interests in the region.

Now, I’d like to explain why that future is now in jeopardy, and provide some context for why we could not, in good conscience, stand in the way of a resolution at the United Nations that makes clear that both sides must act now to preserve the possibility of peace.

I’m also here to share my conviction that there is still a way forward if the responsible parties are willing to act. And I want to share practical suggestions for how to preserve and advance the prospects for the just and lasting peace that both sides deserve.

So it is vital that we have an honest, clear-eyed conversation about the uncomfortable truths and difficult choices, because the alternative that is fast becoming the reality on the ground is in nobody’s interest—not the Israelis, not the Palestinians, not the region—and not the United States.

Now, I want to stress that there is an important point here: My job, above all, is to defend the United States of America—to stand up for and defend our values and our interests in the world. And if we were to stand idly by and know that in doing so we are allowing a dangerous dynamic to take hold which promises greater conflict and instability to a region in which we have vital interests, we would be derelict in our own responsibilities.

Regrettably, some seem to believe that the U.S. friendship means the U.S. must accept any policy, regardless of our own interests, our own positions, our own words, our own principles—even after urging again and again that the policy must change. Friends need to tell each other the hard truths, and friendships require mutual respect.

Israel’s permanent representative to the United Nations, who does not support a two-state solution, said after the vote last week, quote, “It was to be expected that Israel’s greatest ally would act in accordance with the values that we share,” and veto this resolution. I am compelled

to respond today that the United States did, in fact, vote in accordance with our values, just as previous U.S. administrations have done at the Security Council before us.

They fail to recognize that this friend, the United States of America, that has done more to support Israel than any other country, this friend that has blocked countless efforts to delegitimize Israel, cannot be true to our own values—or even the stated democratic values of Israel—and we cannot properly defend and protect Israel if we allow a viable two-state solution to be destroyed before our own eyes.

And that's the bottom line: the vote in the United Nations was about preserving the two-state solution. That's what we were standing up for: Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state, living side by side in peace and security with its neighbors. That's what we are trying to preserve for our sake and for theirs.

In fact, this Administration has been Israel's greatest friend and supporter, with an absolutely unwavering commitment to advancing Israel's security and protecting its legitimacy.

* * * *

Like previous U.S. administrations, we have committed our influence and our resources to trying to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict because, yes, it would serve American interests to stabilize a volatile region and fulfill America's commitment to the survival, security and well-being of an Israel at peace with its Arab neighbors.

Despite our best efforts over the years, the two-state solution is now in serious jeopardy.

The truth is that trends on the ground—violence, terrorism, incitement, settlement expansion and the seemingly endless occupation—they are combining to destroy hopes for peace on both sides and increasingly cementing an irreversible one-state reality that most people do not actually want.

Today, there are a number—there are a similar number of Jews and Palestinians living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. They have a choice. They can choose to live together in one state, or they can separate into two states. But here is a fundamental reality: if the choice is one state, Israel can either be Jewish or democratic—it cannot be both—and it won't ever really be at peace. Moreover, the Palestinians will never fully realize their vast potential in a homeland of their own with a one-state solution.

Now, most on both sides understand this basic choice, and that is why it is important that polls of Israelis and Palestinians show that there is still strong support for the two-state solution—in theory. They just don't believe that it can happen.

After decades of conflict, many no longer see the other side as people, only as threats and enemies. Both sides continue to push a narrative that plays to people's fears and reinforces the worst stereotypes rather than working to change perceptions and build up belief in the possibility of peace.

And the truth is the extraordinary polarization in this conflict extends beyond Israelis and Palestinians. Allies of both sides are content to reinforce this with an us or—"you're with us or against us" mentality where too often anyone who questions Palestinian actions is an apologist for the occupation and anyone who disagrees with Israel policy is cast as anti-Israel or even anti-Semitic.

That's one of the most striking realities about the current situation: This critical decision about the future—one state or two states—is effectively being made on the ground every single day, despite the expressed opinion of the majority of the people.

The status quo is leading towards one state and perpetual occupation, but most of the public either ignores it or has given up hope that anything can be done to change it. And with this passive resignation, the problem only gets worse, the risks get greater and the choices are narrowed.

This sense of hopelessness among Israelis is exacerbated by the continuing violence, terrorist attacks against civilians and incitement, which are destroying belief in the possibility of peace.

Let me say it again: There is absolutely no justification for terrorism, and there never will be.

And the most recent wave of Palestinian violence has included hundreds of terrorist attacks in the past year, including stabbings, shootings, vehicular attacks and bombings, many by individuals who have been radicalized by social media. Yet the murderers of innocents are still glorified on Fatah websites, including showing attackers next to Palestinian leaders following attacks. And despite statements by President Abbas and his party's leaders making clear their opposition to violence, too often they send a different message by failing to condemn specific terrorist attacks and naming public squares, streets and schools after terrorists.

President Obama and I have made it clear to the Palestinian leadership countless times, publicly and privately, that all incitement to violence must stop. We have consistently condemned violence and terrorism, and even condemned the Palestinian leadership for not condemning it.

Far too often, the Palestinians have pursued efforts to delegitimize Israel in international fora. We have strongly opposed these initiatives, including the recent wholly unbalanced and inflammatory UNESCO resolution regarding Jerusalem. And we have made clear our strong opposition to Palestinian efforts against Israel at the ICC, which only sets back the prospects for peace.

And we all understand that the Palestinian Authority has a lot more to do to strengthen its institutions and improve governance.

Most troubling of all, Hamas continues to pursue an extremist agenda: they refuse to accept Israel's very right to exist. They have a one-state vision of their own: all of the land is Palestine. Hamas and other radical factions are responsible for the most explicit forms of incitement to violence, and many of the images that they use are truly appalling. And they are willing to kill innocents in Israel and put the people of Gaza at risk in order to advance that agenda.

Compounding this, the humanitarian situation in Gaza, exacerbated by the closings of the crossings, is dire. Gaza is home to one of the world's densest concentrations of people enduring extreme hardships with few opportunities. 1.3 million people out of Gaza's population of 1.8 million are in need of daily assistance—food and shelter. Most have electricity less than half the time and only 5 percent of the water is safe to drink. And yet despite the urgency of these needs, Hamas and other militant groups continue to re-arm and divert reconstruction materials to build tunnels, threatening more attacks on Israeli civilians that no government can tolerate.

Now, at the same time, we have to be clear about what is happening in the West Bank. The Israeli prime minister publicly supports a two-state solution, but his current coalition is the most right wing in Israeli history, with an agenda driven by the most extreme elements. The result is that policies of this government, which the prime minister himself just described as “more committed to settlements than any in Israel's history,” are leading in the opposite direction. They're leading towards one state. In fact, Israel has increasingly consolidated control

over much of the West Bank for its own purposes, effectively reversing the transitions to greater Palestinian civil authority that were called for by the Oslo Accords.

I don't think most people in Israel, and certainly in the world, have any idea how broad and systematic the process has become. But the facts speak for themselves. The number of settlers in the roughly 130 Israeli settlements east of the 1967 lines has steadily grown. The settler population in the West Bank alone, not including East Jerusalem, has increased by nearly 270,000 since Oslo, including 100,000 just since 2009, when President Obama's term began.

There's no point in pretending that these are just in large settlement blocks. Nearly 90,000 settlers are living east of the separation barrier that was created by Israel itself in the middle of what, by any reasonable definition, would be the future Palestinian state. And the population of these distant settlements has grown by 20,000 just since 2009. In fact, just recently the government approved a significant new settlement well east of the barrier, closer to Jordan than to Israel. What does that say to Palestinians in particular—but also to the United States and the world—about Israel's intentions?

Let me emphasize, this is not to say that the settlements are the whole or even the primary cause of this conflict. Of course they are not. Nor can you say that if the settlements were suddenly removed, you'd have peace. Without a broader agreement, you would not. And we understand that in a final status agreement, certain settlements would become part of Israel to account for the changes that have taken place over the last 49 years—we understand that—including the new democratic demographic realities that exist on the ground. They would have to be factored in. But if more and more settlers are moving into the middle of Palestinian areas, it's going to be just that much harder to separate, that much harder to imagine transferring sovereignty, and that is exactly the outcome that some are purposefully accelerating.

Let's be clear: Settlement expansion has nothing to do with Israel's security. Many settlements actually increase the security burden on the Israeli Defense Forces. And leaders of the settler movement are motivated by ideological imperatives that entirely ignore legitimate Palestinian aspirations.

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But the problem, obviously, goes well beyond settlements. Trends indicate a comprehensive effort to take the West Bank land for Israel and prevent any Palestinian development there. Today, the 60 percent of the West Bank known as Area C—much of which was supposed to be transferred to Palestinian control long ago under the Oslo Accords—much of it is effectively off limits to Palestinian development. Most today has essentially been taken for exclusive use by Israel simply by unilaterally designating it as “state land” or including it within the jurisdiction of regional settlement councils. Israeli farms flourish in the Jordan River Valley, and Israeli resorts line the shores of the Dead Sea. . . , where Palestinian development is not allowed. In fact, almost no private Palestinian building is approved in Area C at all. Only one permit was issued by Israel in all of 2014 and 2015, while approvals for hundreds of settlement units were advanced during that same period.

Moreover, Palestinian structures in Area C that do not have a permit from the Israeli military are potentially subject to demolition. And they are currently being demolished at an historically high rate. Over 1,300 Palestinians, including over 600 children, have been displaced by demolitions in 2016 alone—more than any previous year.

So the settler agenda is defining the future of Israel. And their stated purpose is clear. They believe in one state: greater Israel. In fact, one prominent minister, who heads a pro-settler party, declared just after the U.S. election ... “the era of the two-state solution is over,” And many other coalition ministers publicly reject a Palestinian state. And they are increasingly getting their way, with plans for hundreds of new units in East Jerusalem recently announced and talk of a major new settlement building effort in the West Bank to follow.

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Now, one thing we do know: if Israel goes down the one state path, it will never have true peace with the rest of the Arab world, and I can say that with certainty. The Arab countries have made clear that they will not make peace with Israel without resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That’s not where their loyalties lie. That’s not where their politics are.

But there is something new here. Common interests in countering Iran’s destabilizing activities, and fighting extremists, as well as diversifying their economies have created real possibilities for something different if Israel takes advantage of the opportunities for peace. I have spent a great deal of time with key Arab leaders exploring this, and there is no doubt that they are prepared to have a fundamentally different relationship with Israel. That was stated in the Arab Peace Initiative, years ago. And in all my recent conversations, Arab leaders have confirmed their readiness, in the context of Israeli-Palestinian peace, not just to normalize relations but to work openly on securing that peace with significant regional security cooperation. It’s waiting. It’s right there.

Many have shown a willingness to support serious Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and to take steps on the path to normalization to relations, including public meetings, providing there is a meaningful progress towards a two-state solution. My friends, that is a real opportunity that we should not allow to be missed.

And that raises one final question: Is ours the generation that gives up on the dream of a Jewish democratic state of Israel living in peace and security with its neighbors? Because that is really what is at stake.

Now, that is what informed our vote at the Security Council last week—the need to preserve the two-state solution—and both sides in this conflict must take responsibility to do that. We have repeatedly and emphatically stressed to the Palestinians that all incitement to violence must stop. We have consistently condemned all violence and terrorism, and we have strongly opposed unilateral efforts to delegitimize Israel in international fora.

We’ve made countless public and private exhortations to the Israelis to stop the march of settlements. In literally hundreds of conversations with Prime Minister Netanyahu, I have made clear that continued settlement activity would only increase pressure for an international response. We have all known for some time that the Palestinians were intent on moving forward in the UN with a settlements resolution, and I advised the prime minister repeatedly that further settlement activity only invited UN action.

Yet the settlement activity just increased, including advancing the unprecedented legislation to legalize settler outposts that the prime minister himself reportedly warned could expose Israel to action at the Security Council and even international prosecution before deciding to support it.

In the end, we could not in good conscience protect the most extreme elements of the settler movement as it tries to destroy the two-state solution. We could not in good conscience turn a blind eye to Palestinian actions that fan hatred and violence. It is not in U.S. interest to help anyone on either side create a unitary state. And we may not be able to stop them, but we cannot be expected to defend them. And it is certainly not the role of any country to vote against its own policies.

That is why we decided not to block the UN resolution that makes clear both sides have to take steps to save the two-state solution while there is still time. And we did not take this decision lightly. The Obama Administration has always defended Israel against any effort at the UN and any international fora or biased and one-sided resolutions that seek to undermine its legitimacy or security, and that has not changed. It didn't change with this vote.

But remember it's important to note that every United States administration, Republican and Democratic, has opposed settlements as contrary to the prospects for peace, and action at the UN Security Council is far from unprecedented. In fact, previous administrations of both political parties have allowed resolutions that were critical of Israel to pass, including on settlements. On dozens of occasions under George W. Bush alone, the council passed six resolutions that Israel opposed, including one that endorsed a plan calling for a complete freeze on settlements, including natural growth.

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So we reject the criticism that this vote abandons Israel. On the contrary, it is not this resolution that is isolating Israel; it is the permanent policy of settlement construction that risks making peace impossible. And virtually every country in the world other than Israel opposes settlements. That includes many of the friends of Israel, including the United Kingdom, France, Russia—all of whom voted in favor of the settlements resolution in 2011 that we vetoed, and again this year along with every other member of the council.

In fact, this resolution simply reaffirms statements made by the Security Council on the legality of settlements over several decades. It does not break new ground. In 1978, the State Department Legal Adviser advised the Congress on his conclusion that Israel's government, the Israeli Government's program of establishing civilian settlements in the occupied territory is inconsistent with international law, and we see no change since then to affect that fundamental conclusion.

Now, you may have heard that some criticized this resolution for calling East Jerusalem occupied territory. But to be clear, there was absolutely nothing new in last week's resolution on that issue. It was one of a long line of Security Council resolutions that included East Jerusalem as part of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, and that includes resolutions passed by the Security Council under President Reagan and President George H.W. Bush. And remember that every U.S. administration since 1967, along with the entire international community, has recognized East Jerusalem as among the territories that Israel occupied in the Six-Day War.

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In the end, we did not agree with every word in this resolution. There are important issues that are not sufficiently addressed or even addressed at all. But we could not in good conscience veto a resolution that condemns violence and incitement and reiterates what has been for a long

time the overwhelming consensus and international view on settlements and calls for the parties to start taking constructive steps to advance the two-state solution on the ground.

Ultimately, it will be up to the Israeli people to decide whether the unusually heated attacks that Israeli officials have directed towards this Administration best serve Israel's national interests and its relationship with an ally that has been steadfast in its support, as I described. Those attacks, alongside allegations of U.S.-led conspiracy and other manufactured claims, distract attention from what the substance of this vote was really all about.

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Now, in the end, we all understand that a final status agreement can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties. We've said that again and again. We cannot impose the peace.

There are other countries in the UN who believe it is our job to dictate the terms of a solution in the Security Council. Others want us to simply recognize a Palestinian state, absent an agreement. But I want to make clear today, these are not the choices that we will make.

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Now, everyone understands that negotiations would be complex and difficult, and nobody can be expected to agree on the final result in advance. But if the parties could at least demonstrate that they understand the other side's most basic needs—and are potentially willing to meet them if theirs are also met at the end of comprehensive negotiations—perhaps then enough trust could be established to enable a meaningful process to begin.

It is in that spirit that we offer the following principles—not to prejudge or impose an outcome, but to provide a possible basis for serious negotiations when the parties are ready. Now, individual countries may have more detailed policies on these issues—as we do, by the way—but I believe there is a broad consensus that a final status agreement that could meet the needs of both sides would do the following.

Principle number one: Provide for secure and recognized international borders between Israel and a viable and contiguous Palestine, negotiated based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed equivalent swaps.

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Principle two: Fulfill the vision of the UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of two states for two peoples, one Jewish and one Arab, with mutual recognition and full equal rights for all their respective citizens.

* * * *

Principle number three: Provide for a just, agreed, fair, and realistic solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, with international assistance, that includes compensation, options and assistance in finding permanent homes, acknowledgment of suffering, and other measures necessary for a comprehensive resolution consistent with two states for two peoples.

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Principle four: Provide an agreed resolution for Jerusalem as the internationally recognized capital of the two states, and protect and assure freedom of access to the holy sites consistent with the established status quo.

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Principle five: Satisfy Israel's security needs and bring a full end, ultimately, to the occupation, while ensuring that Israel can defend itself effectively and that Palestine can provide security for its people in a sovereign and non-militarized state.

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Principle six: End the conflict and all outstanding claims, enabling normalized relations and enhanced regional security for all as envisaged by the Arab Peace Initiative. It is essential for both sides that the final status agreement resolves all the outstanding issues and finally brings closure to this conflict, so that everyone can move ahead to a new era of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. For Israel, this must also bring broader peace with all of its Arab neighbors. That is the fundamental promise of the Arab Peace Initiative, which key Arab leaders have affirmed in these most recent days.

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Now, we all know that a speech alone won't produce peace. But based on over 30 years of experience and the lessons from the past 4 years, I have suggested, I believe, and President Obama has signed on to and believes in a path that the parties could take: realistic steps on the ground now, consistent with the parties' own prior commitments, that will begin the process of separating into two states; a political horizon to work towards to create the conditions for a successful final status talk; and a basis for negotiations that the parties could accept to demonstrate that they are serious about making peace.

We can only encourage them to take this path; we cannot walk down it for them. But if they take these steps, peace would bring extraordinary benefits in enhancing the security and the stability and the prosperity of Israelis, Palestinians, all of the nations of the region. The Palestinian economy has amazing potential in the context of independence, with major private sector investment possibilities and a talented, hungry, eager-to-work young workforce. Israel's economy could enjoy unprecedented growth as it becomes a regional economic powerhouse, taking advantage of the unparalleled culture of innovation and trading opportunities with new Arab partners. Meanwhile, security challenges could be addressed by an entirely new security arrangement, in which Israel cooperates openly with key Arab states. That is the future that everybody should be working for.

President Obama and I know that the incoming administration has signaled that they may take a different path, and even suggested breaking from the longstanding U.S. policies on settlements, Jerusalem, and the possibility of a two-state solution. That is for them to decide. That's how we work. But we cannot—in good conscience—do nothing, and say nothing, when we see the hope of peace slipping away.

This is a time to stand up for what is right. We have long known what two states living side by side in peace and security looks like. We should not be afraid to say so.

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On December 29, 2016, the State Department issued a fact sheet setting forth principles for Middle East peace. The fact sheet is excerpted below and available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/12/266156.htm>.

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In his December 28, 2016 Remarks on Middle East Peace, Secretary of State John Kerry presented the Administration's view on the broad consensus that has emerged regarding principles for a final status agreement that could meet the needs of both sides, reflecting the Secretary's efforts and discussions with the parties and key stakeholders over the past four years.

These principles were offered not to prejudice or impose an outcome, but to provide a possible basis for serious negotiations when the parties are ready.

Principle 1. Provide for secure and recognized international borders between Israel and a viable and contiguous Palestine, negotiated based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed equivalent swaps.

Resolution 242, which has been enshrined in international law for 50 years, provides for the withdrawal of Israel from territories it occupied in 1967 in return for peace with its neighbors and secure and recognized borders. It has long been accepted by both sides, and it remains the basis for an agreement today.

The Arab League has previously agreed, following the Secretary's engagement, that the reference in the Arab Peace Initiative to 1967 lines now includes the concept of land swaps, which the Palestinians have acknowledged. This is necessary to reflect practical realities on the ground, and mutually agreed equivalent swaps will ensure that the agreement is fair to both sides.

There is also broad recognition of Israel's need to ensure that the borders are secure and defensible, and that the territory of Palestine is viable and contiguous. There is also a clear consensus that no changes by Israel to the 1967 lines will be recognized by the international community unless agreed to by both sides.

Principle 2. Fulfill the vision of the UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of two states for two peoples, one Jewish and one Arab, with mutual recognition and full equal rights for all their respective citizens.

... Resolution 181 is incorporated into the foundational documents of both the Israelis and Palestinians. Recognition of Israel as a Jewish state has been the U.S. position for years, and many others have expressed that they are prepared to accept it as well, provided the need for a Palestinian state is also addressed.

There are some 1.7 million Arab citizens who call Israel their home and must now and always be able to live as equal citizens. That is why it is so important that in recognizing each other's homeland ... both sides reaffirm their commitment to upholding full equal rights for all of their respective citizens.

Principle 3. Provide for a just, agreed, fair, and realistic solution to the Palestinian refugee issue, with international assistance, that includes compensation, options and assistance in finding permanent homes, acknowledgment of suffering, and other measures necessary for a comprehensive resolution consistent with two states for two peoples.

As part of a comprehensive resolution, the Palestinian refugees must be provided with compensation, their suffering must be acknowledged, and there will need to be options and assistance in finding permanent homes. The international community can provide significant support and assistance, including in raising money to help ensure the compensation and other needs of the refugees are met, and many have expressed a willingness to contribute to that effort. But there is a general recognition that the solution must be consistent with two states for two peoples, and cannot affect the fundamental character of Israel.

Principle 4. Provide an agreed resolution for Jerusalem as the internationally recognized capital of the two states, and protect and assure freedom of access to the holy sites consistent with the established status quo.

Jerusalem is the most sensitive issue for both sides, and the solution must meet the needs not only of the parties, but of all three monotheistic faiths. That is why the holy sites that are sacred to billions of people around the world must be protected and remain accessible, and the established status quo maintained. Most acknowledge that Jerusalem should not be divided again like it was in 1967. At the same time, there is broad recognition that there will be no peace agreement without reconciling the basic aspirations of both sides to have capitals there.

Principle 5. Satisfy Israel's security needs and bring a full end to the occupation, while ensuring that Israel can defend itself effectively and that Palestine can provide security for its people in a sovereign and non-militarized state.

Security is the fundamental issue for Israel. Everyone understands that no Israeli Government can ever accept an agreement that does not satisfy its security needs or risks creating an enduring security threat like Gaza in the West Bank. Israel must be able to defend itself effectively, including against terrorism and other regional threats. There is a real willingness by Egypt, Jordan, and others to work together with Israel on meeting key security challenges. The United States believes that those collective efforts, including close coordination on border security, intelligence-sharing, and joint operations, can play a critical role in securing the peace.

Fully ending the occupation is the fundamental issue for the Palestinians: They need to know that the military occupation will really end after an agreed transitional process, and that they can live in freedom and dignity in a sovereign state while providing security for their population even without a military of their own. This is widely accepted as well.

Principle 6. End the conflict and all outstanding claims, enabling normalized relations and enhanced regional security for all as envisaged by the Arab Peace Initiative.

It is essential for both sides that the final status agreement resolves all the outstanding issues and finally brings closure to this conflict, so they can move ahead to a new era of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. For Israel, this must also bring broader peace with its Arab neighbors. That is the fundamental promise of the Arab Peace Initiative, which key Arab leaders have affirmed.

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B. PEACEKEEPING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers**

On March 4, 2016, Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, provided a statement on the UN Secretary-General's Report on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Ambassador Power's statement follows and is available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7167>.

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The Secretary-General's report on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) is clear—allegations of SEA by UN civilian and uniformed personnel are surging. Worse, over half of these allegations involve the most serious forms of SEA, including rape and sexual activity with minors. The steps the United Nations and its member states have so far taken to address this scourge are demonstrably—and woefully—inadequate.

Of the 69 allegations of SEA for peacekeeping, it is very concerning that approximately 70% of investigations are marked as “pending.” Given the unimaginable suffering of victims around the world, this is outrageous. For any pending allegations, we urge contributing countries and the UN to adhere to the Secretary-General's six-month timeline for completing investigations. The Secretary-General has taken a laudable and critical step toward transparency by reporting the nationality of individuals facing credible allegations of SEA so the world can know which countries are responsible for investigating and, if necessary, prosecuting their personnel, and can track their progress.

The United States has expanded our outreach to troop and police contributing countries to press for immediate and necessary actions to complement the UN's efforts to bolster justice and accountability measures for perpetrators of SEA. In this report, the Secretary-General has requested member states approve several reform initiatives. The United States has always urged the Secretary-General, on his own authority, to take action on SEA, and will also push for member states to approve his requests.

The Security Council has a critical role to play in ensuring the effectiveness of the peacekeeping missions it authorizes, recognizing that SEA by a few undermines the credibility of the many. The United States has tabled a draft resolution to add the Security Council's weight to the United Nations response to this horrific, recurrent problem in peacekeeping missions, including by supporting the Secretary-General's decision to repatriate units that demonstrate a pattern of SEA. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Council toward swift adoption.

We need a whole-of-UN approach to ending sexual exploitation and abuse and ensuring that those who commit such crimes are held accountable. Solutions to this scourge cannot continue to be marked “pending.”

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Again on March 10, 2016, Ambassador Power addressed the subject of SEA in UN peacekeeping. Her remarks at a Security Council meeting on the subject are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7175>. As indicated in the remarks, the United States proposed a resolution on SEA, which was later adopted by the Security Council as Resolution 2272, empowering the Secretary General to repatriate troops when there are unaddressed allegations of SEA.

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...[D]espite the commitment made by this Council over a decade ago to address this problem, the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers persists. According to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's report released last week, 69 allegations of SEA were levied against uniformed and civilian personnel serving in peacekeeping missions last year—a 20 percent increase in reported violations from the previous year. More than half of the allegations in peacekeeping operations involve rape or sexual abuse of children. And these are just the cases we know about; as Special Representative of the Secretary-General Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, who took over as head of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic last August, has said—the cases reported are likely just the “tip of the iceberg.”

We have long known that one of the most effective ways to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation is to send a clear message that perpetrators will be held accountable. So it is deeply alarming that, according to the Secretary-General's report, out of 69 allegations of SEA in 2015, in only 17 instances were investigations completed by January 31, 2016. Seventeen out of 69. And in only one of those cases did a country report to the UN that it had punished a perpetrator in response to a substantiated allegation. One out of 69. And the perpetrator in that case was found to have engaged in a sexually exploitive relationship; as punishment, he was suspended for nine whole days—nine days.

Now, some have argued that this discussion has no place in the UN Security Council, implying that they do not think sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers has an impact on international peace and security. They are mistaken. In addition to being a heinous abuse, SEA erodes the discipline of military and police units, and undermines the confidence of local communities in peacekeepers—both of which are critical to fulfilling UN Security Council mandates. More broadly, when those entrusted with being protectors become perpetrators, it undermines the credibility of peacekeeping missions everywhere, as well as the legitimacy of the UN writ large—and along with it, it undermines our ability to address effectively the serious threats of our time.

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We deem it our responsibility as a Council to oversee every part of their missions—how many soldiers and police to send, what their mandate is, when they can use force. And we give them clear mandates to protect civilians. So let me pose the question this way to the skeptics:

When governments attack civilians, it is our job.

When armed groups, non-state actors, attack civilians, it is our job.

When terrorists attack civilians, it is our job.

So why in the world, when the UN's own peacekeepers are the ones attacking civilians—when peacekeepers commit the sickening crime of raping children—is it someone else's job? Explain that. Why is that the exception?

The Security Council cannot have responsibility for protecting civilians against all threats, from all forces, except those whom we directly oversee.

As we all know, a crucial part of accountability is transparency. The UN, its Member States, and the Security Council need to know when soldiers and police are accused of abusing the privilege of wearing the blue helmet. We need to know whether those allegations are being adequately investigated and, where appropriate, punished. And victims and their communities—imagine if it was a member of our family—they need to know that justice is being served. Yet the opaqueness of the existing system has made it virtually impossible for any of us to know these things. All too often, we don't know whether investigations have been opened. And even when we know investigations are ongoing, we don't know whether they are being carried out promptly, thoroughly, or impartially. Without basic facts, it is impossible to enforce a zero-tolerance policy. It's no coincidence that we've had a zero-tolerance policy for a long time, and yet, sexual abuse and exploitation allegations have risen—it's not a coincidence. There's not sufficient accountability to our own policy.

One of the most eloquent justices who ever served on the United States Supreme Court, Louis Brandeis, once said, "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants." Yet allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers too often are allowed to remain in the darkness, where the rot they cause continues to spread—to the detriment of the entire enterprise of peacekeeping.

That is why it is so important, Mr. Secretary-General, that your report for the first time brings to light the nationality of the personnel who face credible allegations of SEA. And it is why we commend the UN for starting to post on its website new allegations of SEA—including the date the report was received, information about the nationality of the accused, and whether the alleged victims are minors. It is through such reporting that we know that, in the first three months of this year alone, 26 additional allegations of SEA have been reported—a horrifying number.

We can and must do more to shine a bright light on this enduring problem. A place to start would be providing additional information on the status of investigations. For example, while we know that the majority of investigations into allegations of SEA from 2015 are "pending," we do not know when those investigations were opened. This data is crucial for gauging whether countries are acting in a timely manner.

Now, some countries have adamantly opposed this push for greater transparency, in particular the practice of identifying the nationality of peacekeepers credibly alleged to have committed such abuses. They claim that it unfairly singles out troop and police contributing countries that are putting themselves at risk in some of the most difficult environments around the world—police and troop-contributing countries whose service we commend.

Let me be very, very clear: The vast majority of the 91,000 troops and 13,000 police in UN peacekeeping missions serve honorably and with courage, putting their lives on the line every day to protect people in countries very far from their own. They do not commit sexual abuse, nor do they turn a blind eye to it. And most troop-contributing countries are serious about holding to account soldiers and police from their forces who would perpetrate such abuses, recognizing that impunity for SEA undermines the effectiveness of their troop contingents as a whole, whether they are serving in a UN mission or any other mission.

Yet this fact, the fact that so many serve so honorably—the vast, vast majority—is all the more reason that troop-contributing countries and police contributing countries should want to bring these cases to light, to investigate them, to hold accountable those who have committed abuses. Those serving honorably are the ones who have the greatest incentive to prevent the sickening acts of a few from tarnishing the noble service of so many.

When peacekeepers commit sexual exploitation and abuse with impunity, the fault not only lies with the peacekeepers who commit these deplorable acts, or the commanders who look the other way, or the countries that fail to conduct proper investigations. The blame rests on all of us—including the countries that fail to adequately train peacekeepers to prevent and root out these problems; the Member States that fail to press troop and police contributing countries to hold perpetrators accountable; the UN institutions that fail to report on the magnitude of the problem or repatriate units when countries prove unable or unwilling to investigate credible allegations of abuse. This is an all-systems failure.

Let me just give one example. According to the UN, there were seven separate allegations of SEA committed by peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of Congo in a single mission, MINUSCA, over the course of 2015; one allegation was reported in January, one in February, four in August, and one more in September. The majority of the alleged victims of these abuses were kids. As these allegations continued to add up, members of this Council—including the United States—pushed for repatriation of the unit. In the meantime, more and more victims continued to come forward. In January of this year—of 2016—there were three more credible allegations of SEA against the same unit, followed by five more in February. Think about that: eight credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse reported against a single group of peacekeepers in just two months. And in seven of those instances, the alleged victims were children. How could we let that happen? All of us—how could we let that happen?

In late February, the entire contingent from DRC was repatriated—the first time the UN has ever repatriated an entire contingent for sexual exploitation and abuse. It was the right thing to do; it sends a clear message to all countries that there will be consequences for failing to address this serious problem. But it should never have taken so long. The Security Council was told the contingent would be repatriated. But this repatriation was delayed for operational reasons. That is unacceptable. The experience should force us all to ask: What if those soldiers had been sent home sooner? How many kids could have been spared suffering unspeakable violations that no child should ever have to endure, and that they will have to carry with them for the rest of their lives?

We have to do better by these victims. This means not only securing justice, but also ensuring they receive the care that they need and deserve in the aftermath of such crimes, both in the short-term and in the long-term. The Secretary-General has proposed a trust fund to support special services for victims, which would withhold payments from repatriated individuals and direct the funds to victims. We should move swiftly together to create this fund.

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...We cannot wait any longer. The United States has tabled a Security Council resolution to take our responsibility addressing this grave issue. As an immediate step, we urge all Council members to support it. I thank you.

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Ambassador Power delivered the following explanation of vote at the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2272 on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Operations on March 11, 2016. The statement is also available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7183>.

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Thank you, Mr. President. On behalf of the United States, I would like to sincerely thank those countries that voted in favor of this resolution. The resolution adopted today underscores the Security Council's responsibility—our responsibility—to address the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peacekeeping, which has been allowed to persist for far too long. Impunity for such abuses clearly undermines our efforts to promote international peace and security. This resolution makes clear that it is our job to ensure that there is accountability when men, women, and children are abused by the blue helmets this Council sends to protect them.

The resolution signals the Security Council's strong support for the UN zero tolerance policy, and for the ongoing efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen this institution's response, reporting, and remedial measures to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse among UN peacekeepers. The resolution underscores that peacekeepers found guilty—not those accused—those found guilty of committing SEA do not deserve to serve in UN peacekeeping missions, sending a clear message to troop- and police- contributing countries who fail to take action to prevent or punish credible allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as to all Member States, and to UN bodies, to ensure that these investigations are carried out thoroughly, promptly, and impartially.

I also just want to echo my French colleague's comment that the color of the helmet means little to the victim. All of us, wherever we serve, whether it is wearing a blue helmet, or a green helmet, or some other colored helmet, have a responsibility to live up to the standards that this resolution tries to enshrine. All of us have a responsibility if individuals who serve us overseas—the same way that we have a responsibility within our borders—to ensure that these kinds of crimes are never carried out and when they are carried out that the perpetrators are held accountable.

The resolution today endorses the Secretary-General's decision to repatriate UN peacekeeping units that demonstrate widespread or systemic sexual abuse and exploitation. And it requests that the Secretary-General repatriate all uniformed personnel from a contributing country in a given mission if that country fails to take appropriate steps to address credible allegations of SEA, fails to hold the perpetrators accountable, or fails to inform the Secretary-General of the status of such efforts.

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I also take note—a very important comment that Egypt made—of the admission that the measures contained in this resolution, measures requiring accountability, would not have been passed by the General Assembly. We agree—the General Assembly has been totally paralyzed. There are countries within the negotiations that are going on as we speak that have tried to water down the recommendations that the Secretary-General has made. It'd be one thing if we were

succeeding, if it was working, if the system was working. We come in here every day, we lament, we condemn. We condemn the abuse and we condemn the lack of accountability, and then we go to the General Assembly and some of us try to water down provisions to try to strengthen the system. ...

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Let me conclude with two messages.

To the tens of thousands of troops and police who serve honorably in UN peacekeeping operations: We salute you unequivocally for putting your lives on the line for people who live in countries far from your own, with little fanfare or recognition. We, and the civilians that you protect with your bravery, are completely indebted to you for your service. And as I did yesterday, I would single out those countries on this Council who have contributed so many peacekeepers—including Egypt, Senegal, China, Uruguay, of course, the United Kingdom getting involved again. Really, as a country that does not contribute a lot of troops, we are in awe of your service.

To the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers, we pledge that we will do better. We will do better to ensure that the blue helmets we send as your protectors will not become perpetrators. That is what we are striving toward. And when they do, as this resolution demands we do, this Council has committed itself to ensuring that people who violate you, who violate the good name of the United Nations, and the good name of their countries, will be held accountable.

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On March 31, 2016, Ambassador Power delivered a statement while on a visit to the Central African Republic (“CAR”) on new allegations of SEA by peacekeepers in CAR. Her remarks are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7210>.

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The reports of new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN and non-UN personnel in the Central African Republic are sickening. At the request of the Secretariat, the Security Council is meeting today to be briefed on the allegations. In these cases, as in all reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, it is critically important that prompt, thorough, and impartial investigations be carried out; and that, if the allegations are substantiated, the perpetrators be held accountable.

Today, in the town of Bambari in the Central African Republic, I had the opportunity to meet with some of the families of victims of abuse. It was gut-wrenching to hear them speak about how the peacekeepers they had looked to as protectors became perpetrators. Our conversations highlighted how the pain and suffering—and the acute sense of betrayal—endure long after the heinous acts themselves. In a testament to the ongoing agony being experienced by the families of victims of sexual abuse, the teenage girls who were violated by UN peacekeepers

have been ostracized from their communities, themselves blamed for the abuse inflicted upon them.

The people of the Central African Republic have witnessed the potential for peacekeepers to do tremendous good, and for them to inflict tremendous harm. I came here to attend the inauguration of the country's new president, Faustin-Archange Touadéra—a peaceful, democratic transfer of power that may well have not taken place had it not been for the service of UN peacekeepers and other international forces.

This plague of sexual abuse by peacekeepers must stop. These infernal abuses defy the very values the UN was created to uphold, taint the legitimacy of the institution, and undermine the effectiveness of those honorable peacekeepers who are attempting to protect civilians and promote peace.

Would-be perpetrators have to know that they cannot get away with such abuses. That is why the immediate and full implementation of Security Council Resolution 2272 is critical. UN Member States must thoroughly and impartially investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute individuals alleged to have committed sexual exploitation and abuse. Governments that fail to fulfil their duty to investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute, should be denied the privilege of serving in UN peacekeeping missions, and their units should be repatriated. And the UN Security Council, and all UN Member States, must see to it that we live up to the standards we have set. We are seeing the devastating consequences when we do not. The stakes of addressing this problem—for the victims, for nations like the Central African Republic, and for the UN and its Member States—could not be higher.

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Ambassador Isobel Coleman, U.S. Representative to the UN for UN Management and Reform, testified before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 13, 2016 on the topic of SEA by UN Peacekeepers. Her testimony is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7233>.

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Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to travel with Ambassador Power to the Central African Republic to witness the peaceful handover of power to the country's newly-elected president. In many ways, the trip underscored both the best, and the very worst, of UN peacekeeping. The presence of UN peacekeepers has been crucial in stanching the ethnic violence that has wracked the Central African Republic, resulting in thousands of deaths and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

Yet as we all know, some MINUSCA troops have also been implicated in allegations of horrific sexual abuses, preying on the very people they have been sent to protect. During my time in CAR, Ambassador Power and I traveled to Bambari and visited with the families of some of the victims of that abuse. Their descriptions of the violence their loved ones have suffered at the hands of peacekeepers were powerful personal accounts that, for me, cut through all the statistics, the handwringing and frankly, the excuses about why this scourge has continued to happen.

Sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers is not a new problem. It has plagued missions from Bosnia to Haiti, to the DRC to the Central African Republic. Let me read to you just one passage from an internal UN report documenting sexual abuse among peacekeepers: “Some young girls . . . talked of “rape disguised as prostitution”, in which they said they were raped and given money or food afterwards to give the rape the appearance of a consensual transaction.”

These words, I’m sorry to say, are from the Zeid Report, published by the UN in 2005. We know from the scope of current allegations that now, more than a decade later, these very same offenses are still occurring. Despite years of UN leaders insisting on “zero tolerance,” a culture of impunity has been allowed to fester.

When Ambassador Power asked me last year to lead our mission’s efforts in helping to establish a new paradigm for tackling this scourge, it was clear that an unacceptable lack of transparency and accountability were at the heart of the problem. Yes, the UN published an annual report tallying the numbers and types of sexual abuses by peacekeeping mission, but under pressure from the troop contributing countries themselves, it withheld the nationality of alleged perpetrators. That made it difficult for Member States to take collective action on tracking the status of investigations and the outcome of disciplinary action to hold perpetrators to account. In short, without transparency, real accountability was, at best, inconsistent. This, finally, is changing.

Last year, USUN led negotiations in the General Assembly for a breakthrough on transparency, gaining consensus among Member States to support the Secretary General in his intent to name countries in his annual report—a long-overdue step. As of early March, the UN now posts credible allegations on its website, along with the nationality of the alleged perpetrators. With this information, we are pursuing a comprehensive approach as outlined earlier by Ambassador Jacobson, to track individual cases and follow up with the appropriate authorities.

In March, USUN brought the issue of sexual abuse to the Security Council, which adopted Resolution 2272—another significant step forward for accountability. The resolution endorses the Secretary General’s decision to repatriate peacekeeping units that have demonstrated a pattern of abuse—which is a clear indication of insufficient command and control. Going further, Security Council Resolution 2272 empowers the Secretary General to repatriate *all* troops from a mission from a particular troop or police contributing country whose personnel are the subject of an allegation if that country has not taken appropriate steps to investigate allegations against its personnel, has not held perpetrators accountable or has not sufficiently informed the Secretary General of the progress of its investigations.

Our goal is to see Resolution 2272 implemented fully as a means of powerful prevention by ending once and for all the culture of impunity for sexual abuse in peacekeeping that has persisted for too long. Already, we are seeing positive signs of change, with the UN having repatriated military units from MINUSCA for sexual abuse.

The other part of this strategy, as also noted earlier, is to increase the overall supply of peacekeepers such that when military units or contingents are repatriated, others that are well trained and vetted are available to deploy quickly to take their place.

The UN has come a long way in responding to the scourge of sexual abuse, with strong support from the United States. It has built up its investigative capabilities, increased training and vetting of troops, implemented greater community outreach to increase awareness about sexual abuse, instituted penalties for offenders, and is improving victim’s assistance. Clearly, given the

shocking scale and gravity of the sexual abuse incidents being reported from CAR and other missions, these actions by themselves are not sufficient to address the crisis. The UN's recent commitments to greater transparency and accountability *must* result in a long-overdue sea change that ends impunity. Our work is not done. We continue to make it our highest priority both in New York and bilaterally to see perpetrators held to account and sorely lacking integrity restored to peacekeeping.

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Ambassador Coleman delivered remarks on SEA in peacekeeping operations at a UN General Assembly meeting on "Strengthening the UN System" on September 7, 2016. Ambassador Coleman's September 7 statement is excerpted below and available at <https://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7427>.

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The United States welcomes this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to addressing the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse, and our collective support for the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy and his efforts to strengthen its implementation.

Sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel inflicts significant harm on vulnerable communities, the very communities who look to the UN for protection and assistance in some of the world's most dangerous situations. It also undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the UN.

Many positive efforts have been recently undertaken in this space. In 2015, the Secretary-General's annual report on sexual exploitation and abuse detailed over forty initiatives to address prevention, enforcement, and remedial action. Almost a year ago, the Secretary-General met with Troop and Police Contributing Countries to further discuss these measures. And, following the release of the CAR Panel report, the Secretary-General appointed Jane Holl Lute as the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN's Response to SEA: her efforts to date in harmonizing the UN system's approach to SEA have been critical. This year, the Secretary-General also took important steps towards increasing transparency and accountability on SEA allegations, and established the Victims Assistance Trust Fund.

Member States also took action in the realm of SEA. In March, the Security Council adopted resolution 2272, endorsing the authority of the Secretary-General to hold countries accountable for failing to take appropriate action following allegations of SEA against their personnel.

And in May, the Fifth Committee adopted a peacekeeping cross-cutting resolution which welcomed the Secretary-General's determination to fully implement the zero tolerance policy, reaffirmed the need for enhanced coordination for victim support, and expanded the UN's policy of transparency for allegations of SEA.

These are all important steps in the right direction toward accountability, transparency, prevention, and victims' assistance. Together these reforms are crucial for upholding zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse: and now that they have been fully integrated into the UN's policies and standard operating procedures, we must move forward. We cannot go back.

Sexual exploitation and abuse is not a problem that can be solved by a single decision or action. Member States and the UN together must be constantly vigilant and seek ways to improve the implementation of the letter and the spirit of the zero tolerance policy. In this regard, we welcome the UN's recent step of publishing examples of how T/PCCs, Member States more broadly, and other international organizations handle SEA allegations. By sharing national laws, organizational rules and policies, and examples of actions taken in response to specific SEA allegations, we can identify and build on best practices.

The United States firmly supports the authority of the Secretary-General to implement his zero tolerance policy, and welcomes the initiatives he has undertaken thus far. Member States and the UN share a joint responsibility to prevent and address SEA, and to ensure victims receive the assistance that they need. Today, we must reaffirm our unanimous position that one substantiated case of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse is one too many: and that we all have a collective obligation to address this scourge. Finally, we must also recommit to protecting whistleblowers, since we know that there remains a significant issue of underreporting of cases.

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2. Syria

On January 31, 2016, Secretary Kerry provided a statement by video on new UN-sponsored negotiations to try to end the conflict in Syria. Secretary Kerry's statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/01/251899.htm>.

* * * *

For almost five years, the world has watched in horror as Syria has disintegrated into a brutal conflict, killing hundreds of thousands and displacing millions both within and outside the country. Syria today is an unfolding humanitarian catastrophe, unmatched since World War II.

In recent months, a new and broad-based diplomatic initiative was launched, for the first time involving all of the key countries in the conflict. The goal is to reduce the violence, isolate terrorist groups such as Daesh, and create the basis for an inclusive, peaceful, and pluralistic Syria we all seek.

This weekend, we enter a pivotal phase in that diplomatic effort. Officials from the Syrian regime and an inclusive opposition represented by the High Negotiations Committee, begin UN-sponsored negotiations in Geneva. This morning, in light of what is at stake in these talks, I appeal to both sides to make the most of this moment—to seize the opportunity for serious negotiations—to negotiate in good faith, with the goal of making concrete, measurable progress in the days immediately ahead.

The world is hoping that both sides will move quickly to meet the needs of millions of desperate Syrians, to reduce the pressure on neighboring countries, to reduce the levels of migration, and to help restore peace and stability.

The main topics on the agenda for these negotiations include arrangements for a nationwide ceasefire and establishing a path to a political transition that will bring this conflict to an end in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué of 2012 and UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

Now, while battlefield dynamics can affect negotiating leverage, in the end there is no military solution to this conflict. Without negotiations, the bloodshed will drag on until the last city is reduced to rubble and virtually every home, every form of infrastructure, and every semblance of civilization is destroyed. And that will ensure an increased number of terrorists created by, and attracted to, this fight. This conflict could easily engulf the region if left to spiral completely out of control. That is what the negotiations in Geneva can prevent.

There is also an urgent and compelling imperative required by international law and simple human decency that we take steps now to improve the situation on the ground for the Syrian people.

The humanitarian crisis, already disastrous and unacceptable, is actually growing worse by the day. The numbers alone are staggering. An estimated 13.5 million Syrians are in urgent need now of humanitarian aid. Six million are children. ...

Shockingly, less than one percent ... of the besieged population of Syria received food aid in all of 2015. And we are not just talking about remote, hard-to-reach areas.

The town of Madaya is just an hour's drive from Damascus. And yet, in recent months, its people have been reduced to eating grass and leaves. How has the regime and the militias that support it responded? By planting land mines and erecting barbed wire to keep relief workers out. This weekend, we heard reports that another 16 people in the town have died due to starvation amid the bitter winter's cold. Other residents have been described as walking skeletons.

And the tragedy in Madaya is far from the only case. Overall, since the beginning of last year, the Syrian regime has received 113 requests from the United Nations to deliver humanitarian aid. Astonishingly, just 13 of these requests have been approved and implemented. Meanwhile, people are dying; children are suffering not as a result of an accident of war, but as the consequence of an intentional tactic—surrender or starve. And that tactic is directly contrary to the law of war.

Let me be clear. The Syrian regime has a fundamental responsibility; all the parties to the conflict have a duty—to facilitate humanitarian access to populations in desperate need, not in a week, not after further discussions, but right now—today.

Under Resolution 2254, the government and all parties have an obligation, as well, to cease bombings and other attacks against civilians—not eventually, again, but immediately. The international community must be united in pressing for compliance. Both governments supporting the opposition and especially governments that are supporting Bashar al-Assad, whose forces control the vast majority of the territory under siege, have this obligation also.

We must not forget what the Syrian people will always remember: Assad and his allies have, from the very beginning, been by far the primary source of killing, torture, and deprivation in this war; and the primary magnet drawing foreign fighters to Syria, giving cause to Daesh.

In recent weeks, colleagues from the International Syrian Support Group have been in constant contact in order to forge a more unified and collaborative approach to de-escalating this conflict, and also to ensure access to besieged areas for humanitarian workers and supplies. The world needs to push in one direction—toward stopping the oppression and suffering of the Syrian people and ending, not prolonging, this war.

Nothing would do more to cut the legs out from under Daesh than a negotiated political solution in Syria that would allow all sides, all parties, all countries, to focus on defeating the terrorist group Daesh once and for all. This imperative was underlined yet again just this morning, when terrorist bombers attacked a religious shrine, killing dozens, in Damascus.

The people of Syria deserve a real choice about the kind of future that they want. Not a choice between brutal repression on one side and terrorists on the other; that's the choice the Assad regime would like to offer. What the people of Syria need is the kind of choice that emerges from a credible political process.

This week in Geneva, that political process can get underway. The road ahead remains challenging. Success is not assured. But we have seen through years of savage fighting what the absence of serious negotiation yields.

So I urge all parties to seize this opportunity and go forward with the best interests of their country in mind. The United Nations Security Council has created a framework for bringing the war in Syria to an end. It embraces a ceasefire, humanitarian access throughout the country, a transition process, and elections within 18 months in which Syrians can determine the future of Syria.

So the opportunity now is real and present to achieve a future that ensures Syria's unity, independence, territorial integrity, and non-sectarian character; to keep state institutions intact; and to protect the rights of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religious denomination.

We call upon the parties in Geneva to take the first urgent steps and not to miss the chance this moment presents.

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On February 11 and 12, 2016, Germany hosted a meeting of the International Syria Support Group ("ISSG") on the margins of the Munich Security Conference. As explained in the Group's February 11 Joint Statement (released as a February 11, 2016 State Department media note, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252428.htm>), the meeting focused on commencing humanitarian access to besieged areas, achieving a nationwide cessation of hostilities in Syria, and implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (discussed in *Digest 2015* at 698-702). Among the outcomes of the meeting was the decision to establish an ISSG ceasefire task force, under the auspices of the UN, co-chaired by Russia and the United States with the participation of ISSG members with influence on the parties to the conflict. Secretary Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and UN Special Envoy Steffan de Mistura addressed the press on February 12, 2016 regarding the outcomes of their meeting. Secretary Kerry's remarks are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/02/252431.htm>.

* * * *

Last fall, the International Syria Support Group came together out of a shared sense of responsibility for the nightmare that the Syrian people have been enduring for far too long. And in December we agreed on a set of commitments, unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council, aimed at bringing an end to the war. Obviously, it's been difficult. Everybody understands that. That effort at the UN led to specific UN-sponsored negotiations between the Syrian parties, which began under the stewardship of UN Envoy Staffan de Mistura and the UN itself. And everybody knows that as the situation on the ground in Syria grew steadily worse the talks themselves became wrapped up in the level of violence and in concerns that people had about negotiating under difficult circumstances.

Staffan de Mistura wisely at that moment, after conversing with both sides in what were always scheduled to be proximity talks, then delayed this process knowing that we were meeting here in Munich yesterday and part of this morning. During this time, the perception of many members was that the regime of Bashar al-Assad was violating international law by trying to force surrender through starvation. And with the help of indiscriminate bombing, the regime intensified its assault in Aleppo, killing civilians and forcing more than 60,000 Syrians to flee their homes in search of refuge across the Turkish border. And it is our perception that rather than hurting Daesh, this process has, in fact, empowered Daesh to take advantage of the chaos.

UN Special Envoy de Mistura who convened those talks agreed that we should come here to Munich in order to allow the ISSG nations and the parties themselves to try to make the necessary progress to bring about humanitarian access that is urgently needed on the ground and in trying to implement a ceasefire on both sides.

Foreign Minister Lavrov worked closely with me and with the rest of the members today and I'm pleased to say that as a result today in Munich we believe we have made progress on both the humanitarian front and the cessation of hostilities front. And these two fronts, this progress, has the potential, fully implemented, fully followed through on, to be able to change the daily lives of the Syrian people.

First, we have agreed to accelerate and expand the delivery of humanitarian aid beginning immediately. Sustained delivery will begin this week, first to the areas where it is most urgently needed: Deir al-Zor, Fouah, Kafrayah, the besieged areas of rural Damascus, Madaya, Mouadhimiyyeh, Kafr Batna, and then to all the people in need throughout the country, particularly in the besieged or hard-to-reach areas, the smaller neighborhoods and towns.

This access is specifically called for in UN Security Council resolution 2254 and to ensure that it is fully implemented the United Nations will convene a task force made up of members of the ISSG and of relevant UN entities and of countries that have an influence on the parties particularly. And this working group will meet tomorrow in Geneva. It will ensure that humanitarian access is granted by all sides to all people who require help. And it will meet, as I said, for the first time tomorrow. It will report weekly on progress or lack thereof to help ensure a consistent and timely and approve access moving forward.

I will say that it was unanimous. Everybody today agreed on the urgency of humanitarian access. And what we have here are words on paper. What we need to see in the next few days are actions on the ground in the field. And Staffan will speak to that.

In addition, the ISSG members will work together with the Syrian parties to ensure the immediate approval and the completion of all pending UN access requests. As everybody knows, there have been about 114 of them—only 13 or so, 14 approved—and that has to change.

Second, we have agreed to implement a nationwide cessation of hostilities to begin in a target of one week's time. That's ambitious, but everybody is determined to move as rapidly as possible to try to achieve this. This will apply to any and all parties in Syria with the exception of the terrorist organizations Daesh and al-Nusrah and any other terrorist organization designated by the Security Council.

To that end, we have also established a task force under the auspices of the UN and co-chaired by Russia and the United States. And over the coming week this group will work to develop the modalities for a long-term, comprehensive, and durable cessation of violence, of hostilities. We will begin to exercise our influence by the commitment of every country at the table immediately for a significant reduction in violence as we work towards the full cessation of hostilities.

Now, I want to underscore putting an end to the violence and the bloodshed is obviously essential, as is providing Syrians who are starving the humanitarian aid that they desperately need. But ultimately the end of this conflict will only come when the parties agree on a plan for a political transition in accordance with the Geneva communiqué of 2012. ...

Today all ISSG members agree that the Geneva talks should resume as soon as possible and they should resume in strict compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. And the ISSG also pledges—all of us—to take every single measure we can to facilitate progress within the negotiations. In December we agreed on a six-month timeframe for the political transition process and today we reaffirmed our commitment to that timeline. We approach this, I think, with a uniform belief that the killing and the starvation of innocent people needs to end as soon as possible.

Now, obviously, just in closing I'll say our hard work is obviously far from over. But our work today, while it has produced commitments on paper, I want to restate the real test is clearly whether or not all the parties honor those commitments and implement them in reality. What I've said again and again is we cannot guarantee success in the outcome. What the diplomatic process can guarantee is that we exhaust the possibilities of diplomacy and that we make every best effort to try to produce a platform on which the parties themselves can determine their future.

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On February 22, 2016, arrangements for a cessation of hostilities in Syria concluded under the auspices of the ISSG. Secretary Kerry summarized the cessation of hostilities in a February 22, 2016 press statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/02/253117.htm>. His statement includes the following:

... If implemented and adhered to, this cessation will not only lead to a decline in violence, but also continue to expand the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian supplies to besieged areas and support a political transition to a government that is responsive to the desires of the Syrian people.

...

We are all aware of the significant challenges ahead. Over the coming days, we will be working to secure commitments from key parties that they will abide by the terms of this cessation of hostilities and further develop modalities for monitoring and enforcement.

This is a moment of promise, but the fulfillment of that promise depends on actions. All parties must meet their commitments under this agreement, ensure full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, and cease attacks on each other, including aerial bombardments. And all parties must remain committed over a period of time to make possible a political end to this conflict.

As we move forward, we will remain vigilant to ensure that implementation achieves what we set out to do, which is to stop the violence and provide the space and the opportunity for a negotiated political transition, consistent with the Geneva Communiqué of 2012, that unites all Syrians who reject dictatorship and terrorism and want to build a new future for their country.

On the day the cessation of hostilities arrangement was concluded, the United States and Russia issued a joint statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/253115.htm>, which follows.

* * * *

The United States of America and the Russian Federation, as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) and seeking to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis with full respect for the fundamental role of the United Nations, are fully determined to provide their strongest support to end the Syrian conflict and establish conditions for a successful Syrian-led political transition process, facilitated by the UN, in order to fully implement the Munich Statement of the ISSG on February 11th, 2016, UN Security Council Resolution 2254, the 2015 Vienna Statements and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

In this regard, and in furtherance of the February 11th decisions of the ISSG, the United States and Russia, as co-chairs of the ISSG and ISSG Ceasefire Task Force, announce the adoption on February 22, 2016, of the Terms for a Cessation of Hostilities in Syria attached as an Annex to this statement, and propose that the cessation of hostilities commence at 00:00 (Damascus time) on February 27, 2016. The cessation of hostilities is to be applied to those parties to the Syrian conflict that have indicated their commitment to and acceptance of its terms. Consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the statements of the ISSG, the cessation of hostilities does not apply to “Daesh”, “Jabhat al-Nusra”, or other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council.

Any party engaged in military or para-military hostilities in Syria, other than “Daesh”, “Jabhat al-Nusra”, or other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council will indicate to the Russian Federation or the United States, as co-chairs of the ISSG, their commitment to and acceptance of the terms for the cessation of hostilities by no later than 12:00 (Damascus time) on February 26, 2016. In order to implement the cessation of hostilities in a

manner that promotes stability and protects those parties participating in it, the Russian Federation and the United States are prepared to work together to exchange pertinent information (e.g., aggregated data that delineates territory where groups that have indicated their commitment to and acceptance of the cessation of hostilities are active, and a focal point for each side, in order to ensure effective communication) and develop procedures necessary for preventing parties participating in the cessation of hostilities from being attacked by Russian Armed Forces, the U.S.-led Counter ISIL Coalition, the Armed Forces of the Syrian government and other forces supporting them, and other parties to the cessation of hostilities. Military actions, including airstrikes, of the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Russian Armed Forces, and the U.S.-led Counter ISIL Coalition will continue against ISIL, “Jabhat al-Nusra,” and other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council. The Russian Federation and United States will also work together, and with other members of the Ceasefire Task Force, as appropriate and pursuant to the ISSG decision of February 11, 2016, to delineate the territory held by “Daesh,” “Jabhat al-Nusra” and other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council, which are excluded from the cessation of hostilities.

In order to promote the effective implementation of the cessation of hostilities, the ISSG Ceasefire Task Force, co-chaired by the United States and Russia, has been established under UN auspices, including political and military officials from the co-chairs and other Task Force members; the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSE) serves as secretariat. The primary functions of the Task Force are, as provided in the ISSG Statement of February 11, to: a) delineate the territory held by “Daesh”, “Jabhat-al-Nusra” and other terrorist organizations designated by the United Nations Security Council; b) ensure communications among all parties to promote compliance and rapidly de-escalate tensions; c) resolve allegations of non-compliance; and d) refer persistent non-compliant behavior by any of the parties to the ISSG Ministers or those designated by the Ministers to determine appropriate action, including the exclusion of such parties from the arrangements of the cessation of hostilities, and the protection it affords them.

The United States and Russia are prepared, in their capacities as co-chairs of the Ceasefire Task Force and in coordination with other members of the ISSG Ceasefire Task Force as appropriate, to develop effective mechanisms to promote and monitor compliance with the ceasefire both by the governmental forces of the Syrian Arab Republic and other forces supporting them, and the armed opposition groups. To achieve this goal and to promote an effective and sustainable cessation of hostilities, the Russian Federation and the United States will establish a communication hotline and, if necessary and appropriate, a working group to exchange relevant information after the cessation of hostilities has gone into effect. In addressing incidents of non-compliance, every effort should be made to promote communications among all parties to restore compliance and rapidly de-escalate tensions, and non-forcible means should be exhausted whenever possible before resorting to use of force. The United States and Russia as co-chairs of ISSG Ceasefire Task Force will develop such further modalities and standard operating procedures as may be necessary to implement these functions.

The United States and the Russian Federation together call upon all Syrian parties, regional states and others in the international community to support the immediate cessation of violence and bloodshed in Syria and to contribute to the swift, effective and successful promotion of the UN-facilitated political transition process in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254, the February 11 Statement of the ISSG, the 2015 Vienna statements of the ISSG, and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

ANNEX
TERMS FOR CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES IN SYRIA

The nationwide cessation of hostilities is to apply to any party currently engaged in military or paramilitary hostilities against any other parties other than “Daesh”, “Jabhat al-Nusra”, or other terrorist organizations designated by the UN Security Council.

The responsibilities of the Syrian armed opposition are set out in paragraph 1 below. The responsibilities of the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, and all forces supporting or associated with the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic are set out in paragraph 2 below.

1. To take part in the cessation of hostilities, armed opposition groups will confirm—to the United States of America or the Russian Federation, who will attest such confirmations to one another as co-chairs of the ISSG by no later than 12:00 (Damascus time) on February 26 2016—their commitment to and acceptance of the following terms:

- To full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, adopted unanimously on December 18, 2015—including the readiness to participate in the UN-facilitated political negotiation process;
- To cease attacks with any weapons, including rockets, mortars, and anti-tank guided missiles, against Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, and any associated forces;
- To refrain from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the ceasefire;
- To allow humanitarian agencies, rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained access throughout areas under their operational control and allow immediate humanitarian assistance to reach all people in need;
- To proportionate use of force (i.e., no greater than required to address an immediate threat) if and when responding in self-defense.

2. The above-mentioned commitments will be observed by such armed opposition groups, provided that the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic, and all forces supporting or associated with the Armed Forces of the Syrian Arab Republic have confirmed to the Russian Federation as co-chair of the ISSG by no later than 12:00 (Damascus time) on February 26, 2016 their commitment to and acceptance of the following terms:

- To full implementation of UN Security Resolution 2254, adopted unanimously on December 18, 2015, including the readiness to participate in the UN-facilitated political negotiation process;
- To cease attacks with any weapons, including aerial bombardments by the Air Force of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Aerospace Forces of the Russian Federation, against the armed opposition groups (as confirmed to the United States or the Russian Federation by parties to the cessation of hostilities);
- To refrain from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the ceasefire;
- To allow humanitarian agencies, rapid, unhindered and sustained access throughout areas under their operational control and allow immediate humanitarian assistance to reach all people in need;
- To proportionate use of force (i.e., no greater than required to address an immediate threat) if and when responding in self-defense.

The Russian Federation and the United States, as co-chairs of the ISSG and ISSG Ceasefire Task Force, are prepared to work together to ensure effective communications and develop procedures necessary for preventing parties participating in the cessation of hostilities from being attacked by Russian Armed Forces, the U.S.-led Counter ISIL Coalition, the Armed Forces of the Syrian government and other forces supporting them, and other parties to the cessation of hostilities.

All parties further commit to work for the early release of detainees, particularly women and children.

Any party can bring a violation or potential violation of the cessation of hostilities to the attention of the Task Force, either through the OSE or the co-chairs. The OSE and Co-Chairs will establish liaison arrangements with each other and the parties, and inform the public generally about how any party may bring a violation to the attention of the Task Force.

The United States and the Russian Federation as co-chairs confirm that the cessation of hostilities will be monitored in an impartial and transparent manner and with broad media coverage.

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On February 26, 2016, Ambassador Power provided the U.S. explanation of vote on Security Council Resolution 2268 on the cessation of hostilities in Syria. Ambassador Power's statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7156>.

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We are gathered here at a critical moment. The resolution we have just adopted—in which the Security Council endorses the cessation of hostilities in Syria—offers a genuine opportunity to pause, at least in part, the fighting in one of the most brutal conflicts the world has seen in a generation; a conflict that, for the past five years, this Council and the international community have been unable to stop. This resolution endorses a set of practical, concrete steps—along with terms to which the parties to the conflict must commit—to reduce the violence and create space for a long overdue political transition.

There is some skepticism as to whether this cessation of hostilities—which is scheduled to go into effect in less than an hour, at midnight Damascus time—will be respected from the outset, or, just as important, whether it will hold with time. That skepticism is more than reasonable, given previous efforts that this Council and other multilateral institutions have undertaken to try to stop the monstrous violence and immeasurable suffering experienced by the Syrian people. Yet that record does not change the fact that this is our best chance, it's our best chance to reduce the violence. Today, as in every previous effort, the only measure that matters is not the words on the page of this resolution, it is whether these commitments are actually put into practice and whether these commitments lead to real changes on the ground.

For that to happen, first and foremost, the parties to the conflict must abide by the terms endorsed today. To that end, the United States has continued to consult closely with the major Syrian armed opposition groups, which have confirmed their acceptance of the terms of the

cessation of hostilities through the High Negotiations Committee, the HNC, or directly with us. The vast majority [is] ready to participate in the cessation provided the Syrian government, and the governments and forces supporting it, abide by their commitments under the terms.

We are, therefore, deeply concerned by the continued Syrian and Russian aerial bombardment of towns across Syria; aerial bombing that has caused massive displacement and hundreds of civilian deaths. Many of the towns being hit by Syrian and Russian bombers are towns like Daraya, a suburb of Damascus that is being pummeled—up to this very day—a town that is not held by ISIL or the al-Nusra Front. It is hard to seem serious and sincere about ceasing hostilities when you ramp up fighting right up to the minute the cessation of hostilities is to take effect.

Second, those countries with influence on the parties must use it to press the parties to live up to their commitments.

And third, when violations occur—as inevitably they will—a sober, coordinated response is critical. The International Syria Support Group has set up a taskforce assigned with specific steps to address allegations of non-compliance, including working with parties to de-escalate violence that could quickly spiral out of control.

Let us be real: it is going to be extremely challenging, especially at the outset, to make this work. In a world of horrific crises, arguably no crisis has done more to threaten international peace and security, or has inflicted as much human suffering, as the conflict in Syria. We are all now broken records here in this Council about the fact that this crisis cannot be resolved through force alone, that it will require a political solution. We've heard it, we've said it. But today, we have an opportunity: if we can make this cessation of hostilities hold—which is a *very* big if—we will take a genuine step toward that political solution we have been talking about for so long.

As we all know, if implemented a cessation of hostilities would not apply to terrorist groups like ISIL, who will continue to fight. Yet even a partial de-escalation would make a real difference in the lives of Syrians. And it would also allow us to expand the reach of humanitarian access, which despite the modest gains that have been made in recent days and weeks, is extremely limited and extremely inadequate—particularly when it comes to hard-to-reach or besieged areas, where people continue to starve to death and die of treatable illness due to a lack of medicine. Man-made starvation continues to go on; man-made deaths because medicine is being stripped from convoys. Regular, sustained, and unimpeded access must be granted to all Syrians in need, no matter where they live.

A cessation of hostilities will also help foster conditions in which Special Envoy de Mistura could reconvene talks between the parties in Geneva, which is crucial to working toward the political transition that offers the only long-term solution to Syria's conflict. That transition, as we have said all along, must be a transition away from Bashar al-Assad, who has lost all legitimacy to lead. As President Obama said yesterday, "It's clear that after years of his barbaric war against his own people—including torture, and barrel bombs, and sieges, and starvation—many Syrians will never stop fighting until Assad is out of power."

The cessation will not itself ensure a political solution is reached, but it does at least create conditions in which one is possible. Beyond respecting the cessation, the parties can take other meaningful steps to build confidence, starting by releasing detainees—especially women and children—who continue to be subjected to deplorable treatment and inhumane conditions.

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It is true that our actions alone will not determine whether or not the cessation of hostilities holds; even if we all act in good faith, other parties have the power to sabotage the cessation by their actions. Yet it is also true that the failure by any one of our nations to live up to our part of the deal—which includes working to ensure that the commitments made are honored, pressing on the parties within our respective spheres of influence, and making sure sober, united steps are taken to de-escalate violations when they occur—could also result in the failure of the cessation. And if this collapses we will lose the most tangible opportunity we have had in a very long time to reduce the suffering of the Syrian people, and to create space for finding a political solution that will finally bring them peace. So much relies on what we do. Let us not squander this chance. Thank you.

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On March 11, 2016, the State Department issued a press statement noting that, after two weeks, the armed factions were adhering to the Cessation of Hostilities in Syria (“COH”) and that the ISSG, the UN, and the United States considered it still in effect at that time. The press statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/03/254633.htm>, also expresses concern about specific violations to the COH, “including attacks on civilians and opposition forces by the regime and its supporters” and calls for the violations to cease. The press statement continues:

The Cessation of Hostilities has produced a dramatic reduction in violence in Syria and permitted humanitarian access to begin in some besieged areas. At the same time, more must be done by the international community to stop the violence, end the sieges permanently, deliver the aid, and release detainees, particularly women and children. We are at a critical moment in this conflict. We should not squander it through neglect or willful negligence. All parties must abide by their obligations.

On May 2, 2016, Secretary Kerry delivered remarks with UN Special Envoy Steffan de Mistura after their meeting in Geneva. Secretary Kerry observed that the COH was beginning to fray. His remarks are excerpted below and available in full at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/05/256774.htm>.

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The cessation of hostilities that we were able to negotiate and put in place over the Christmas holiday and into January has had a profoundly positive impact on the lives of many Syrians during the time that it has been kept, and over much of Syria violence has been significantly down, many lives have been saved, and many communities have succeeded in having humanitarian assistance delivered after in some cases years in which they had no humanitarian assistance. But it is a fact that in the last weeks, the cessation of hostilities has been put to test, and it has frayed in certain areas and it has fallen completely in a few areas. And so we are

engaged in an effort with all of the members of the International Syria Support Group and with Russia particularly in an effort to restore that cessation of hostilities in those places where it has been most at risk or most shredded.

In particular, in the last hours of Saturday morning, we were able to restore a brief period of the cessation going back into effect in East Ghouda and in Latakia. And now we are very much working and focused on the question of restoring the cessation of hostilities to the remaining areas where it's been disturbed, but particularly to Aleppo. And Aleppo is particularly disturbing to everyone for what has happened there. There are three health clinics now, one major hospital, that have been attacked from the air by bombs. There are only two air forces flying in that particular area, and the Russians are clear that they were not engaged or flying at that time. The regime has clearly indicated the willingness, over a period of time now, to attack first responders, to attack health care workers and rescue workers. And the attack on this hospital is on unconscionable, under any standard anywhere. It has to stop.

The last pediatrician who was serving people in the Aleppo area was killed the other day in this hospital, not to mention probably some 250 civilians, some of whom were killed by the other side. So both sides—the opposition and the regime—have contributed to this chaos. And we are working over these next hours intensely in order to try to restore the cessation of hostilities, and at the same time to raise the level of accountability that will accompany the day-to-day process of implementing the ceasefire. To that effect Russia and the United States have agreed that there will be additional personnel who will work from here in Geneva on a daily basis—24 hours a day, 7 days a week—in order to try to make sure that there is a better job and a better ability to be able to enforce the cessation of hostilities day to day.

I will be talking later today by telephone with Foreign Minister Lavrov, and Staffan de Mistura will be traveling to Moscow tomorrow for meetings. ... So we are trying in the next hours to see if it is possible to reach agreement that can not just re-implement cessation, but create a path forward for the cessation to hold so that there isn't one day of silence or two days of silence, but an ongoing process that relieves the people of Syria from this devastation, from this day-to-day killing machine that is being unleashed by the Assad regime. And obviously, it is incumbent on the United States and our colleagues in the International Syria Support Group to keep our part of the bargain, which is to make certain that the opposition is living up to this agreement, and it is incumbent on Russia and Iran as they have accepted responsibility to make sure that the regime is living up to its part of this agreement.

At the same time, it is imperative that the full measure of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254—which not only calls on the parties to have a cessation of hostilities, of a country-wide ceasefire, but it is imperative that the humanitarian access that was promised in that resolution is delivered. And the regime, unfortunately, is still preventing access to certain communities. So that has to be part of our ability to be able to get back to political talks. You cannot have legitimate political talks about peace when the parties at the table have both signed up to an agreement which calls for a full cessation of hostilities countrywide as well as a full delivery of humanitarian materials countrywide, and yet one party is blatantly violating that agreement.

So this is the moment to try to make certain that what everybody has signed up to is in fact being delivered, being lived up to, without hypocrisy and without variation. And that's what we're working for, and I'm hopeful that over the course of the next day or so greater clarity will be available as to exactly what progress has been made.

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On May 4, 2016, the State Department issued a press statement reaffirming the cessation of hostilities in Aleppo, Syria. The statement follows and is available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/256865.htm>.

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As part of our urgent efforts to de-escalate violence in Syria and reaffirm the Cessation of Hostilities nationwide, the United States and Russia concluded arrangements late yesterday to extend this effort to Aleppo province, including Aleppo city and its surrounding areas. Since this went into effect today at 00:01 in Damascus, we have seen an overall decrease in violence in these areas, even though there have been reports of continued fighting in some locations.

To ensure this continues in a sustainable way, we are coordinating closely with Russia to finalize enhanced monitoring efforts of this renewed cessation. We expect all parties to the Cessation of Hostilities to abide fully by the renewed cessation in Aleppo and throughout the entire country, pursuant to the terms of the arrangements established in Munich in February 2016. Attacks directed against Syria's civilian population can never be justified, and these must stop immediately.

We look to Russia as a co-chair of the International Syria Support Group to press for the Assad regime's compliance with this effort, and the United States will do its part with the opposition. Following the regime's overnight airstrikes against Eastern Ghouta, we welcome today's reaffirmation of the cessation in Eastern Ghouta for the next 48 hours. It is critical that Russia redouble its efforts to influence the regime to abide fully by the cessation.

Our objective remains, and has always been, a single nationwide cessation of hostilities covering all of Syria—not a series of local truces. We are determined to reaffirm the Cessation of Hostilities across Syria and will continue expanding this effort so we can de-escalate the violence, alleviate the suffering, and help create the conditions that enable the parties to resume negotiations focused on a political transition, as called for in UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

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On May 9, 2016, the Russian Federation and the United States issued a joint statement on Syria, excerpted below and available as a State Department media note at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/256998.htm>.

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The Russian Federation and the United States of America, as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), recognize the progress that has been made with respect to the cessation of hostilities (CoH) in Syria, in accordance with our Joint Statement of February 22, 2016, and in

improving humanitarian access. We believe our joint efforts have brought about a significant decrease in violence in the areas of North Latakia and East Ghouta. However, we also recognize the difficulties faced by the CoH in several areas of the country, especially in the recent period, as well as remaining problems in ensuring humanitarian access to the besieged areas. As a result, we have decided to reconfirm our commitment to the CoH in Syria and to intensify efforts to ensure its nation-wide implementation. We also intend to enhance efforts to promote humanitarian assistance to all people in need in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254.

Cessation of Hostilities

The co-chairs re-affirm our commitment to the nationwide CoH that went into effect on February 27 across Syria, and have decided to pursue the following measures to reinvigorate it:

1. Recognizing challenges related to the CoH in certain areas the co-chairs have re-emphasized the terms of the COH with field commanders on all sides, especially in Aleppo, Eastern Ghouta, and Latakia, where we are determined to improve and sustain the CoH. We are using our influence with the CoH parties on the ground to press them to abide by the COH, refrain from disproportionate responses to provocations and demonstrate restraint.
2. We demand that parties cease any indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including civilian infrastructure and medical facilities. Where attacks leading to significant civilian casualties are reported to have occurred, the co-chairs are committed to undertaking, within existing channels of interaction in Geneva, the region, and capitals, a joint assessment and to sharing the results with the members of the ISSG Ceasefire Task Force and, through the UN Special Envoy for Syria, to the UN Security Council.
3. The Russian Federation will work with the Syrian authorities to minimize aviation operations over areas that are predominantly inhabited by civilians or parties to the cessation.
4. The co-chairs are urging all states to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 2253 (December 17, 2015) by preventing any material or financial support to ISIL, the al Nusra Front, as well as any other groups designated as terrorist organizations by the United Nations Security Council, and to prevent attempts by such groups to cross the Syrian border. To that end, the United States is committed to intensifying its support and assistance to regional allies to help them prevent the flow of fighters, weapons, or financial support to terrorist organizations across their borders.
5. In order to maintain the effectiveness of the CoH, the co-chairs are committed to undertaking efforts to develop a shared understanding of the threat posed, and territory controlled, by ISIL and the Nusra Front, and to consider ways to deal decisively against the threat posed by ISIL and the Nusra Front to Syria and international security.

Ensuring Humanitarian Access

Since January 2016 the UN, in coordination with the ICRC and Syrian Arab Red Crescent, have taken significant steps to deliver assistance to 255,250 people in besieged areas and 472,975 people in hard-to-reach areas. However, many Syrians with urgent needs have yet to be reached, especially in besieged communities. Life-saving assistance, including certain medical supplies and personnel to ensure their proper use, has been denied to populations in need. UN assessment teams and humanitarian personnel have been barred from accessing certain besieged areas.

In order to urgently deliver humanitarian aid, the Russian Federation and the United States of America are committed to pressing the parties to ensure continuous delivery of assistance to Douma, East Harasta, Arbeen, Zamalka, Darayya, Zabadin, Fouah, Kafrayah, Madaya, Zabadani, Mouadhimiyyeh, Yarmouk, Ein Terma, Hammura, Jisrein, Saqba, and Kafr Batna by land, and that it continues as long as humanitarian needs persist. Deliveries by air will be continued to Deir ez Zor for approximately 110,000 people in need. In addition, we reaffirm the need for continuous deliveries to all locations considered by the UN to be hard-to-reach, such as al Waer, Talbisseh, al Rastan, and Afrin. We also recommend that the UN consider other locations that may meet the criteria for priority designations, including Nubul, Zahra, and Hasakeh. Humanitarian access, including by medical personnel, to these most urgent areas must be a first step toward full, sustained, and unimpeded access throughout the country. As called for in UNSCR 2258, border crossings that are necessary for humanitarian relief should remain open.

Humanitarian aid will be delivered based on need, with the full package of food, medical, and non-food items as decided by the UN authorized for delivery by all sides. The provision of mobile health services and evacuation of urgent medical cases should be facilitated by all sides.

The co-chairs reaffirm that all parties must allow immediate and sustained humanitarian access to reach all people in need, throughout Syria, particularly in all besieged and hard-to-reach areas, in accordance with UNSCR 2254. The co-chairs commit to immediately work together with the Syrian parties to ensure no delay in the granting of approval and completion of all pending UN requests for access in accordance with the UN's monthly plans. The co-chairs urge all parties to effectively address the issue of detainees and hostages in accordance with UNSCR 2254, 2258, and other relevant resolutions. We also support the UN's appeals for continued funding of the Syria Response Plan, and encourage the international community and UN to intensify efforts to meet the needs of internally displaced persons across Syria.

Supporting a Political Settlement in Syria

The Russian Federation and United States are determined to redouble efforts to reach a political settlement of the Syrian conflict consistent with UNSCR 2254 through the intra-Syrian negotiations in Geneva under UN auspices. We concur that these talks should be resumed on the basis of the Special Envoy's mediator's summary of April 27, in particular the annex addressing the fundamental issues for a viable transition, and the section on the commonalities on the political transition. We urge all parties to the conflict, fellow ISSG members, and other members of the international community to promote and support a political settlement in Syria through the full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 2254 and 2268, the 2016 Munich and 2015 Vienna Statements of the ISSG, and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. In this regard, the co-chairs strongly support efforts to end violence and bloodshed, counter the threat of terrorism, and ensure the implementation of international humanitarian law.

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On May 9, 2016, Secretary Kerry delivered remarks in Paris before meeting with French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault. Secretary Kerry's remarks are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/05/257044.htm>.

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...[T]oday the Russian Federation and the United States released, as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group and shared with all of our colleagues, a document that will reinstate a nationwide cessation of hostilities as well as calls on the full delivery of humanitarian assistance according to the UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

Now, as I said before when we were in Vienna, these are words on a piece of paper. They are not actions, but they are a commitment by Russia to, in fact, limit the Syrian regime from its ability to fly in civilian-occupied areas as well as to work with the commanders on the ground in order to try to deliver stability and a reaffirmation of the cessation of hostilities.

So the most we diplomats can do is try and bring the parties together and put together an agreement that asserts the international community's imperative. It is going to be up to the commanders on the field and the interested parties, which includes us. We have a responsibility ... to make certain that the opposition lives up to this, and Russia and Iran have a responsibility to make sure that the Assad regime lives up to this. But after many hours of discussions, the Russians made clear that that's the route that they're prepared to go. But again, the proof will be in the eating of the pudding, not the making, and we'll have to see what happens.

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Also on May 9, 2016, a U.S. government official provided a special briefing on Syria and the joint statement with Russia. The briefing is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/257042.htm>.

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...[T]he statement with Russia affirms our shared understanding of efforts to revitalize the nationwide cessation of hostilities in Syria, and that's opposed to reverting to local ceasefires. It also explains our commitment to making particularly intensive efforts in specific hot spot areas of Aleppo, Eastern Ghouta, and Latakia. It has a clear demand which Russia joins on parties to cease any indiscriminate attacks on civilians, including civilian infrastructure and medical facilities. It has a commitment for undertaking a joint assessment where such incidents are reported to have occurred with casualties, as well as to share that with the members of the task force and through the UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura to the UN Security Council.

There's also a commitment by Russia to work with the Syrian authorities to minimize aviation operations over areas that are predominantly inhabited by civilians or parties to the cessation. There's also a clear call on the parties for ensuring continuous delivery of humanitarian access including to besieged areas that haven't been reached yet, and those are specifically named, and for unconditional delivery without obstruction of medical personnel and equipment, having access to those areas as well.

... There has been a reduction in violence in various parts of Aleppo. We've seen a decrease, although there are pockets where that has not been the case. There has been fighting in the southwest, for example, fairly intensive, although that fighting is involving Nusra and other groups that are not party to the cessation. So fighting there shouldn't be seen as indicative of the

cessation not being in effect or being extended in Aleppo. We are fully committed to its extension in Aleppo. Each side has communicated with commanders, saying that the other side is called upon to honor the cessation and that they should reciprocate.

So the cessation of hostilities is in effect in Aleppo, but there are periods—pockets where there has been fighting, certainly in the last 12 to 24 hours. One would like to see a decrease there, but in the areas I just mentioned where Nusra is operating we may not see that right away.

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... the cessation went into effect on the 27th of February as far as not striking parties to the cessation or civilians. I think we've raised serious concerns about the strains and the very real strains the cessation underwent and violations that we've seen in recent weeks, and so we believe that it was quite important to renew the commitment with a particularly intensive focus on areas or hot spots where we've seen more violence, Aleppo being among them.

Now, there is no prohibition on overflight or general air operations, so an undertaking on their part to work with minimizing air operations over these areas is an additional measure that, if implemented, would strengthen the COH. They are not restricted from striking Nusra, but minimizing air operations even where Nusra is present, if in an area that's predominantly inhabited by civilians or the parties to the cessation would help with implementation of the cessation more generally.

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So our view is that the renewal of the cessation of hostilities coupled with humanitarian access—indeed being allowed in the besieged and hard-to-reach areas and for the assistance to be continuous—these things create ... a far more conducive environment towards the parties being able to tackle very difficult political issues.

The statement points to the mediator's summary that was issued following the last round of talks between the 13th and the 27th of April, which in its annex listed many different issues that the parties need to tackle for the political transition to be viable. And it's important to note in there that among the things it covers are how is power to be exercised in practice by the transitional governance, including in relation to the presidency, executive powers, control over the government's own security institutions.

... But they're very, very difficult issues, to be certain. So the issues are difficult, and equally the cessation—...when it went into effect, we knew that it would face setbacks and that it would take strenuous efforts to get it back on track. The same remains today. But the commitment that we have from both co-chairs is to work through those challenges—indeed, to try to get it back on track.

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On May 17, 2016, the State Department published as a media note another statement by the ISSG. The statement follows and is available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/257295.htm>.

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Meeting in Vienna on May 17, 2016, as the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), the Arab League, Australia, Canada, China, Egypt, the European Union, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, The Netherlands, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the United States reaffirmed the ISSG's determination to strengthen the Cessation of Hostilities, to ensure full and sustained humanitarian access in Syria, and to ensure progress toward a peaceful political transition.

Cessation of Hostilities

Members, emphasizing the importance of a full cessation of hostilities to decreasing violence and saving lives, stressed the need to solidify the cessation in the face of serious threats, particularly during the past several weeks. The members welcomed the Joint Statement of May 9 by Ceasefire Task Force Co-Chairs, the Russian Federation and the United States, recommitting them to intensify efforts to ensure the cessation's nationwide implementation. In this regard, they welcomed the ongoing work of the Task Force and other mechanisms to facilitate solidifying of the cessation such as the UN Operations Center and Russian-U.S. Coordination Cell in Geneva.

The ISSG Members urged full compliance of the parties to the terms of the cessation, including the ceasing of offensive operations, and undertook to use their influence with the parties to the cessation to obtain this compliance. Additionally, the ISSG called upon all parties to the cessation to refrain from disproportionate responses to provocations and to demonstrate restraint. If the commitments of the parties to the cessation are not implemented in good faith, the consequences could include the return of full-scale war, which all the Members of the ISSG agreed would be in no one's interest. Where the co-chairs believe that a party to the cessation of hostilities has engaged in a pattern of persistent non-compliance, the Task Force could refer such behavior to the ISSG Ministers or those designated by the Ministers to determine appropriate action, including the exclusion of such parties from the arrangements of the cessation and the protection it affords them. Moreover, the failure of the cessation of hostilities and/or of the granting of access to the delivery of humanitarian relief will increase international pressure on those failing to live up to these commitments.

Noting previous calls by the ISSG and the unanimously-adopted UNSCR 2254 of December 18, 2015, the ISSG reiterated its condemnation of the indiscriminate attacks by any party to the conflict. The ISSG expressed its serious concern about growing civilian casualties in recent weeks, making clear that the attacks on civilians, including attacks on medical facilities, by any party, is completely unacceptable. The ISSG took note of the March 2016 commitment by the Syrian government not to engage in indiscriminate use of force and urged the fulfillment of that commitment. The ISSG committed to intensifying its efforts to get the parties to stop any further indiscriminate use of force, and welcomed the Russian Federation's commitment in the Joint Statement of May 9 to "work with the Syrian authorities to minimize aviation operations over areas predominantly inhabited by civilians or parties to the cessation, as well as the United States' commitment to intensifying its support and assistance to regional allies to help them prevent the flow of fighters, weapons, or financial support to terrorist organizations across their borders."

The ISSG, noting that Da'esh and the Nusra Front are designated by the UN Security Council as terrorist organizations, urged that the international community do all it can to prevent any material or financial support from reaching these groups and dissuade any party to the cessation from fighting in collaboration with them. The ISSG supports efforts by the co-chairs of the Ceasefire Task Force to develop a shared understanding of the threat posed, and delineation of the territory controlled, by Da'esh and the Nusra Front, and to consider ways to deal decisively with the threat posed by Da'esh and the Nusra Front to Syria and international security. The ISSG stressed that in taking action against these two groups, the parties should avoid any attacks on parties to the cessation and any attacks on civilians, in accordance with the commitments contained in the February 22 Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the United States.

The ISSG also pledged support for seeking to transform the cessation into a more comprehensive nationwide ceasefire in parallel with progress in negotiations for a political transition between the Syrian parties consistent with the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012, relevant UNSC Resolutions and ISSG decisions.

Ensuring Humanitarian Access

Since the ISSG's last meeting, the UN, in coordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Syrian Arab Red Crescent, has delivered assistance to 255,000 people in besieged areas and 473,000 people in hard-to-reach areas. However, the Syrian government has yet to permit access to many locations including a number of besieged communities in Rural Damascus, in contravention of the Munich Statement. UN assessment teams, life-saving assistance, including medical supplies and personnel to ensure their proper use, have been denied to populations in need. Although some urgent medical evacuations have taken place, many cases have been delayed or denied.

The members of the ISSG reaffirmed that sieges of civilian populations in Syria are a violation of International Humanitarian Law and called for the immediate lifting of all sieges. The ISSG committed to use its influence with all parties on the ground and in coordination with the United Nations to ensure immediate, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access throughout Syria, and allow humanitarian assistance to reach all people in need, particularly in all besieged and hard-to-reach areas, as defined by the UN and called for in UNSCR 2254. As called for in UNSCR 2258, border crossings that are necessary for humanitarian relief should remain open.

The ISSG insisted on concrete steps to enable the provision of urgent humanitarian deliveries to the following locations: Arbeen, Darraya, Douma, East Harasta, Mouadhiyeh, Zabadin and Zamalka. Regular humanitarian deliveries must continue, according to the UN's monthly plans, to all other besieged and hard to reach locations, including Fouah, Kefraya, Kafr Batna, Ein Terma, Hammura, Jisrein, Madaya, Zabadani, Yarmouk. Starting June 1, if the UN is denied humanitarian access to any of the designated besieged areas, the ISSG calls on the World Food Program to immediately carry out a program for air bridges and air drops for all areas in need. The ISSG pledges to support such a program, and also calls on all parties to the cessation of hostilities to provide a secure environment for that program. Air deliveries should also continue to Dayr al-Zour. The ISSG stressed that such access, as in other areas, must be continuous for as long as humanitarian needs persist. Humanitarian access to these most urgent areas will be a first step toward full, sustained, and unimpeded access throughout the country.

The Members of the ISSG look forward to seeing the UN's June plan for priority humanitarian deliveries and urge the government to approve it swiftly and in its entirety to make up for lost time. All ISSG members commit to work together immediately with the Syrian parties to ensure no delay in the granting of approval and completion of all UN requests for access consistent with UNSCR 2254, paragraph 12.

The ISSG reaffirmed that humanitarian access should not benefit any particular group over any other, but must be granted by all sides to all people in need, in full compliance with UNSCR 2254. Humanitarian aid is to be delivered based on need, for the number of beneficiaries specified by the UN, with the full package of food, medical, surgical, water, sanitation, non-food items, and any other urgently required goods as determined by the UN. The provision of mobile health services and evacuation of urgent medical cases should be facilitated by all sides based solely on urgency and need.

The ISSG asked the UN to report weekly, on behalf of the Task Force, on progress on the implementation of the plan referenced above, so that in any cases where access lags or approvals are lacking, relevant ISSG members could use their influence to press the requested party or parties to provide that approval and access. The ISSG further decided that in cases where humanitarian access is systematically denied, either fully or by the denial of delivery of certain categories of humanitarian aid or disagreements over the number of beneficiaries, the ISSG, with the agreement of the co-chairs, can inform the Security Council through the UN Special Envoy for Syria.

ISSG co-chairs and participants pledged to ensure that humanitarian aid convoys are used solely for humanitarian purposes. International humanitarian organizations, in particular the United Nations, will play the central role, as they engage the Syrian government, Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the opposition and local populations, in arranging the monitoring and sustained and uninterrupted distribution of aid.

We encourage the international community and the UN to intensify efforts to meet the needs of internally displaced persons across Syria, without losing sight of the imperative of building conditions for the safe return of the refugees, including during the transition, in accordance with all norms of international humanitarian law and taking into account the interests of the host countries.

Advancing a Political Transition

The ISSG reiterated the objective of meeting the target date established by UNSCR 2254 of August 1 for the parties to reach agreement on a framework for a genuine political transition, which would include a broad, inclusive, non-sectarian transitional governing body with full executive powers. In this regard, they welcomed the "Mediator's Summary" issued after the third round of intra-Syrian talks on April 27 by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, and endorsed in particular the "Commonalities on Political Transition" noted within the report as well as the "Fundamental Issues For a Viable Transition" contained in Annex 1 of the report that may serve as the basis for the next round of the intra-Syrian negotiations. The ISSG notes that the parties have accepted a political transition will be overseen by a transitional governing body formed on the basis of mutual consent and vested with full executive powers, to ensure continuity of governmental institutions, in accordance with UNSCR 2254. On the basis of the Geneva Communiqué, the ISSG urged the parties to engage constructively with the UN Special Envoy in addressing the fundamental issues for a transition, as set out by the Special Envoy. ISSG Members believe that the parties should return to negotiations on that basis at an appropriate time.

All ISSG members reaffirmed that political transition in Syria must be Syrian-owned and Syrian-led, and expressed their unequivocal and united commitment to facilitating the start of political transition in Syria by consistent with resolution 2254 (2015) and previous ISSG statements of October 30 and November 14, 2015, and February 11, 2016. The ISSG also requests UN Special Envoy for Syria de Mistura to facilitate agreements between the Syrian parties for the release of detainees. The ISSG called upon any party holding detainees to protect the health and safety of those in their custody.

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The parties were not able to meet the target of August 1 to reach agreement on a framework for a political transition and the cessation of hostilities further unraveled over the summer.

Secretary Kerry provided a statement to the press after the ISSG meeting on September 22, 2016 in New York City, New York. That statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/09/262314.htm>.

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...There are reports that even as we were meeting this afternoon, a regime offensive was taking place in Aleppo, which is exactly the kind of regime action that has done so much damage to this process and to the credibility of the concept of restraint or ceasefire.

As I said yesterday in the UN Security Council, this is a moment of truth for Russia, it's a moment of truth for the Assad regime and for the opposition. And it's a moment of truth for everybody, all of us, who are determined to try to end this war in Syria and to defeat the terrorist groups Nusrah and Daesh/ISIL.

So let's confront some of the hard truths here. The United States continues to believe that the objectives and the processes laid out in Geneva earlier this month were and are the right ones: a renewal of the cessation of hostilities, the resumption of aid deliveries, the isolation of al-Nusrah and Daesh, and the beginning of a Syrian-led negotiating track that can provide a pathway out of the conflict and make possible the restoration of a united and peaceful Syria.

We remain absolutely convinced there is no such thing as a military solution. There can only be a political solution in order to actually get extremists and all of the parties to end the violence. Without that political solution, one party or the other will continue to prosecute in its own way—whether it's just suicide belts or car bombs—but the violence will continue, and the capacity to put Syria back together will not present itself.

Now, obviously, no one can possibly be satisfied with the events that have unfolded in the last few days—far, far from it. The cessation offered a glimmer of what could be achieved in the first few days when violence dropped significantly, but then the spoilers went to work. Humanitarian aid deliveries were blocked. The ceasefire was violated by one or the other again and again. And accusations were then exchanged. And then Monday, one of the first aid convoys that was actually allowed to move towards Aleppo was brutally attacked.

Let me be clear: The United States makes absolutely no apology for going the extra mile to try to ease the suffering of the Syrian people and to ensure that they have access to food and to medicine and to other critical supplies. We will continue to fight for that. This war has been going on for five years, and for a few moments here and there, when we've been able to try to get the parties to stop fighting, we've been able to see what a reduction of violence can actually look like. And we've been able to witness how much the Syrian people themselves, wherever they live, long for a taste of normalcy.

But we can't be the only ones trying to hold this door open. Russia and the regime must do their part, or this will have no chance. The question now is whether there remains any real chance of moving forward, because it's clear we cannot continue on the same path any longer.

This effort has always depended on Russia having the will and the wherewithal both to comply and to deliver the Assad regime and its partners, and depends on the opposition and its supporters willing to live up to their obligations, to their commitments. And in the end, without that compliance, none of this can work.

And we have said for days that it will take significant and immediate steps in order to put things back on track, not little changes around the margins. A lot of people doubt that this can be done or that, in fact, the key parties want it done. So the first thing that we have to do is find the way to restore credibility to the process if that can be done, and that means that we need significant action now. It can't be based on exceptions and loopholes and carve-outs that every time are exploited by one party or another in order specifically to undermine the cessation of hostilities. It has to be achieved through a genuine and sustained reduction in violence as well as unfettered humanitarian access that is unmistakable to everyone.

The only way to achieve that is if the ones who have the air power in this part of the conflict simply stop using it—not for one day or two, but for as long as possible so that everyone can see that they are serious. Absent a major gesture like this, we don't believe there is a point in making more promises or issuing more plans or announcing something that simply can't be enforced or reached. If Russia demonstrates that it is serious, we will work with the opposition to reciprocate and to pull back from this cycle of escalation, because the opposition also has a responsibility to observe the cessation of hostilities if the government does and to disassociate from al-Nusra.

So make no mistake: The United States will continue to pursue every avenue of progress that we can, because it is the only way to stop the killing, it's the only way to ease the suffering, and it's the only way to make possible the restoration of a united Syria. And because if we do not succeed in doing this one way or the other, this catastrophic situation is going to get even worse.

But at the same time, we can't go out to the world and say we have an agreement when we don't, nor can we tell our partners that there is a cessation when there isn't. The simple reality is that we can't resolve a crisis if one side is unwilling to do what is necessary to avoid escalation. And we won't get anywhere if we begin by ignoring facts and plain common sense or denying the truth.

I want to emphasize that both the regime and the opposition have an obligation to comply with the United Nations Security Council mandates that international humanitarian law be observed, that aid be allowed to reach besieged areas, that the UN role be respected, and that the safety of aid workers be guaranteed.

Now, Sergey Lavrov and I have spent a part of the last couple of days discussing how and whether we can agree on the necessary steps in order to be able to move forward, and we had good suggestions in the ISSG today about monitoring and other ways to try to advance this

process. And we have exchanged ideas with the Russians and we plan to consult tomorrow with respect to those ideas.

In today's meeting of the ISSG, we heard near unanimity that this process is the only viable path forward. So I am no less determined today than I was yesterday, but I am even more frustrated, obviously. If the Russians come back to us with constructive proposals, we will listen. ... This is not a time for maneuvering or for delay. It is time to make decisions that will benefit the people of Syria and hopefully bring stability to a country and to a region that is in absolutely desperate need.

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Also on September 22, 2016, senior U.S. government officials provided a background briefing on the ISSG meeting via teleconference. Excerpts follow from the transcript of the briefing, which is available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/09/262319.htm>.

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...[W]e just got out of a two-and-a-half-hour-plus meeting of the International Syria Support Group. It was a pretty contentious meeting, which is not surprising because it's been a pretty contentious week on the subject of Syria both here in New York and then obviously and more importantly on the ground in Syria as well.

We received reports during the course of the meeting of an announced regime offensive on the city of Aleppo, which was just further evidence of what the Secretary has been describing all week of the type of acts that are eroding the credibility of this process, and also of why we are not sure at this point whether or not it can be fixed.

As we've said for days, getting things back on track is going to require extraordinary steps by the Russians and the regime. And as the Secretary has been quite clear about, bombing has been the biggest challenge both to the cessation of hostilities and also the biggest threat to Syrian civilians during the course of this conflict. So the discussion of extraordinary steps has focused very much on bombing and on the types of steps that could take regime and Russian forces out of the skies over parts of the country where this has been a problem.

As you heard the Secretary say, he and Foreign Minister Lavrov have exchanged ideas on these topics. They have agreed to continue consulting on this subject both tomorrow and on these ideas both tomorrow and in the coming days. And our view at this point is if the Russians come back to us with something significant and something serious, we will be ready to listen. But again, I want to stress at this point that it's going to require something extraordinary beyond the types of things that have been agreed in the past, and that we are not sure at this point whether they are ready and willing to take those kinds of steps.

The only other thing I want to tell people about this ISSG meeting is about the only thing that there was clear consensus on is that this process, troubled as it is, gives us the best chance of any available avenue for finding a way forward in Syria that can reduce the violence, increase the humanitarian access, and eventually get us to the point where we can have a viable conversation about a political transition.

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On September 24, 2016, the Secretary of State joined the foreign ministers of France, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the High Representative of the European Union in issuing a statement on Syria. The statement follows and was posted as a State Department media note at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/09/262382.htm>.

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The devastating events in Syria this week underscore what we have been saying for some time: the burden is on Russia to prove it is willing and able to take extraordinary steps to salvage diplomatic efforts to restore a cessation of hostilities (CoH), allow unfettered humanitarian assistance and create the conditions necessary for the resumption of UN-led talks about a political transition.

The outrageous bombing of a humanitarian convoy, the Syrian regime's public denunciation of the CoH, continuing reports that the regime is using chemical weapons, and the unacceptable ongoing regime offensive on eastern Aleppo, supported by Russia, blatantly contradicts Russia's claim that it supports a diplomatic resolution. The Quint nations and the European Union High Representative therefore call on Russia to take extraordinary steps to restore the credibility of our efforts, including by halting the indiscriminate bombing by the Syrian regime of its own people, which has continually and egregiously undermined efforts to end this war. We welcome recent proposals made in the International Syria Support Group to enhance monitoring of these efforts.

We reaffirm our commitment to the destruction of Da'esh in Syria and Iraq and urge Russia to follow through on its pledge to actually focus on this group. We also reaffirm our shared view that the Nusra Front, al Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, is a terrorist organization and an enemy of the international community. Nusra rejects a negotiated political transition and inclusive democratic future for Syria, and we call on all armed groups fighting in Syria to cease any collaboration with Nusra.

We demand immediate, expanded humanitarian access to all areas of Syria, including those on the United Nations' priority list, and we deplore the delays and obstruction caused primarily by the Syrian regime of humanitarian deliveries to Syrians in desperate need. We fully support the United Nations investigations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and are resolved to take further action to address it.

Finally, the Quint and the EU High Representative reaffirm calls made in this week's meetings of the International Syria Support Group for the Co-Chairs to continue their diplomatic consultations on these issues, but also underscore that patience with Russia's continued inability or unwillingness to adhere to its commitments is not unlimited. We therefore also call on the UN Security Council to take urgent further steps to address the brutality of this conflict, and particularly the assault on Aleppo.

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On December 15, 2016, Secretary Kerry delivered remarks on Syria in Washington, DC. His remarks are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/12/265696.htm>.

* * * *

Hello, everybody. I just wanted to bring you all up to date on what we've been trying to do with respect to the tragic situation in Syria, and obviously mostly focused or especially Aleppo.

I don't think I have to elaborate, but I'm going to certainly focus on the anger and the anguish that everybody feels—or most people feel—about the continued relentless and inexcusable attacks that have been directed at the civilian population in Aleppo, including women, children, humanitarian workers, and medical personnel. And there is absolutely no justification whatsoever for the indiscriminate and savage brutality against civilians shown by the regime and by its Russian and Iranian allies over the past few weeks, or indeed for the past five years.

Now, the position of the United States remains clear, and I have personally reiterated that position in conversations over the past weeks and especially over the past 24 hours, with the UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura, who I talked with earlier today who was in Paris meeting now with Jean-Marc Ayrault, and with senior officials from Russia, Qatar, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the region.

What the United States is working toward, and has been working towards for some period of time now, under difficult circumstances, where, if some parties do not want to move in that direction, it remains very difficult to secure, obviously, a ceasefire; but what we want in Aleppo right now, which is the precursor to any ability to move to other things, is an immediate and verifiable, durable cessation of hostilities, and that includes all attacks by the regime, its allies, and other combatants in Aleppo—all combatants in Aleppo.

And we've been working very hard on that. We worked on that in Hamburg, in my meetings with Foreign Minister Lavrov, where we reached some measure of agreement—in fact, a considerable measure of agreement—but weren't able to secure every component of what was needed in order to move forward. We want safe passage, corridors of evacuation, which we're beginning today to see perhaps take shape. But we want to see those for both civilians and fighters who choose to evacuate the city. We want full access for the delivery of humanitarian supplies to people in need throughout Syria. And with these steps, we are convinced that the killing and the suffering in Syria could stop, and it could stop very, very quickly, if Russia and the regime made the decision to do so.

This morning, I was encouraged by reports that, after a number of fits and starts, what we worked on in Paris and then got picked up on in continued conversations—which, by the way, we were informed of by Russia and Turkey were going to take place—to build out on what we'd talked about, actually using the same template that we had created. There are individual ceasefires being worked out, individual arrangements with armed opposition group commanders. And it appears, for some period of time at least—we don't know yet if it will hold or where it is—that airstrikes and shelling have stopped and that the ceasefire may—I emphasize may—be taking hold.

Buses, some of them in convoys, are beginning to move. And my understanding is that the first group of 21 buses and 19 ambulances reached its checkpoint at Khan al-Assal. Now, this convoy includes more than 1,000 people who are on their way to the Turkish border. However, ...we also heard reports that a convoy of injured people was fired on by forces from the regime or its allies. And we remain deeply concerned as well that we are hearing reports of Syrian men between the ages of 18 and 40 who have apparently been detained or conscripted into military service when trying to pass through government checkpoints and that some who—of these actually went missing days or even weeks ago, and we still don't have, the families don't have, their loved ones don't have accountability for what has happened to them. Obviously, these actions are despicable and they're contrary to the laws of war and to basic human decency.

Now, more positively, we have finally received pledges from Russia that it will assist in the monitoring of evacuations, that the International Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Crescent, Red Arab Crescent, will also be allowed access in order to be able to try to help with the monitoring. The UN is prepared to receive evacuees in numerous sites, and emergency relief kits have been pre-positioned to try to help people. Medical assistance is also going to be available. The Government of Turkey is prepared to accept more evacuees for aid and treatment. So it appears that the necessary preparations have been made for the evacuation process that will eventually save lives, but the implementation of that process continues to be dependent on the actions of the regime and its allies on the ground.

Let me emphasize, we're going to continue to do our part. The United States of America is going to continue to try to push the parties towards a resolution. As President Obama said the other day, in giving us all both his impressions as well as instructions about these next days, we're going to be trying every way we can to try to save lives and push this to where it needs to get to. To date, we've provided more than \$6 billion in food, water, medicine, and other supplies to people who've been affected by the violence in the region.

...[W]hat has happened already in Aleppo is unconscionable, but there remains tens of thousands of lives that are now concentrated into a very small area of Aleppo, and the last thing anybody wants to see—and the world will be watching—is that that small area turns into another Srebrenica. It is imperative that key actors step up and do their part, and I call on the entire international community to join in exerting pressure on all parties to go forward with the process that has been laid out for some period of time now, to abide by the cessation of hostilities, and to bring the killing and the cruelty, particularly starting with Aleppo, which lays the groundwork to be able to take the next steps particularly in Aleppo.

Now, all of you know that we've been engaged in a lot of talks over ... an extended period of time now. And all of those talks have been geared towards trying to end ... the civil war in Syria. In September, after months of very tough negotiation, Foreign Minister Lavrov and I were able to stand up late at night and make an announcement in Geneva that we had arrived at an agreement, September 9th. And that agreement required a number of days, as everybody knows, of calm in order to indicate the seriousness of purpose, and then we were going to have joint cooperation in order to move forward.

Regrettably, for a number of different reasons—Syrian troops that were accidentally bombed, and a humanitarian convoy that was not accidentally but purposefully destroyed by Assad regime to start with and then by others who joined in—it fell apart. And everybody feels the pain of the lost moment, of a lost opportunity, for externalities that we did not have, apparently, control over.

More than a year ago, we agreed on a series of steps that could have and should have produced a lasting ceasefire and direct negotiations. But the process has not succeeded mostly, in my judgment, because of the continued, constant unwillingness of the Assad regime to live by those agreements, to always press it, to always break out, to always try to gain more territory, and to go out publicly not reaffirming its willingness to go to Geneva and negotiate but always affirming publicly in one brash statement after another its readiness to take back the whole country, to crush the opposition, and to do everything without regard to the real underlying concerns of many people who want to be part of a legitimate government, part of a legitimate process, but fear that Assad is not going to be their leader and that he will never be able to unite the country. That's what's fueled this and kept it going.

So we have arrived now at another critical point, another critical juncture. If Aleppo falls completely and people are slaughtered in that small area, it will be even harder to be able to bring people around. And it will not end the war. The fall of Aleppo, should it happen, does not end the war. It will continue. There still is the challenge of governing and the challenge of reuniting the country and the challenge of rebuilding the country. And how many countries will step up and rebuild it for the policies that are being executed today?

So provided we are able to stabilize the situation in Aleppo, it is essential that we move forward at the earliest possible moment with a Syrian-led political process aimed at ending the war and transitioning to a new and more representative government. And without that meaningful transition of power in which the voices of the Syrian people are heard, the opposition will continue to fight, terrorists will continue to be drawn to the country, and millions of Syrians will continue to be forced to flee their homes.

...[E]very stakeholder tells me they are ready and willing to get back on the path to Geneva—and that includes the legitimate Syrian opposition, it includes Turkey and Qatar and the Arab states. The only remaining question is whether the Syrian regime, with Russia's support, is willing to go to Geneva, prepared to negotiate constructively, and whether or not they're willing to stop this slaughter of their own people.

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... But all of the parties have now told me, with the exception of what we haven't heard from Assad himself and his willingness to go out and actually negotiate in good faith and try to bring Syria back together. That is the only way to make progress towards a united and peaceful Syria that is reflected in Resolution 2254 as well as in the ISSG statements, which include Russia and Iran. So hopefully people will put actions where the words have been.

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3. Burundi

On January 19, 2016, the State Department issued a press statement expressing U.S. alarm at reports of mass graves and serious human rights abuses in Burundi. The press statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251504.htm>, includes the following:

The United States is deeply alarmed by reports, including those from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, of serious human rights violations and abuses in Burundi, including eyewitness reports of mass graves, a sharp increase in alleged enforced disappearances and torture, and reports of sexual violence by security forces.

These and other reports further underscore the urgent need for the Government of Burundi to allow for the immediate full deployment and unimpeded access of African Union human rights observers to investigate these allegations. It is imperative that the Government of Burundi remove all bureaucratic and practical roadblocks it has used to prevent the AU human rights and military observers from fulfilling their mandate for the past six months to investigate reports of violence committed by any side in the conflict.

We call upon the Government of Burundi to permit an immediate, impartial investigation into these recent allegations and to hold accountable all those found responsible for crimes. The United States remains concerned about Burundi's ongoing political and humanitarian crisis and the resulting suffering it has brought to the people of Burundi. We once again call on all parties to reject unlawful violence, and reiterate that the only way to resolve the crisis gripping the country is for all parties to agree promptly to engage in internationally-mediated, inclusive dialogue without preconditions.

On March 2, 2016, the Department of State issued a press statement, calling on the Government of Burundi to carry out its commitments to accept AU observers and UN experts, release detainees, allow for freedom of expression, and in other ways support efforts to stabilize and secure a resolution of the situation in Burundi. The U.S. press statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/03/253917.htm>.

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The United States welcomes signs of intensified regional and international commitment to resolving the Burundi crisis. This includes the appointment of former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa as the full-time facilitator for the regionally mediated dialogue and recent commitments by the Government of Burundi to the UN and African Union (AU) to release political prisoners and allow independent monitors.

In particular, the United States recognizes the AU High Level Delegation's success in securing the Government of Burundi's acceptance of 200 AU human rights and security observers, and we urge the government to allow these officials complete and free access to perform their duties by signing the memorandum of understanding associated with their deployment without delay.

We urge prompt action by the Government of Burundi to implement President Nkurunziza’s promise to release at least 2,000 detainees. ... We welcome the decision by the Government of Burundi to accept the first visit by three United Nations independent experts ... to investigate violations and abuses, and to meet with all stakeholders.

The United States looks forward to the East African Community immediately announcing a date for the resumption of dialogue with all stakeholders, both those inside and outside the country. The United States continues to urge all sides to lay the groundwork for a successful dialogue by refraining from the daily grenade attacks, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and other acts of violence that continue to destabilize Burundi. We also urge all the stakeholders to publicly commit to participating in the regionally-mediated dialogue without preconditions or red lines.

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On April 1, 2016, Ambassador David Pressman, U.S. Alternate Representative to the UN for Special Political Affairs, provided the U.S. explanation of vote at the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2279 on Burundi. The statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7212>.

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The situation in Burundi is beyond fragile. The ongoing repression, harassment, and violence against the legitimate political opposition, the closure of free and impartial media, and widespread impunity for human rights violations and abuses—including those involving killings and alleged sexual violence by security services against political opponents, members of civil society and others—continue. Almost a quarter of a million have fled. Again, over a quarter of a million Burundians have already fled the country since April 2015 out of fear for their lives, and countless more have been internally displaced. ...

Against this backdrop, let’s be clear: progress will be measured by peace, and peace will come from genuine political dialogue that is inclusive. To date, while there have been opening ceremonies, the real discussions have not commenced. We strongly support former President Mkapa in his efforts to move this process forward and urge a date be scheduled for discussions to begin. Each day that this crisis continues makes it that much harder for Burundi to regain the progress it has achieved over the past decade, risking a much longer-term and much deadlier crisis.

While in our discussions, some have pointed to the release of a “significant number of prisoners.” This resolution does not do that. This resolution instead welcomes “the steps made by the Government of Burundi” towards that end and urges them to fulfill their commitments. The progress made by the Government of Burundi to date is woefully insufficient. There have been plenty of press releases, but not enough political prisoner releases. We acknowledge the government’s acts of clemency for prisoners who are old, under-aged, or infirm—but that is not the same as releasing political prisoners, and they must begin to deliver on those important promises.

We have been promised that free media would be allowed to operate, but today only 2 out of 5 banned outlets are today operating.

It was agreed that 200 African Union human rights and military observers would be deployed, but today there are currently 32 human rights observers and 15 military observers on the ground in Burundi, and they do not have a Memorandum of Understanding with the government.

Recognizing the enormity of these problems, today's action by the Security Council is indeed important.

With this resolution, the Security Council expresses its support for the African Union's efforts in Burundi, including the deployment of the 200 AU human rights observers and military observers. We call on the Government of Burundi to cooperate fully to facilitate the implementation of the mandate of these human rights observers and military experts. With this resolution, the Security Council endorses the EAC-led, regionally-mediated dialogue. Only such an inclusive and regionally-mediated dialogue can resolve this crisis and restore stability to Burundi. We urge all stakeholders to expedite the resumption of this dialogue in pursuit of a peaceful and consensual path forward for Burundi.

With this resolution, the Security Council urges the Government of Burundi to deliver in reality what it has committed to in the press. With this resolution, the Security Council has sent a strong message to the Government of Burundi and the opposition to cease all violence, refrain from provocation, and to commit to peacefully resolving this crisis through dialogue – a dialogue based on respect for the Arusha Agreement.

And with this resolution, we are today sending a more robust, larger international civilian presence into Burundi to advance political dialogue, security, and rule of law. We are also asking for options for the deployment of a police mission, which should include options on the deployment of formed police units, to Burundi to advance rule of law.

The United State appreciates the efforts the Security Council members and our colleagues have made to find consensus on this important resolution.

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On April 26, 2016, the State Department issued a statement welcoming the resumption of the Burundian Dialogue. The statement follows and is available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/04/256616.htm>.

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The United States welcomes the announcement by former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa, as the facilitator of the East African Community (EAC)-led Burundian dialogue, that the next round of talks will take place May 2–6 in Arusha, Tanzania. We continue to support the regionally mediated dialogue as the best means to restoring peace and stability to Burundi and strongly urge all stakeholders to fully participate without preconditions or redlines.

The resumption of dialogue is critical, as the situation in the country is increasingly dire. This year-long crisis already has claimed over 400 lives and led over a quarter million Burundians to flee their country. We continue to see reports of sharp increases in killings, including the recent assassination of General Kararuzza, torture, forced disappearances, and

sexual violence, along with the use of illegal detention facilities by government security forces and armed factions of the ruling party youth wing. This horrific violence must end, and those responsible for atrocities must be held accountable. The opening of a preliminary examination in Burundi by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court sends a strong warning in this regard to all perpetrators and would-be perpetrators.

The United States stands ready to support the EAC and all Burundian stakeholders in their pursuit of a peaceful, consensual solution to this crisis. The sooner this crisis is resolved, the sooner we can help Burundi realize greater development and prosperity.

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On May 2, 2016, the State Department issued a press statement urging the resumption of the Burundian Dialogue. The press statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/256794.htm>.

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While the United States strongly supports the regionally mediated Burundi dialogue, led by former President Mkapa under the auspices of the East African Community, we are disappointed the scheduled dialogue did not resume today.

Postponement of this dialogue only serves to worsen a crisis that has already resulted in hundreds of lives lost, thousands injured, more than 260,000 Burundian refugees displaced, and a worsening economic situation.

We call upon all stakeholders to ensure the dialogue resumes immediately and to commit to participating without preconditions or redlines.

Burundi's political leaders owe it to their citizens to take concrete steps to resolve this crisis as soon as possible within the framework of the Arusha Accords, the foundation for peace and stability in Burundi. Now is the time for all parties to cease all violence and exercise restraint and engage in an inclusive and peaceful dialogue.

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On July 29, 2016, Ambassador Power delivered the U.S. explanation of vote on UN Security Council Resolution 2203 on Burundi. Ambassador Power's statement follows and is available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7392>.

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Thank you, Mr President. We are profoundly concerned about the dramatic deterioration of the situation in Burundi over the last year and a half. During this period, as we all know, some 270,000 people have been displaced; at least 348 people have reportedly been the victims of extrajudicial killings; and 651 reported cases of torture have been documented. These are just the crimes that we know about. All are worrying signs that the country's brutal past may be

repeating itself. This week, appalling new reports emerged of sexual violence by members of the ruling party's youth militia, which we and other Council members have been warning about for several years. Women have said that they were raped simply because of their political party affiliations. This is sickening. Absent serious, concerted international engagement and pressure, the situation is all but certain to deteriorate further.

The Council is not alone in its grave concern regarding these crimes or in its efforts to stop them and bring the perpetrators to justice. The UN has established an office in Burundi, drawn up contingency plans, sent the Secretary-General to Bujumbura, and opened a Human Rights Council independent investigation into the situation. And, as we all know, in January the Security Council traveled to Burundi, where we urged President Nkurunziza to change course and pursue a path to peace. None of the steps that we asked the president to take has he embarked upon.

Meanwhile, the African Union authorized the deployment of 200 human rights and military monitors, dispatched a delegation of five heads of state to help address the evolving crisis, and authorized, initially, a 5,000-strong peacekeeping force to stem the violence. The AU began the deployment of human rights observers and military experts to Burundi on July 22, 2015—more than one year ago—after the AU Peace and Security Council agreed to deploy monitors in May of 2015. But rather than facilitating the deployment of AU monitors, the Government of Burundi spent months delaying the implementation of a memorandum of understanding that would have allowed the monitors to do their job. After rejecting a peacekeeping force, the government promised AU heads of state in February of this year that 200 monitors would be allowed to deploy. Yet today, only 36 monitors are in Burundi. I want to stress: this is the Government of Burundi that many members of this Council have stressed we should coordinate the UN deployment with. Of course the deployment must be coordinated with the Government of Burundi. Of course. In order for anybody to deploy, you have to coordinate that with the government that provides visas, that provides landing rights at the airport, that allows people to move around.

But honestly, listening to this session today, I feel like we're living in a parallel universe: Council members speaking, in many cases, with no regard for what the government is doing to Africa's own monitors. It is especially disappointing not to hear the two abstainers from Africa even acknowledge the fate of Africa's own monitors. We have got to merge the reality that we live in ... with the reality that is playing out on the ground every day.

Today was an occasion that we could have sent a clear, unified message to the Government of Burundi that we will not allow similar tactics to delay the police deployment authorized today, and that continued obstruction of the AU mission must stop. If the African members of the Council can't stand for this, I don't know what we're doing here. This is a government that's blocking your people from deploying. You're trying to help. We're trying to help you help.

The Government of Burundi has remained ... unwilling to listen to its neighbors, partners, and the international community, and resistant to following through on the commitments it has made. Meanwhile, it has to be stressed that some of those who oppose the government continue also to resort to violence and to commit abuses. The United States strongly condemns violence perpetrated by all sides in Burundi and we hope that this presence, as it evolves, will document those abuses and empower us to come to agreement on what further steps might be taken.

The authorization of a UN police component will put additional eyes and ears on the ground, who will be able report directly to the Security Council. That is valuable. But we should not harbor any illusions that this will fix Burundi's problems. It will only, at best, observe those problems. Police are not being deployed to protect civilians, even though civilians are in dire need of protection. That should embarrass us. Instead, police are effectively being asked to be human rights monitors. That is the most that we as a Council were able to agree upon—and we couldn't even secure consensus on this. This really raises questions about this Council's will when it comes to preventing atrocities, especially when a government is implicated in atrocities. What the people of Burundi deserve—and what this Council needs to continue to insist on—is serious engagement by the government in a process of dialogue with all stakeholders in order to reach agreement on a peaceful way forward. The games have to stop, the preconditions have to stop. The government is still insisting on sitting down only with those it already agrees with. It must stop lashing out at civil society and the opposition. And the opposition—those who have engaged in violence must renounce it and must itself must refrain from setting these onerous preconditions for the dialogue. Nobody will get anywhere if things continue as they are.

The United States has settled for much less than what it wanted with this resolution. Others have spoken about good faith proposals; I assure you lots of good faith proposals do not appear in the text of this resolution. But I have to say—just as somebody who's looked at the issue of mass atrocities over many years and studied it on many continents—we worry that our inability to unite even on this sends precisely the wrong message to parties that already feel a great sense of impunity. These abstentions will be solace to a government that relishes our division—they've always made that clear. And it is not at all clear to me that a Council that says repeatedly that it has learned the lessons of Rwanda, has in fact done so. It is not at all clear to me that for all the talk at yesterday's Africa peacebuilding session about the importance of prevention, that we in the UN Security Council are serious about prevention. This is a prevention moment. And yet, this is where we are. What is clear is that we believe in prevention of atrocities by non-state actors, but when a government is implicated we can't even unite to send a robust monitoring presence.

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4. Colombia

On January 25, 2016, Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, provided the U.S. explanation of vote at the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2261 establishing a UN observer mission to assist with implementing the peace agreement reached in Colombia. Her remarks are excerpted below and available at <https://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7104>.

* * * *

After nearly four years of negotiations, the Colombian Peace Process has yielded agreements on a set of extraordinarily complex issues—including an accord on “victims of the conflict,”.... Colombia is now on the precipice of a historic achievement. Forging a lasting peace agreement

will not resolve all of Colombia's challenges, nor will it instantly help heal the deep wounds inflicted over the last five decades. ...

With today's resolution, the Security Council shows that the United Nations stands with the Colombian people as they forge this new future. This resolution represents the UN's answer to the joint call made by the Government of Colombia and the FARC for UN engagement to help end this conflict. The requested UN observer mission will serve as the international component of a tripartite mechanism that will monitor and verify the ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities, and be responsible for monitoring the laying down of weapons. This Mission will be strengthened by the participation of observers from other countries in the region, and will complement the important work of UN agencies already in Colombia, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

With our vote today, the United States underscores its continued partnership with Colombia. Just as we have supported the government since it developed the Plan Colombia strategy nearly 16 years ago, so have we backed the government's efforts to negotiate a just and lasting peace agreement—one that should be consistent with Colombia's domestic and international legal obligations, and make accountability and rule of law the bedrock of a sustainable peace.

As Colombia works toward this goal, the United States remains at your side, ready to assist in the hard work ahead—in the lead-up to the Final Peace Agreement, and then in the challenging process of implementation that will follow, where what is put in writing must be translated into practice. Victims and vulnerable individuals will need access to justice, protection, and dispute resolution services. Communities that suffered in the conflict will need basic security and additional public services. Former combatants will need to be reintegrated with society. Landmines will need to be removed so that communities can return to their lands, and more rural economic development can occur. The United States will support critical government initiatives like those to expand the rule of law and economic opportunity in former conflict zones; to bolster civilian law enforcement; to support the victims of conflict; and to expand protections for human rights.

Let me conclude. Back in September, President Santos travelled to Havana, where he reached an agreement with the FARC to complete a peace deal by March. He said at the time, "We are adversaries, on different sides, but today we advance in the same direction, the direction of peace."

Today Colombia has taken another step in that direction of peace. The road ahead will surely have its bumps, and much will rest on implementation. But because of the Government of Colombia's commitment—its "unyielding determination," as President Obama put it—to fight for peace, the destination is in sight. With today's vote, the United Nations recognizes your achievement, and offers our collective support as you complete the journey.

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On June 23, 2016, State Department officials held a briefing to discuss the Colombia peace accord. The transcript of the briefing is available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/259009.htm>. The officials described the U.S. role in the peace process in Colombia.

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As many of you know, this is an issue where the Secretary has been personally involved for decades, going back to his time in the Senate when he was chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee and was actively engaged in passing Plan Colombia. And since he became Secretary, it's been one of his highest priorities in the Western Hemisphere. I think within 10 days of his taking office, he had a conversation with President Santos, where they discussed how they could move the peace process forward. And over the past three and a half years, they've remained in regular contact as issues arose and obstacles arose and opportunities arose for where the Secretary could step in and help drive this process.

In December of 2014, the Secretary met with President Santos in Colombia, where Santos suggested that the U.S. may take a more direct role in support of the peace process. And it was shortly after that that the Secretary appointed Bernie Aronson as his special envoy for the Colombian peace process. Since then, Bernie's taken, I think, about 20 trips to Havana to meet with the negotiating teams on both sides. After each one of these, he updates the Secretary. And over the past few years, the Secretary's also been in regular contact with President Santos, Foreign Minister Holguin, and with Cuban, Vatican, and other regional counterparts.

In the last few months, I think we sensed that there was a real opportunity to bring this—to make major strides forward, and so our efforts have intensified. President Santos's visit to Washington in February was a good opportunity for the Administration to demonstrate our full support for the peace process. And then in March, while accompanying President Obama down to Cuba, the Secretary held lengthy meetings with the negotiating teams on both sides—first with the government, and then with the FARC. And these meetings focused specifically on how to reach agreement on the key issues that are being announced today. And our understanding is that those meetings had a very positive effect in pushing the two sides forward.

In addition to his personal engagement, the Secretary also directed the department to redouble our efforts to demonstrate support for the process, including directing our embassy in Bogota to help Colombia address the security threats that had hindered the peace talks and which have helped pave the way for the security guarantee in the agreement. We've also mobilized additional resources to help create the conditions for successful implementation if we get to a final agreement. In our FY17 budget request, as part of Paz Colombia, we increased our request by ... almost 25 percent. And these funds will help Colombia secure post-conflict areas, address the needs of conflict victims, and promote economic development.

And finally, the Secretary also assumed leadership of the Global Demining Initiative for Colombia, which is a multinational effort to rid Colombia of landmines in five years, and we are actively recruiting other nations to join that.

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We expect this afternoon the Colombian Government and the FARC delegations will issue a joint communiqué in Havana, where they will announced they've reached agreements on a definitive bilateral ceasefire, the timetable for a full cessation of hostilities, the disarmament process, and the essential security guarantees for demobilized combatants and members of civil society in those conflicted zones. We understand that the announcement today will be led by Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC leader Timochenko.

The United States welcomes these developments. We are very hopeful that they will conclude successfully and they will lay the foundation for a just and lasting peace after more than 50 years of armed conflict. We congratulate President Santos and his team for their unwavering commitment to peace in Colombia and this major step toward a final peace accord. We look forward to partnering with Colombia on this important work, as both Official One and Official Two outlined, in terms of the additional support that we will be making to the implementation of the peace process.

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...[T]he United States is not a party to these negotiations. This really was between the government and the FARC, and our role was to support the parties as they move forward. ...

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President Santos has consistently and repeatedly made it clear that there will be a plebiscite that he intends to consult with the Colombian people on the agreement. ...

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Secretary Kerry issued a press statement on June 23, 2016 on the Colombia peace process, which is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/06/259007.htm>.

* * * *

Today's announcement regarding the "end of conflict" in Colombia is welcome news to the people of that country and to all who desire peace. I congratulate President Santos and his negotiating partners for this milestone in their ongoing effort to conclude a conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) that has plagued their nation for 52 years, the longest running war in our hemisphere.

I am pleased that, after more than four years of intensive talks, the Colombian government and the FARC have achieved breakthroughs on some of the most challenging issues before them. Although hard work remains to be done, the finish line is approaching and nearer now than it has ever been.

President Santos deserves credit for his courage, leadership, and unwavering commitment to peace. I also want to recognize the hard work of the negotiating teams and the constructive role played by the governments of Norway and Cuba, who have served as guarantors of the peace process. Thanks are due, as well, to U.S. Special Envoy, Bernie Aronson, for his tireless efforts in support of a settlement.

For many years and on a bipartisan basis, the United States has supported Colombia in its efforts to strengthen its democracy and safeguard the security of its people. That friendship will continue as Colombia's leaders strive to complete the peace process and take steps to recover from the many years of division and conflict.

To this end, the United States will work closely with Colombia to ensure that commitments made during the negotiations yield tangible benefits for the country's citizens. In February, President Obama announced Paz Colombia, a new strategic framework for our bilateral engagement. As part of that plan, the President asked me to lead a Global Demining Initiative for Colombia, together with our partner Norway. I look forward to fulfilling that important and life-saving commitment.

Today, I congratulate all Colombians and ask the U.S. Congress and the international community to join in supporting the people of that nation as they continue to make progress towards a just and lasting peace.

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On August 25, 2016, Secretary Kerry welcomed the final peace accord reached by the Government of Colombia and the FARC. Secretary Kerry's statement follows and is available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/08/261259.htm>.

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After over fifty years of conflict and four years of difficult negotiations, a final peace accord has been reached by the Colombian government and the FARC. The United States strongly supports this accord that can achieve a just and lasting peace for all Colombians.

I salute the courage and leadership of President Santos, whose unwavering commitment to peace made these breakthroughs possible. I also want to recognize the hard work and commitment of the negotiating teams, as well as the constructive role of Norway and Cuba, guarantors of the peace process over the past four years. And I want to thank the U.S. Special Envoy for the Colombian Peace Process, Bernie Aronson, for his tireless efforts.

The United States has been Colombia's steadfast partner, through Administrations and Congresses led by both political parties, as the Colombian people defended their democracy. We will remain Colombia's partner as they continue to take steps to secure the just and lasting peace the Colombian people deserve.

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Ambassador Power provided a statement on the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2307 on Colombia on September 13, 2016. Ambassador Power's statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7428>.

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The UN Security Council today took another important step in support of the August 24 agreement between the Colombian government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), detailing how the UN will support the peace process once the historic peace accord

enters into force. With this resolution, the UN can now complete operational planning for its monitoring and verification role, which will be critical to the agreement's implementation.

The people of Colombia are taking groundbreaking steps to end a half-century of conflict, which has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions, and the United States remains committed to our longstanding Colombian partners as they work to forge a new, more peaceful future. Earlier this year, President Obama announced the establishment of "Paz Colombia," which will provide a framework for U.S. assistance focused on reinforcing security gains, reintegrating former combatants into society, extending economic opportunity, and strengthening the rule of law.

Today, the UN and Colombia deepen their partnership in service of peace. As one Colombian noted as the peace negotiators announced a final agreement from Havana, "finally I'll see my country without violence and with a future for my children."

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Ambassador Michele J. Sison, U.S. Deputy Representative to the UN, delivered the U.S. explanation of vote at the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2307 on Colombia on September 13, 2016. The explanation of vote, available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7429>, includes the following:

Today, the United States welcomes the support of the Security Council to help Colombia implement its final peace accord with the FARC, and congratulates the parties for their sustained commitment to ending the longest-running conflict in the Americas, which has tragically resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, tens of thousands of kidnappings, and displaced millions of Colombians. We also thank Cuba and Norway for the special roles they have played as co-guarantors, as well as Venezuela and Chile, who have accompanied the process.

As President Obama has said, "even as we mark the end of an era of war, we recognize that the work of achieving a just and lasting peace is only beginning. Yet just as the United States has been Colombia's partner in a time of war, we will be Colombia's partner in waging peace." Through this resolution, the Security Council makes clear that the United Nations also stands with the Colombian people as they work towards implementing the Final Peace accord. The Agreement's successful implementation is integral to the hard work of securing a truly just and lasting peace, which all those gathered here today know is something the Colombian people unquestionably deserve.

Today's resolution will ensure the readiness of the UN Monitoring and Verification Mission in Colombia by updating the mandate with details that were unavailable last January, when UN Security Council Resolution 2261 was adopted. The United States commends those countries that will be playing a role in the UN Monitoring and Verification Mechanism to monitor and verify the bilateral ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities, and the disarmament process. The stakes for the success of this mission are high.

On October 2, 2016, Colombia held a democratic referendum on the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC, which resulted in a majority "No" vote on the deal. See October 3, 2016 State Department press statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/10/262703.htm>. The United States expressed continued support for the ongoing efforts to achieve peace. On October 5, 2016, a senior State Department official conducted a special briefing on the Colombia peace process, which is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/10/262835.htm>.

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As everyone knows, the October 2nd plebiscite resulted in a majority vote for the no campaign. It's about a 51,000 vote difference between the two sides, and the turnout was about 37 percent. President Santos immediately recognized and accepted the results of the plebiscite, as do all of the international community, and recognize and respect the views of the Colombian people on this. Nobody in the plebiscite voted for resuming the war. That's the good news. And President Santos has made it clear that he is open to and seeks a dialogue with those who voted no as well as those who didn't vote at all, to see if he can build a new national consensus that will allow for a final peace settlement.

Both the FARC and the government reiterated their desire to maintain the current ceasefire. The UN monitoring and verification mission is still in place and playing the role that was intended to do so. The FARC and the government continue to cooperate in removing land mines and searching for the remains of disappeared to be returned to their relatives, cooperating in the return of child soldiers, cooperating in crop substitution and anti-narcotics, all of which are called for under the agreement. Secretary Kerry has been in touch with President Santos and reiterated strong U.S. support for the peace process. Obviously, Colombia is divided about the best terms on which to end this war through negotiations, because it's not divided on the desire to end this war through negotiations. So it's obviously up to Colombians to try to come to some new consensus that will allow the peace process to be finalized, and the United States stands ready to help that effort in any way the Colombian Government wishes us to do so.

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But what the plebiscite clearly revealed was that while Colombians desperately want to see an end to violence and have, I think, appreciated the fact that the war has really been dormant for the last two years under the unilateral ceasefire, they are deeply divided about the terms on which they would settle a final peace agreement. And so what I think the government has said it is doing is to reach out to all voices and all sectors inside the country, including those who opposed the agreement, to listen to their views about why they took the stance they had and see whether their concerns can be addressed, and see whether a new national consensus can be built that would allow for the agreement to go forward. Whether there'd be a second plebiscite or not is not an issue that has been discussed and is probably not really germane at this point in the process.

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On November 12, 2016, Secretary Kerry congratulated the government and people of Colombia on the revised peace agreement they concluded. Secretary Kerry's statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/11/264264.htm>, notes:

President Santos and his negotiating team, those from the "No" campaign, and other important sectors of Colombian society deserve credit for engaging in a far reaching and respectful national dialogue following the plebiscite. This agreement has the benefit of many hours of discussion between supporters and critics of the original Peace Accords. After 52 years of war, no peace agreement can satisfy everyone in every detail. But this agreement constitutes an important step forward on Colombia's path to a just and durable peace. The United States, in coordination with the Government of Colombia, will continue to support full implementation of the final peace agreement.

On December 1, 2016, Secretary Kerry issued a press statement welcoming the vote by the Colombian congress to approve the revised peace accord between the Colombian Government and the FARC. Secretary Kerry's statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/12/264709.htm>, notes that the terms of the accord include the FARC demobilizing, disarming, and forming a political organization to participate in Colombia's democratic system. The United States pledged to continue to support Colombia, including the Paz Colombia Initiative

5. Mali

On June 29, 2016, Ambassador Pressman, U.S. Alternate Representative to the UN, provided the U.S. explanation of vote at the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2295 on the situation in Mali. Ambassador Pressman's statement is excerpted below and available at <https://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7358>.

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Mr. President, The United States welcomes the Security Council's unanimous vote today to extend MINUSMA for an additional year. This decision comes at a critical time in Mali's history and for the future of United Nations peacekeeping.

Over the last year alone in Mali, 27 MINUSMA peacekeepers have been killed. Over the last year alone, 112 have been wounded. Ten of these attacks used improvised explosive devices that targeted MINUSMA convoys. UN peacekeepers are increasingly being called upon to fulfil

complex mandates in dangerous environments that include asymmetric threats. This requires more prompt, effective, and agile responses by the UN system and Member States deploying or providing capabilities to successfully operate in such environments. It also requires clarity from the United Nations Security Council.

In light of the volatile security situation, particularly in central and northern Mali, the Security Council's decision to reinforce the mission's vital protection of civilians and stabilization mandate should help to rationalize the mission's posture with the prevailing security environment. The Security Council is also requesting that the Secretary-General enhance MINUSMA's cooperation with regional security initiatives, such as the G5-Sahel, so that the mission has greater awareness of the broader regional security dynamics in which it operates.

The Security Council took an important step today by reconciling MINUSMA's current mandate with its security environment and by calling on the Secretary-General and Member States to urgently give MINUSMA the capabilities it needs to enable the mission's more mobile, proactive, and robust posture in the pursuit of its mandate. The Security Council resolution is emphasized that MINUSMA must anticipate, deter, and counter threats, including asymmetric threats, to protect civilians and United Nations personnel. This means that MINUSMA must take robust and active steps, including direct operations, if necessary, against serious and credible threats. When MINUSMA is attacked or threatened as it carries out its mandate, MINUSMA is expected to act, and we are expected to ensure MINUSMA has the ability to do so effectively. This is not ambiguous, as some have suggested. It is rational and it is necessary when a mission is deployed in this kind of environment. It is a critical step forward for this peacekeeping mission.

Today, the Security Council also affirmed that the gradual restoration and extension of State authority across Mali, and particularly the reformed and reconstituted Malian Defense and Security Forces, would contribute to the stability that all Malians seek. This would also help to deter the terrorist threat, which continues to claim the lives of Malian security forces and those supporting the Malian people—namely the French forces and MINUSMA peacekeepers—to achieve the peace they have so long desired. And we certainly pay tribute to their sacrifices in Mali.

The Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was signed over a year ago, and yet today it remains largely unimplemented. Failure to move forward, to take the political risks necessary for the greater good of Mali's enduring peace creates openings for spoilers and for terrorists. While the United States is encouraged by the recent agreement amongst the signatories on the interim authorities, as well as President Keita's decision to appoint a high-level representative on implementation, we continue to urge—as this resolution rightly underscores—that all the signatories immediately implement the broad range of institutional, security, development, and defense provisions of the Agreement. Too much time has passed. Patience is wearing thin. Political will is dissipating and implementation is urgently necessary.

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Ambassador Power delivered remarks at a ministerial meeting on implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation for Mali on September 23, 2016 at the UN. Her remarks are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7449>.

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... The signing of the peace accord was a truly significant achievement, and we welcome the commitments that continue to be made by the parties to implement these accords. We know that the threats that the people of Mali face in this crisis and—as you noted, Mr. President—this meeting is just the latest emblem of the international community’s support for the people of Mali. Fifteen months have passed, though, since the signing, and we join others in expressing deep concern that not enough has changed for the people of Mali. The government is still not present in nearly half of its territory. Insecurity appears to have increased—not decreased—in places like Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal. And we see little evidence to suggest that the situation is on the verge of changing for the better. Let me make three quick points on what it seems needs to change.

First, we urge the Malian government to take greater responsibility for the peace process. The peace accord called for certain basic confidence-building measures to take place right away, including joint patrols between the Malian Army and the signatory groups. Preparations have been made for these patrols, but they are still not happening. The peace process can’t be just about passing laws and setting up commissions. We urge you, Mr. President, to focus on concrete, visible actions that improve the security environment and build trust among all accord signatories and the Malian population. This includes, as others have noted, providing social services, which remain very scarce in the north. We know that the environment is very difficult and insecure, but the lack of resources in the north only strengthens the hand of extremists. You must extend your authority and your security presence. The lack of security and the government’s lack of investment in local governance have led, just in one example, to the closure of 44 schools in Mopti and 37 schools in Gao, just in the last year. And even among the schools that are open, many still lack teachers. The government needs to extend its authority in the ways that matter most to the Malian families who live in those areas.

We also appeal to the Malian government to stop any support to proxies that are fueling conflict among factions within the Coordination and Platform association. One sitting Malian general even continues to direct a northern armed militia. These are actions that harken back to policies aimed at dividing northern groups, which failed in the past and will only make it harder to promote a united and democratic future for Mali.

Second, Mali’s armed groups need to comply with their obligations under the peace accord. This means providing lists of their combatants for cantonment, a task now 14 months overdue. The armed groups have failed to fully submit the names of their participants for commissions on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. Mali’s armed groups must support steps to create an inclusive, republican military force capable of protecting Mali’s civilians. Building a unified Mali cannot be achieved without the full participation of all northern groups, and these groups will not achieve a better outcome through violence.

Yet, the all-too-predictable result of Mali’s stalled peace process is an increase in fighting on the ground. In recent weeks, all sides have violated the ceasefire, with heavy clashes around Kidal. The United States calls on the parties to halt these military actions, de-escalate immediately, and focus at last on establishing the security arrangements outlined in the peace accord.

Third and finally, as others have stressed, all Member States—including all of us here represented—must do our part to give the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission the resources it desperately needs to help promote stability. MINUSMA’s troops deploy under some of the most grueling and dangerous circumstances in the world—in remote outposts and in areas rife with traffickers, criminal gangs, and terrorist groups. We join others in paying tribute to those peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice. These circumstances make supporting an effective and properly-equipped MINUSMA force all the more important. We need Member States to step up in committing replacements for the mission’s contingent of four helicopter units, the loss of which was a real blow to this mission, to providing additional armored personnel carriers, and to ensure that their deployed forces are equipped according to the Statement of Unit Requirements.

The longer the delay in taking these three concrete steps toward stability, the more that popular frustration with the peace process will rise. Earlier this summer, youth in Gao took to the streets carrying signs that read, “Enough is enough,” demanding that the state do more to provide security and economic opportunity. People seem to be losing faith; as the SG noted, new momentum is urgently needed. These youth have reason to demand more, and so do all of us. It is past time for the parties in Mali to focus on implementing the truly worthy peace accord that they signed. And we are here to support you as you do, Mr. President. Thank you.

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6. Democratic Republic of the Congo

On January 2, 2017, the State Department issued a press statement applauding the agreement reached between the government and the opposition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (“DRC”). The statement is excerpted below and available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/01/266198.htm>

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The United States welcomes the December 31 signing of an inclusive political compromise agreement by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and opposition party leaders. By paving the way for peaceful, democratic elections in 2017, this agreement marks an important and historic step for the DRC and the region of Central Africa. We commend the willingness of President Kabila and opposition leaders to compromise on key issues, thereby laying the groundwork for the country’s first democratic transfer of power.

We also commend the tireless mediating role played by the DRC’s Conference of Catholic Bishops leading to this agreement.

We encourage the DRC government and opposition leaders to continue their cooperation as they work to implement this agreement and preserve the progress achieved on behalf of the Congolese people.

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On February 3, 2016, the State Department issued another statement on the DRC, this time welcoming the DRC government’s renewed cooperation with MONUSCO, the UN mission in the DRC. The statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252100.htm>.

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The United States welcomes the recent announcement that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) have signed an agreement to permit resumed cooperation against illegal armed groups. This agreement follows nearly a year during which such cooperation had ceased.

We urge both MONUSCO and the Government of the DRC to take action quickly against illegal armed groups, which continue to commit atrocities against Congolese citizens and communities. We note the particular importance of ending the presence of foreign armed groups in eastern DRC—including the Allied Democratic Forces and Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)—which pose a threat to broader regional peace and security.

This agreement provides an important opportunity for MONUSCO and the DRC’s armed forces (FARDC) to deal the FDLR a decisive blow. Strong cooperation between MONUSCO and the DRC Government is particularly important during the current electoral period. As the largest financial contributor to MONUSCO and a provider of security assistance to professionalize the DRC armed forces, the United States will continue to support combined efforts by MONUSCO and the DRC Government in civilian protection and the consolidation of peace throughout the DRC.

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7. South Sudan

On January 22, 2016, the State Department issued, as a media note, the joint statement of the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway (the “Troika”) urging the South Sudanese parties to form a transitional government. The media note containing the joint statement is available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/01/251657.htm>. The joint statement expresses the Troika members’ “deep concern at delays in forming the Transitional Government of National Unity, which was due to be completed [January 22, 2016].” The statement continues:

Advancing implementation of the peace agreement, reviving the economy, and implementing critical reforms depend on the formation of the transitional government. The Presidential Decree establishing 28 states has created an obstacle to consensus. We urge all parties to make immediate efforts to resolve

this impasse and to form the transitional government as soon as possible. It is time for leaders on all sides to put aside partisan bickering and prioritize the interests of the South Sudanese people.

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The Troika issued a joint statement on April 22, 2016, excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/04/256503.htm>.

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The members of the Troika (United States, United Kingdom, and Norway) are deeply disappointed by Riek Machar's continued failure to return to South Sudan's capital Juba to form the Transitional Government of National Unity. This represents a willful decision by him not to abide by his commitments to implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. We congratulate the government for demonstrating maximum flexibility for the sake of peace by agreeing to the compromise proposal on the return of security forces proposed by regional and international partners and mediated by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. It remains important that the government fully withdraws its troops from Juba as called for in the peace agreement. We also welcome the opposition's support for the compromise proposal and demand that Machar abide by this commitment and return to Juba by 23 April. Machar's failure to go to Juba, despite efforts from the international community to support his return, places the people of South Sudan at risk of further conflict and suffering and undermines the peace agreement's reform pillars—demilitarizing South Sudan, injecting transparency of public finances, and pursuing justice and reconciliation—that offer South Sudan a chance for renewal. We will pursue appropriate measures against anyone who further frustrates implementation of the peace agreement.

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The Troika issued a joint statement on April 29, 2016, excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/04/256723.htm>.

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The members of the Troika (United States, United Kingdom, and Norway) welcome the long-awaited formation of South Sudan's transitional government of national unity. We also welcome the April 26 statements by President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar calling for cooperation, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence. We call on South Sudan's leaders to continue this spirit of cooperation and to start the difficult task of rebuilding their country. While formation of the transitional government is a step forward, with thousands dead, widespread atrocities committed and millions displaced from their homes during the conflict, this is no time

for celebration. Today the international community stands united in urging the transitional government to start to work for the people of South Sudan. The fighting must stop, decisive action must be taken to tackle the economic crisis and there must be full cooperation with the UN and humanitarian agencies to ensure aid reaches those in need; formal and informal impediments must be removed.

The Troika countries will remain long-term partners and friends of South Sudan's people. We stand ready to support the transitional government if it shows it is serious about working for the good of the country and implementing the peace agreement in full. In that regard, decisions undermining provisions the parties agreed to in negotiations, such as not fully meeting obligations for women's participation in the council of ministers, sets a concerning precedent at the beginning of the transition. We expect the transitional government to honor its commitments. The people of South Sudan deserve nothing less.

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On June 10, 2016, the U.S. Department of State issued a press statement expressing support for the full implementation of the peace agreement in South Sudan. The statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/258361.htm>.

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The United States remains committed to the full implementation of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. One of the most important components of the Agreement is facilitating transitional justice, reconciliation and accountability. Both President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Riek Machar signed the agreement, which calls for establishing the Hybrid Court for South Sudan and a Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing. We firmly support the subsequent efforts of the African Union to establish the Hybrid Court. So do the people of South Sudan, who overwhelmingly support accountability for crimes committed during the conflict and oppose amnesty. In that spirit, it is imperative that the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGNU) cooperates fully in establishing the Hybrid Court as well as establish the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing. The United States recently awarded a \$6 million grant to support the complementary efforts of the South Sudan Council of Churches to promote reconciliation across the country. Ensuring reconciliation and justice, as history has proven in countless post-conflict situations, is essential to long-term peace and stability.

The United States' enduring partnership with the people of South Sudan continues as they work to recover from devastating conflict. We are heartened to see the TGNU make progress on a range of security and political challenges. We plan to continue to support the TGNU as long as it demonstrates commitment to the full range of reforms outlined in the Agreement. The United States strongly encourages South Sudan's leaders to remain steadfast in their effort to fully implement the agreement, so the country can regain peace and stability and resume development and advancement.

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On July 29, 2016, Ambassador Power delivered the U.S. explanation of position at the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2302 on the UN Mission in South Sudan. Ambassador Power's statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7391>.

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The renewal of violence in South Sudan earlier this month was horrifying, but sadly not unexpected. Horrifying because, as we all know, in only a few days 300 men, women, and children were reportedly killed, tens of thousands were displaced, and 4,500 metric tons of humanitarian aid—food that would have fed 220,000 people in dire need for a full month—was looted. Yet the renewal of the conflict in Juba was also foreseeable, because of the inability of South Sudan's leaders to work together and put the interest of the people of South Sudan ahead of their own.

The Heads of State and Government of IGAD Plus, South Sudan's neighbors and their partners, are now calling for UNMISS to have an enhanced capacity—particularly in Juba—in response to the deteriorating security situation there. The African Union Assembly has endorsed this decision. The Peace and Security Council has as well. And they're all recommending that regional forces contribute to UNMISS to provide it. We all need to support them. The United States believes the region's proposal offers a basis to reestablish a secure environment in Juba, which is critical for the parties to make progress on implementing the peace agreement they signed onto almost a year ago, as well as to ensure the unfettered delivery of humanitarian aid to those who are at grave risk of famine.

Of course, the proposal—as many Council members have noted—merits thorough review, and translating its purpose into a mandate for UNMISS must be done with great care, and in consultation with TCCs and all members of this Council. We have to get this right. But it also must be done with great urgency. Let us not be fooled into believing that time is on our side. It is not. Events in recent weeks have demonstrated how quickly violence can reignite, and how devastating are the human consequences when it does. I want to stress this also for Council members here today—we have just received very disturbing reports of significant violence in the Equatorias in South Sudan. And all of us need to be on alert, I think, this weekend, because events could spiral rapidly out of control, yet again. Every report of a spike in violence, of course, costs human lives and leaves an indelible and searing mark on those affected by it.

Just to give one example, on July 18, a young woman was reportedly grabbed only meters away from the gate to the UN camp in Juba where she had taken shelter, after being displaced by the violence. She told a reporter from *The Guardian* that the five men in uniform gave her a choice. She said, "I could choose the one who would rape me, or they all would." The woman said, "I begged them to kill me instead." Unfortunately, she told the reporter, the men dragged her to the side of the road and raped her. In broad daylight. UNMISS as it is currently configured, has proven unable—and in some cases unwilling—to prevent horrors like this. We must work together urgently to fix that.

No one has more of a stake in finding a way out of this conflict and in bringing justice than the people of South Sudan, who have already endured such tremendous suffering in the short history of their nation, and of course their neighbors who have been clear about what this situation requires. Let us be motivated by the pain of South Sudanese civilians and by the initiative shown by the region. And let us work with tremendous urgency and will to protect civilians and create the conditions critical to bringing an end to this ghastly conflict in South Sudan.

This resolution offers additional time for the regional leaders to meet, to engage the Government of South Sudan, and it offers us additional time to find a way forward before we proceed with mandating this new force within UNMISS.

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On October 20, 2016, the Department of State issued a press statement decrying South Sudan's support of armed Sudanese opposition groups. The statement follows and is also available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/10/263373.htm>.

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The United States calls on the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to comply with its commitments to cease harboring or providing support for Sudanese armed opposition groups, as required by UN Security Council Resolution 2046 (2012). Despite its obligations under international law and repeated agreements between the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and the Government of Sudan to end such support, credible reports continue to indicate the Government of the Republic of South Sudan is harboring and providing assistance to armed Sudanese opposition groups. We urge South Sudan's leaders to redouble their efforts to meet the commitments they recently reached with Sudan under which both sides agreed to end support for armed opposition groups on either side.

The presence of Sudanese armed opposition forces in South Sudan, and their involvement in South Sudan's internal conflicts, destabilizes both Sudan and South Sudan. It is, moreover, a violation of the terms of the Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. We call on the Government of the Republic of South Sudan to ensure Sudanese armed opposition groups are not in a position to conduct armed operations within South Sudan or across the border in Sudan. We call on the Government of South Sudan to either expel Sudanese armed opposition groups or disarm them and place them in cantonment.

We also urge both Sudan and South Sudan to fully respect the 2012 Agreement on Security Arrangements, and withdraw their armed forces from the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone.

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8. Sudan

On February 18, 2016, the U.S. Department of State issued a press statement, calling for an end to the violence in Jebel Marra, Darfur, Sudan. The statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/02/252619.htm>.

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The United States is deeply concerned about the increased violence against civilians and the grave humanitarian situation in and around Jebel Marra, Darfur. Initial attacks by the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid opposition group on Sudanese armed forces prompted a response by Sudan's military that included aerial bombardments despite the UN Security Council demand that Sudan cease offensive military flights over Darfur. These attacks have forced 73,000 people to flee their homes, and thousands more are trapped in the conflict zone of Jebel Marra without access to aid.

The United States calls on both the Government of Sudan and the armed movements of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) to re-commit to their cessation of hostilities declarations for Darfur and in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. We welcome the recent absence of major offensive action in South Kordofan and urge all parties to show the same restraint in Darfur and also in Blue Nile state, where government and opposition forces each carried out attacks last month.

There is no military solution to Sudan's internal conflicts. We call on the Government of Sudan and the SRF to de-escalate the violence and work with the African Union and others to agree to a comprehensive cessation of hostilities agreement that will allow immediate and unfettered humanitarian access for Darfur, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile. We also urge the government to create an environment conducive to the participation of armed movements and other political opposition parties in a comprehensive and inclusive national dialogue that addresses systemic governance issues in Sudan.

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On April 8, 2016, the Troika issued a joint statement encouraging the Sudanese parties to agree on the African Union High-level Implementation Panel ("AUHLIP") Roadmap Agreement for ending conflict in Sudan. The April 8 joint statement is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/04/255633.htm>.

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The Troika (Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States) supports the efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to create a Roadmap Agreement for ending conflict in Sudan.

While we welcome the Government of Sudan's signing of the Roadmap agreement, we urge the government to clarify its commitments regarding the inclusion of other relevant stakeholders in the National Dialogue and to uphold the results of any National Dialogue preparatory meetings arranged by the AUHIP between Sudan's National Dialogue Steering Committee known as the 7+7 Committee and opposition groups. Once that is done, we would urge the Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minawi, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), and the National Umma Party to sign the Roadmap.

If agreed to by all parties to the conflicts, the AUHIP Roadmap could allow genuine political dialogue at both regional and national levels that is needed to address the underlying causes of the armed conflicts that have plagued Sudan for so long.

We are deeply concerned about the increase in fighting between Government forces and the SPLM-N in both Blue Nile and South Kordofan and urge both sides to show restraint and avoid ambushes, military offensives, rocket attacks, and aerial bombardments that negatively affect civilian populations.

We call on both sides to renew their unilateral cessation of hostilities commitments and to fully respect those commitments in order to create a more conducive environment for implementation of the AUHIP Roadmap. There is no military solution to Sudan's conflicts. Further violence only serves to increase the suffering of the Sudanese people. The Troika calls on all parties at conflict in Sudan to seize this opportunity to end the wars and find a path towards lasting peace.

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After the Government of Sudan declared a unilateral cessation of hostilities in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, the State Department issued a press statement on June 21, 2016 welcoming the step toward a broader resolution of conflict in other regions in Sudan, particularly Darfur. The June 21, 2016 press statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/06/258960.htm>, goes on to say:

...An end to military offensives and fighting in these areas would bring much needed relief to thousands of Sudanese and create an improved environment for dialogue leading to a political solution.

We urge the Sudan Revolutionary Front to reciprocate by ceasing all military action against the Sudanese Armed Forces and recommit to the cessation of hostilities it declared nearly two months ago. We encourage both the Government of Sudan and the opposition to work under the auspices of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel to translate their cessation of hostilities declarations, which must ultimately include the region of Darfur, into a sustainable end to this conflict. A negotiated solution that addresses the key political and security drivers of conflict in all areas of Sudan will be needed in order to establish a lasting peace.

Ambassador Pressman delivered the U.S. explanation of vote at the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2296 on the situation in Darfur on June 29, 2016. The U.S. explanation of vote is available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7359>, and appears below.

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...The United States supports the Security Council's adoption of the resolution renewing the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for another year.

The United States welcomes the Government of Sudan's recent declaration of a unilateral cessation of hostilities in Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile, and we would like to see that declaration extended to the Darfur region, as unfortunately, fighting by the government and its proxies continues in Darfur. An end to military offensives and fighting in all of these areas would bring much needed relief to thousands of Sudanese and create an improved environment for dialogue leading to a political solution. Lasting peace will only come from a negotiated solution that addresses the key political and security drivers of conflict in all areas of Sudan.

Civilians continue to suffer in Darfur, with—according to the United Nations—at least 80,000 newly displaced in 2016 alone and over two million IDPs in need of aid and who cannot return to their homes. In the absence of a comprehensive political agreement and in the face of these pressing needs, UNAMID plays a critical role protecting civilians and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Darfur. Any calls for the mission to leave Sudan are woefully premature. We urge the Government of Sudan to allow the mission to carry out the mandate this Security Council has given it, including by not placing restrictions on its freedom of movement or its needed food and supplies. We understand that, as of June 23, all UNAMID food ration shipments that had been held at Port Sudan by the Government of Sudan have been cleared for release. We welcome this development and call on the Government of Sudan to urgently release the almost 300 remaining containers of much needed equipment, in compliance with its obligations under the Status of Forces Agreement with the United Nations.

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Finally, we reiterate that any exit strategy for UNAMID is pretty clear. It is one linked to the achievement of the agreed benchmarks on an inclusive political process, protection of civilians, and prevention of violence. We look forward to progress on achieving these benchmarks.

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On August 9, 2016, the Governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Norway, Germany, and the European Union issued a joint statement welcoming the signing of the Roadmap Agreement by the various groups engaged in the conflict in Sudan. The joint statement was published as a State Department media note at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/08/260937.htm>, and appears below.

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The representatives of the Troika (Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States), Germany, and the European Union welcome the signing of the Roadmap Agreement by the Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudan Liberation Movement-Minni Minnawi, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, and the National Umma Party. In signing the Roadmap Agreement, these groups have taken an important first step in ending the conflicts in Sudan and moving towards a process of dialogue as a basis for lasting peace in their country. We welcome the support of the Roadmap by other members of the Sudan Call alliance of opposition groups.

We also commend the Government of Sudan for signing the Roadmap Agreement on 16 March 2016, and subsequently clarifying its commitments regarding the inclusion of other relevant stakeholders in the National Dialogue and to continue to uphold any decisions reached between the opposition signatories and the 7+7 Mechanism, the steering committee of the National Dialogue.

We recognize that the opposition expressed valid concerns which have been noted by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). We believe these constitute legitimate agenda items for any preparatory meetings.

The Roadmap Agreement constitutes a valuable step towards ending the wars in Sudan. We urge the signatories to lose no further time in agreeing to a cessation of hostilities and modalities for humanitarian access in Darfur and the Two Areas.

In parallel, we encourage opposition parties in Sudan to seize this opportunity to come together inside a process of dialogue to achieve a political settlement addressing the challenges that continue to face their people. And we appeal to the Government of Sudan to take all necessary steps to ensure a conducive environment for this process to succeed.

We wish to underscore the significant efforts of the AUHIP in helping to achieve this Roadmap Agreement, and we call on the signatories to engage constructively and sincerely to build on the Roadmap in order to realize a peaceful and stable Sudan.

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9. Nagorno-Karabakh

On April 2, 2016, the United States issued a statement condemning ceasefire violations along the Nagorno-Karabakh Line of Contact. The statement decries the violations for causing casualties, including civilians. The statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/04/255432.htm>, goes on to say:

We extend our condolences to all affected families. We urge the sides to show restraint, avoid further escalation, and strictly adhere to the ceasefire. The unstable situation on the ground demonstrates why the sides must enter into an immediate negotiation under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs on a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

We reiterate that there is no military solution to the conflict. As a co-chair country, the United States is firmly committed to working with the sides to reach a lasting and negotiated peace.

On December 8, 2016, the heads of delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries issued a joint statement on Nagorno-Karabakh, which is excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/12/264999.htm>.

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We, the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries—Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov, Secretary of State of the United States John Kerry, and Foreign Minister of France Jean-Marc Ayrault—remain fully committed to a negotiated settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In light of the dramatic escalation in violence along the Line of Contact in April, we express concern over continuing armed incidents, including reports on the use of heavy weapons, and strongly condemn the use of force or the threat of the use of force. There is no military solution to this conflict and no justification for the death and injury of civilians. We are also aware of allegations of atrocities committed on the field of battle in April, which we condemn in the strongest terms. We appeal to the sides to confirm their commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict as the only way to bring real reconciliation to the peoples of the region. We also urge them to adhere strictly to the 1994/95 ceasefire agreements that make up the foundation of the cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone.

We call on Baku and Yerevan to honor the agreements reflected in the Joint Statements of the 16 May Summit in Vienna and the 20 June Summit in St. Petersburg. We welcome the sides' progress in implementing the exchange of data on missing persons under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross. We urge the parties to remove all remaining obstacles to expanding the mission of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and to make progress on a proposal to establish an OSCE investigative mechanism. The proposals should be implemented together with the immediate resumption of negotiations on a settlement. We would like to reiterate our call to the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to demonstrate flexibility and to return to the negotiation table with the firm aim of moving toward a sustainable peace on the basis of the current working proposals. Unless progress can be made on negotiations, the prospects for renewed violence will only increase, and the parties will bear full responsibility.

We remind the sides that the settlement must be based on the core principles of the Helsinki Final Act, namely: non-use of force, territorial integrity, and the equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and additional elements as proposed by the Presidents of the Co-Chair countries, including return of the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control; an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance; a corridor linking Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh; future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will; the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their former places of residence; and

international security guarantees that would include a peacekeeping operation. Our countries will continue to work closely with the sides, and we call upon them to make full use of the assistance of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs as mediators.

The Co-Chair countries are prepared to host a meeting of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan when they are ready. We firmly believe that the Presidents need to engage in negotiations in good faith at the earliest opportunity. Continuous and direct dialogue between the Presidents, conducted under the auspices of the Co-Chairs, remains an essential element in building confidence and moving the peace process forward.

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10. Yemen

Throughout 2016, the United States actively participated in joint efforts with foreign leaders of governments including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and UN Special Envoy to Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed to broker a peaceful solution to the ongoing conflict in Yemen. Talks led by the UN Special Envoy yielded the announcement in March 2017 of a nationwide cessation of hostilities in Yemen beginning April 10th in advance of the next round of peace talks, to start April 18th in Kuwait. The United States urged all parties to de-escalate violence in advance of the cessation of hostilities and to honor it once it commenced. See March 24, 2016 Daily Press Briefing, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2016/03/255119.htm>.

After further discussions on April 7, 2016, Secretary Kerry stated:

The United States very strongly supports the efforts of Saudi Arabia and others who have been trying to establish a cessation of hostilities in key areas with the goal of a full cessation of hostilities April 10th, and a new round of real negotiations starting on April 18th.

Remarks with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/04/255599.htm>. While conflict continued in some parts of Yemen in April, the cessation of hostilities held in April and talks resumed on April 21.

Secretary Kerry met with Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir on May 9, 2016, when they discussed a range of issues, including the Yemen peace talks being held in Kuwait. Secretary Kerry “expressed the U.S. Government’s appreciation for the key role Saudi Arabia continues to play in combating terrorism and AQAP in Yemen, in particular. Saudi leadership in making available an operations center and contributing the largest number of forces has been indispensable to recent successes, including most recently in al Mukallah.” Readout of Secretary’s Meeting, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/257004.htm>.

On July 19, 2016, the foreign ministers of the United Kingdom, United States, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates met in London to review the situation in Yemen, following the resumption of UN led-peace talks in Kuwait on July 16, 2016. The four governments issued the following joint statement after their meeting, available at <https://yemen.usembassy.gov/pr072016.html>.

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The Ministers expressed their concern about the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in Yemen and reiterated their strong support for the UN Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed and for the role of the UN in mediating a lasting political solution to the crisis, based on the agreed references for the UN talks, namely the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, including Resolution 2216, the GCC initiative and the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference.

The Ministers expressed their strong appreciation to Kuwait for hosting the talks and providing political support to the UN Special Envoy.

The Ministers stressed that now was the time to reach an agreement in Kuwait.

The Ministers discussed the sequencing of a potential agreement and affirmed that a successful resolution would include arrangements that would require the withdrawal of armed groups from the capital and other areas, and a political agreement that would allow for the resumption of a peaceful, inclusive political transition.

The Ministers agreed that the conflict in Yemen should not threaten Yemen's neighbours and reaffirmed that the re-establishment of an inclusive government was the only means to combat effectively terrorist groups like Al-Qaida and Da'esh and to address successfully the humanitarian and economic crisis. Ministers also called for the unconditional and immediate release of all political prisoners.

The Ministers agreed to remain in close touch over the coming weeks to support UN-led efforts to reach an agreement.

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After further meetings on August 25, 2016 in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Secretary Kerry and Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir jointly met with members of the press. The cessation of hostilities reached in April had eroded considerably by August. The joint press availability is transcribed at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/08/261273.htm>. Secretary Kerry's comments are excerpted below.

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This afternoon Adel and I met with our counterparts from the Gulf Cooperation Council—UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Kingdom joined us, as well as UN Special Envoy Ismail Ahmed. The purpose of our meetings was, quite simply, to see if together we could find a

way to end the violence of Yemen, to end the war, and to address the deeply troubling situation there, which has now not only killed more than 6,500 people to date, but become a humanitarian crisis of enormous magnitude and a growing security threat ... [I]f we cannot find a solution to the war that meets the appropriate needs of respecting the sovereignty and the security of Saudi Arabia, while at the same time providing the Houthis, a minority, an opportunity to be part of a government in the future, then things can only go in one direction, and that is worse, in Yemen.

The restoration of stability to Yemen is vital in order to ease the suffering and to prevent groups like al-Qaida and Daesh from taking further advantage of the political and security vacuum and the instability that has been created. It is essential for Yemen, for countries in the region, and for the world community in general to agree on a plan to end the fighting and achieve a lasting peace.

The bloodshed, I think most would agree, has simply gone on for too long. It has to stop. And everyone that we met with today, all of the ministers who came here, were in full agreement: there is no military solution.

As I made clear in our meetings today ... the United States is committed to the security of Saudi Arabia. We were deeply troubled by the attacks on Saudi territory. We were deeply troubled by the photographs which were shown to me early on by His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Nayef showing missiles that had come from Iran that were being positioned on the Saudi border. And we are deeply concerned about missile attacks that have taken place on border towns.

It is basic international law: Every country has a right to a safe and sovereign border, and any violation of that is unacceptable and a violation of international law; and a country has a right to defend itself. The threat additionally posed by the shipment of missiles and other sophisticated weapons into Yemen from Iran extends well beyond Yemen. It is not a threat just to Saudi Arabia; it is a threat to the region, it is a threat to the United States, and it cannot continue.

As we have stated previously, we're also extremely concerned by reports of civilian casualties and the destruction of vital infrastructure no matter who causes it. Strikes that damage or destroy homes, businesses, and hospitals not only exacerbate the suffering of the Yemeni people, but they also undermine attempts to try to resolve peacefully the challenges that the country faces.

I did raise this in a number of our meetings, but let me share with you, I know it is a concern fully shared by Foreign Minister al-Jubeir and by the Government of Saudi Arabia. And he has committed and the government have committed to investigating troubling reports that we've all seen in order to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

Now, we all know that the humanitarian situation in Yemen has deteriorated rapidly. And frankly, that just underscores the reasons that we came here today, and it underscores the work that we have to do. The numbers don't begin to capture the true depth of the tragedy, but they are nevertheless staggering. More than 2 million Yemenis are now displaced from their homes. Food shortages have driven prices up 60 percent since last March, and they have brought the country to the brink of famine. More than 14 million people are facing severe hunger and malnutrition, including one in three children under the age of five. Overall, 80 percent of Yemenis are in need of humanitarian assistance.

I have to say that, to date, the international response to this crisis has fallen short of filling the gap between the supplies that are available and those that are required. The United States has been the largest donor—by far—and today I can announce we will contribute another \$189 million dollars in urgently needed aid. We strongly urge other countries in and outside the region to expand their contributions as well. And every party has an obligation to allow the unfettered flow of humanitarian assistance to Yemenis in all parts of the country. That is necessary to save lives, and it is also mandated under international law, and it is the right thing to do.

But the surest way to relieve the hardships and the hunger is to stop the fighting, end the war. And we need to return, as quickly as possible, to a ceasefire that can lead to a permanent end to the conflict.

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On October 18, 2016, parties to the conflict in Yemen agreed to resume the cessation of hostilities for a 72-hour period. Secretary Kerry issued a press statement on the day the renewed cessation of hostilities was announced. The statement appears below and at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/10/263252.htm>.

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The United States welcomes today the announcement of a renewable 72-hour Cessation of Hostilities agreed upon by all Yemeni parties and the Saudi-led Coalition, which the UN Special Envoy, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, has said will take effect on Wednesday, October 19. This cessation requires all parties to implement a full and comprehensive halt to military activities of any kind and help facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Yemenis across the country. It will also enable the Special Envoy to continue his consultations and renew the peace negotiations as soon as possible. We ask the parties to take all steps necessary to advance the implementation of this cessation, call on them to sustain it, and strongly encourage its unconditional renewal. We reiterate the Special Envoy's request to "allow free and unhindered access for humanitarian supplies and personnel to all parts of Yemen, in addition to a full and comprehensive halt to military activities of any kind." The people of Yemen are depending on the full cooperation of all parties with the Special Envoy's request.

We note again that peaceful resolution of this conflict requires compromises and commitments by everyone. The United States, alongside the international community, is ready to provide assistance and will continue to work with all parties to conclude a negotiated settlement that will bring a permanent and lasting end to the conflict.

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The United States urged all sides to abide by and extend the renewable 72-hour cessation of hostilities. See October 24, 2016 State Department daily press briefing, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2016/10/263482.htm#YEMEN2>. Nonetheless, the October 19 cessation of hostilities failed to hold.

On November 20, 2016, Secretary Kerry welcomed the public commitment by parties to the conflict in Yemen to a renewable cessation of hostilities for an initial period of 48 hours. His statement, available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/11/264466.htm>, called on all sides to honor their commitments and allow for delivery of humanitarian aid to support efforts to advance peace talks. Secretary Kerry reiterated U.S. support for the efforts of UN Special Envoy Ahmed to restart negotiations towards a comprehensive agreement by the end of the month, using the UN Roadmap.

The initial 48-hour cessation of hostilities referenced by Secretary Kerry in his November 20, 2016 statement did not take hold and was not renewed. Secretary Kerry continued to pursue a cessation of hostilities in Yemen in collaboration with the government of Saudi Arabia and the UN special envoy. See transcript of November 21, 2016 State Department daily press briefing, available at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2016/11/264484.htm>.

C. CONFLICT AVOIDANCE AND ATROCITIES PREVENTION

1. Protecting Civilians

On June 10, 2016 Ambassador Power delivered remarks at a UN Security Council open debate on the protection of civilians in the context of peacekeeping operations. Ambassador Power's remarks are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7327>.

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...I would like to focus my remarks today on three ways the Security Council can help address chronic shortcomings when it comes to civilian protection and peacekeeping.

The first should be easy—that is, reporting. We strongly support the Secretary-General's demand in the report he released last month that “any failure by peacekeepers to act or follow orders will be brought to the Council's attention.” However, we all know that such failures are rarely reported to the Council in a timely manner; more often, reports take many, many months to emerge, if they emerge at all. To give just one example, a report by the UN's internal oversight office in 2014 found that in 507 attacks against civilians from 2010 to 2013, peacekeepers virtually never used force to protect those coming under attack, likely resulting in the deaths of thousands of civilians. And yet, those same investigators could not find a single case—not one—in which the failure of a peacekeeping unit to execute the order of a Force Commander was conveyed to the Security Council, or even included in the mission situation reports that are regularly sent to DPKO. This is not a functional system; this is not a system acting in accordance to the will expressed by the Secretary-General, and the necessity for this Security Council to know what is happening in the field in missions that we have mandated and we must take responsibility to try to strengthen. This must change, and we collectively have to be the ones to make it change.

Reporting is critical both for accountability and for surfacing problems that have to be solved to make the collective enterprise more effective. Without reporting, impunity persists and bad practices become more common—civilians are the ones who get hurt. When, on the other hand, a problem is reported to the Council, that is not a panacea, but we at least have a shot at using the bilateral and multilateral tools in our toolkit to address it. Regular reporting can also help the Council right-size missions, taking into account the performance of peacekeepers on the ground while allowing Council members, in their national capacity, to offer targeted training and equipment to address the challenges the troop-contributing countries face. When appropriate, it also allows the Secretary-General to repatriate contingents that prove unwilling to protect civilians, or that fail to investigate allegations of abuse or hold perpetrators accountable.

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The second way the Council can improve protection of civilians is through improving the way it plans and adapts missions to conditions on the ground. Fulfilling our responsibility to protect civilians demands anticipating and pre-empting threats that analysis suggests are likely to emerge. This has to happen not only at the planning stage for missions, but also at regular intervals for as long as the mission is deployed in order to respond to kinetic and evolving circumstances in real time. This is basic common sense. And yet, as we all know, it is far too rare.

Third and finally, we must get better at matching the will and capacity of troop-contributing countries with mandates. Let's be honest, this was hard to do in the past due to the scant supply of troops and police. But the nearly 50,000 additional troops and police pledged at last September's peacekeeping summit, and in the days that followed, were a game changer—allowing us and the UN system to help ensure a better fit between what missions demand and what troops and police from a given country are willing and able to do. Troop- and police-contributing countries that have qualms about the mandates—or that doubt their capacity to do what is asked of them—should no longer deploy to missions simply because nobody else will. And neither the UN nor this Council should feel forced to leave in place blue helmets who are unwilling or unable to do what is asked by them.

Here, I agree with the Minister, the Kigali Principles can be extremely helpful in aligning the will and capacity of contributors with the demand of respective missions. The principles are designed to provide a concrete blueprint for shaping the practice of peacekeepers in volatile situations, particularly with respect to the theme of this meeting, protection of civilians. To give just one example, the Principles call for troop-contributing countries to empower the military commander of a peacekeeping contingent to make decisions on whether to use force to protect civilians, because experience has taught us that if a commander has to wait hours for guidance, it may mean not being able to react in time to repel a fast-approaching attack on a nearby village. If properly implemented, these Principles can make peacekeeping missions more effective, improve security, and save lives.

At present, 29 countries, including the United States, Senegal as we heard, Uruguay, France have announced support for the Kigali Principles, accounting for more than 40,000 troops and police currently serving in UN peacekeeping operations. That is well over one-third of the uniformed personnel on the ground right now. We encourage all troop-contributing countries to make these principles their own as we believe they are indispensable to effective peacekeeping in the 21st century. Given the real-life implication of these principles—and what they suggest about a country's willingness to protect civilians under threat—we urge the UN to attach considerable

weight to a country's commitment to implementing the Kigali Principles when it is selecting units for peacekeeping operations—particularly those operations deployed to volatile environments with civilian protection mandates.

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On September 21, 2016, Sarah Sewall, U.S. Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, delivered remarks at the 9th Annual Ministerial on the Responsibility to Protect. Under Secretary Sewall's remarks are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/j/remarks/262339.htm>.

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When I began working on civilian protection in the early 1990s at the U.S. Department of Defense, I was one of just two people in our office on peacekeeping. Now, there are presidential summits focused exclusively on peacekeeping while demand for peacekeeping has remained high, and increasingly, roles and expectations have changed. Civilian protection is now a routine priority objective or mandated task.

As is so often the case, our normative goals outstrip capacity to implement those goals. Our work now—and the purpose of the Kigali Principles—is to move toward practical realization of civilian protection on the ground. The United States proudly stands with the 36 other countries that have endorsed the Kigali Principles, and we call on others to join us.

These principles include steps to strengthen civilian protection, such as calling on troop and police contributing countries to empower commanders of peacekeeping contingents to use force at their discretion, so they can, for example, act to repel an attack on civilians instead of waiting precious hours for guidance from their capitals.

Peacekeepers and countries that provide peacekeeping training and equipment also have a responsibility to realize the Kigali Principles. And we can all help elevate the principles by making support for them a key factor in selecting sector and contingent commanders, along with nominees for mission leadership.

The United Nations can also prioritize the deployment of units that have demonstrated the will—and the means—to implement protection mandates. That is what the United States seeks to do with our capacity-building support for peacekeepers.

Of course, we must hold contingents accountable for underperformance, or worse, for egregious failures to protect civilians. In these cases, repatriation and replacement must be on the table.

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Over the last decade, the international community vastly increased the demands placed on peacekeepers. We often ask them to do more with less in ever more challenging environments. So we owe it to them, and the communities they serve, to make peacekeeping a more effective instrument for protection. Thank you.

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2. Atrocities Prevention

On March 17, 2016, consistent with Section 7033 of P.L. 114-113, the State Department issued the atrocities prevention report, describing targeting of and attacks against civilians, including members of religious and ethnic groups in the Middle East and in Burma. See *infra* for discussion of Secretary Kerry's announcement on March 17, 2016 that he judged Da'esh to be responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims. The atrocities prevention report is available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/254807.htm>.

On May 18, 2016, the President of the United States issued an executive order laying out a comprehensive U.S. approach to atrocity prevention and response. Senior U.S. government officials provided a special briefing, explaining the background for the order. Excerpts follow from the briefing, a record of which is available at <http://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/257366.htm>.

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It was about four years ago, a little more than four years ago, when President Obama announced that preventing mass atrocities was a national security priority of the United States in addition to being a moral imperative. And it's since then that we've been working through the Atrocity Prevention Board to ensure that the possibility of mass killings of civilians in countries abroad is something that we are constantly scanning the horizon for, that we are ensuring is discussed and placed at the right level of attention within the U.S. Government, that we are developing tools to address and mitigate the consequences of mass casualties, and that we are doing this in a way where we're consciously learning lessons and institutionalizing the responses to become better both ourselves and as part of a broader multinational community that's committed to atrocity prevention.

So the APB itself convenes monthly to review the intelligence and other non-classified information about the potential for mass civilian harm throughout the globe, and it considers individual countries both as they arise by virtue of the events going on in the world but also takes a more conscious and strategic review approach to cases that have been identified as being at risk.

The main goal of the Atrocity Prevention Board as it has functioned is to move upstream in the prevention realm. Because the interagency process is well developed for ongoing crises that receive significant attention from policymakers, the main value added of the APB as it has evolved has been to do the over-the-horizon scanning and to get us ahead of the curve both unilaterally and multilaterally in doing conflict prevention work that bears on atrocities.

The board itself includes some 11 departments and federal agencies, and we've worked very hard not just to improve our awareness and predictive ability and the refinement of our priorities for focus, but to really develop a process in which we are focusing on the policies and the programs and the specific actions that can be taken on individual cases to mitigate risks.

And I want to just run through three typologies that are examples of the three different phases in which we've been working. One is ... to galvanize interventions before it is even on the screen of the international community that there is the potential for mass atrocities, and Burundi would be our case in point, where years before the international community was seized of Burundi, we were concerned about the early warning signs of atrocity risk. We sent a team to go and examine the drivers and the potential for mitigation, doing their risk assessment. We put together a resource plan with some 7 million of programming—and this was three years ago—doing community leader training on conflict resolution, helping civil society with tools to monitor hate speech, to amplify messages of peace—those types of interventions. We also sent a prevention advisor to the embassy there to do more intensive analysis and we supported civil society assessments. And then we worked on the sticks piece as the situation evolved, ... and we coordinated with our European allies to reinforce this message.

Obviously, the situation in Burundi has evolved to a place where it remains at significant risk for mass atrocities, but I think that we feel confident that ... we have helped to mitigate the risks that civilians have been killed as the crisis has continued to unfold.

...Central African Republic is a great example of how the Atrocity Prevention Board, having identified in the post-December 2013 violence escalation ... the need to focus on the stabilization after the political resolution there, ways to focus the government's efforts on DDR, on security sector reform; the need to get a special representative and get President Obama to do a peace message; the need to find ways to engage the urban youth that typically at times of political mobilization have been most inclined to actually carrying out violence—a whole host of stabilization measures with an aim to preventing the return to past cycles of violence that we've seen that have targeted civilians.

And then finally, the third sort of typology I want to share with you is the case of Burma, where, as you know, the potential for mass atrocities remains high, in particular in Rakhine state, with tensions between the Rohingya communities and the Rakhine community—the Burmese Rakhine community. 2012, we saw a lot of violence. What has been done on the ground there is to create a heads-of-mission group that has focused our posts and their tools on preventing violence—six different countries working with the UN and international humanitarian organizations with a coordinating mechanism that is focused on a unified diplomatic strategy that is built around atrocity prevention and the deployment of full-time advisors there to monitor dynamics to support the heads-of-mission group. So that's an example of something that's very forward-looking and that is focused on activity in the field.

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... the President released an executive order entitled “A Comprehensive Approach to Atrocity Prevention and Response.” The executive order sets out the structure and protocols of the Atrocity Prevention Board. ...At the time that it was created, I think we spoke about the possibility of an executive order that would basically codify its responsibilities and protocols, and this executive order is sort of the culmination of that commitment.

...[I]t restates the policy set forth in Presidential Study Directive 10, which dates back to 2011, which states that preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States. It offers a very brief definition, a non-legal definition of what we mean by mass atrocities in this context, which is these are large-scale and deliberate attacks on civilians, including acts that [may] fall within the definition of genocide. It lays out the responsibilities that the board has, which I think is very useful in terms

of creating a blueprint for any next administration that wants to take up the work of the board—and we believe that this is an institution that is worth enduring through to the next administration as some comparable bodies do in other policy spaces. It lays out the structure and protocols of the board, which we haven't previously made public, and then it talks about the work the departments and agencies belong to the board are going to be doing to support the agenda sort of within their own structures.

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So the board was designed to ensure that we did not have a situation in which senior officials were unaware of mass atrocities and the U.S. did not have every opportunity to take action in response. The highest value added for the board in a government that, by definition, is constantly dealing with atrocity issues in the context of ongoing issues in which the government is deeply involved, is to focus the board's attention on the upstream preventive measures, we all know and agree that we would prefer to prevent atrocities than respond to them.

But there are many cases in which the ongoing conflict means that there are atrocities going on. To suggest that those cases implicate the board as having failed, I think is an unrealistic expectation for any single government let alone any one piece of government.

In the case of the Yezidis, the charge, I think, is even more wrong, to be honest, because the U.S. is leading an international coalition to fight Daesh. So Daesh has been the source of the atrocities against the Yezidis and we are currently engaged in leading an international coalition to fight Daesh. So I think ...it would be inaccurate to imply that the Atrocity Prevention Board has failed because there have been atrocities against Yezidis.

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The text of E.O. 13729 of May 18, 2016, "A Comprehensive Approach to Atrocity Prevention and Response," follows. 81 Fed. Reg. 32,611 (May 23, 2016).

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By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. As articulated in Presidential Study Directive-10 (PSD- 10), preventing mass atrocities and genocide is a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States. Noting that governmental engagement on mass atrocities and genocide too often arrives too late, when opportunities for prevention or low-cost, low-risk action have been missed, PSD-10 directed the establishment of an interagency Atrocities Prevention Board (Board), with the primary purpose of coordinating a whole-of-government approach to prevent mass atrocities and genocide. PSD-10 also directed an interagency study to develop and recommend the membership, mandate, structure, operational protocols, authorities, and support necessary for the Board to coordinate and develop atrocity prevention and response policy. This order continues in place the Board established in 2012 as I directed in PSD-10, sets

out the support to be afforded by executive departments, agencies, and offices, and updates and memorializes the terms on which the Board will continue to operate in the service of its important mission.

Sec. 2. Definition. For purposes of this order, the term “mass atrocities” or “atrocities,” neither of which is defined under international law, refers to large scale and deliberate attacks on civilians, and includes acts falling within the definition “genocide” as defined in international law and under U.S. domestic statute.

Sec. 3. Responsibilities. The Board shall seek to ensure that mass atrocities and the risk thereof are effectively considered and appropriately addressed by the U.S. Government, and shall coordinate the development and execution of policies and tools to enhance our capacity to prevent and respond to mass atrocities.

(a) In order to ensure that emerging mass atrocity risks and mass atrocity situations are considered and addressed, the Board shall monitor developments around the world that heighten the risk of mass atrocities, and analyze and closely review specific mass atrocity threats or situations of heightened concern.

(b) The Board shall also identify any gaps related to the prevention of and response to mass atrocities in the current policies and ongoing inter-agency processes concerning particular regions or countries and shall make recommendations to strengthen policies, programs, resources, and tools related to mass atrocity prevention and response to relevant executive departments and agencies (agencies), including through the Board’s function as an interagency policy committee, as detailed in section 4 of this order. In these efforts, the Board shall focus in particular on ways for the U.S. Government to develop, strengthen, and enhance its capabilities to:

- (i) monitor, receive early warning of, and coordinate responses to potential mass atrocities;
- (ii) deter and isolate perpetrators of mass atrocities through all available and appropriate authorities;
- (iii) promote accountability of and deny impunity for perpetrators of mass atrocities, including by denying safe haven for perpetrators found in the United States;
- (iv) engage allies and partners, including the United Nations and other multilateral and regional institutions, to build capacity and mobilize action for preventing and responding to mass atrocities;
- (v) deploy civilian personnel with expertise in conflict prevention, civilian protection, mediation, and other relevant skills, including on a rapid response basis, to assist in mass atrocity prevention and response efforts;
- (vi) increase capacity for our diplomats, armed services, development professionals, and other actors to engage in mass atrocity prevention and response activities;
- (vii) develop and implement tailored foreign assistance programs as well as doctrine for our armed services to address and mitigate the risks of mass atrocities;
- (viii) ensure intelligence collection, analysis, and sharing of information, as appropriate, relating to mass atrocity threats and situations; and
- (ix) address any other issue regarding mass atrocity prevention and response that the Board determines is appropriate.

Sec. 4. Structure and Protocols of the Atrocities Prevention Board. The

Board shall continue to operate and will have the following structure and protocols:

(a) The Board shall function as an interagency policy committee, or body of equivalent standing, chaired by a member of the National Security Council staff at the Senior Director level or higher who shall be designated by the President (Chair).

(b) The Chair shall convene the Board on a monthly basis to perform the responsibilities set forth in section 3 of this order. The Board shall also meet as needed on an ad hoc and time-sensitive basis to consider and address emerging mass atrocity threats or situations.

(c) The Deputies Committee of the National Security Council (Deputies) shall meet at least twice per year, and the Principals Committee of the National Security Council (Principals) shall meet at least once per year, to review and direct the work of the Board.

(d) The Board shall be composed of individuals at the Assistant Secretary- level or higher who shall be designated by the leadership of their respective departments or agencies. Within 60 days of a vacancy on the Board, the relevant department or agency or office head shall designate a replacement representative and notify the National Security Advisor. In addition to the Chair, the Board shall consist of the designated representatives from the following:

(i) the Office of the Vice President; (ii) the Department of State; (iii) the Department of the Treasury; (iv) the Department of Defense;

(v) the Department of Justice;

(vi) the Department of Homeland Security;

(vii) the U.S. Mission to the United Nations;

(viii) the Office of the Director of National Intelligence;

(ix) the Central Intelligence Agency;

(x) the U.S. Agency for International Development;

(xi) the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and

(xii) such other agencies or offices as may request to participate in coordination with the Chair.

(e) The Chair shall report, through the National Security Advisor, to the President by April 30 each year on the work of the U.S. Government in mass atrocity prevention and response, including the work of the Board.

(f) The Chair shall prepare written updates for the public, on an annual basis, on the work of the U.S. Government in mass atrocity prevention and response, including the work of the Board.

(g) Consistent with the objectives set out in this order and in accordance with applicable law, the Board shall conduct outreach, including regular consultations, with representatives of nongovernmental organizations with expertise in mass atrocity prevention and response and other appropriate parties. Such outreach shall be for the purpose of assisting the Board with its work on considering and addressing emerging mass atrocity threats or situations and on developing new or improved policies and tools, as well as for the purpose of providing transparency on the work of the Board.

(h) In order to conduct the work set forth in this order effectively, the Board may:

(i) request information or analysis from the Intelligence Community (IC), Chiefs of Mission, agencies, and offices;

(ii) develop policy recommendations and programmatic recommendations for agencies, offices, and existing interagency processes;

(iii) in conjunction with existing interagency processes, formulate policy recommendations and programmatic recommendations;

(iv) coordinate with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to develop guidance on mass atrocity prevention resource priorities for agencies and offices; and

(v) bring urgent or significant matters to the attention of the Deputies and, as appropriate, request that the Deputies convene to address a situation of concern, consistent with Presidential Policy Directive-1 or its successor.

Sec. 5. *Enhancing Capabilities and Tools.* Agencies shall take the following actions in support of the United States Government's policy of working to prevent and respond to mass atrocities:

(a) Agencies, in coordination with the Board, shall ensure that mass atrocity prevention and response staffing, training, funding, and activities are addressed in their strategic planning and budget processes, including Department Quadrennial Reviews, Mission Resource Requests, State Department Integrated Country Strategies, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Joint Strategic Plans, State Department Bureau Strategic Resource Plans, and related strategic planning and budget processes and documents. The Chair shall make recommendations to the National Security Advisor on the inclusion of material in the President's National Security Strategy that addresses mass atrocity prevention and response.

(b) The Department of State and USAID shall work with OMB to support the maintenance of civilian assistance accounts and authorities that enable swift civilian responses to mass atrocity threats and situations.

(c) The Department of State and USAID shall offer mass atrocity prevention and response training courses to all officers deployed or planning deployment to countries deemed by the IC to be at high or substantial risk for mass atrocities.

(d) The Department of State and USAID shall continue to build and use civilian capacity (i.e., the ability to deploy personnel with expertise in conflict prevention, civilian protection, mediation, and other relevant skills) effectively for mass atrocity prevention and response, and shall develop mechanisms for enhanced partnerships with non-U.S. Government actors that could provide surge capacity, such as the United Nations and other multilateral and regional organizations, foreign governments, and non-governmental organizations.

(e) The IC shall continue to monitor developments worldwide and, as changing conditions warrant, prepare an IC-coordinated assessment updating IC judgments in its National Intelligence Estimate on the global risk of mass atrocities and genocide at regular intervals to inform the work of the Board.

(f) Recognizing mass atrocity prevention as a core national security interest of the United States, the IC shall allocate resources so as to permit a collection surge for countries where the Board determines, and the Deputies concur, that there are ongoing or acute risks of mass atrocities that merit increased attention, in accordance with the National Intelligence Priority Framework and available resources.

(g) The IC shall work with partner governments to encourage the collection and analysis of mass atrocity-related intelligence and the sharing of this intelligence with the U.S. Government and its partners in mass atrocity prevention and response.

(h) The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Justice, in coordination with the Department of State, shall continue to develop proposals for legislative, regulatory, or administrative amendments or changes that would permit the more effective use and enforcement of immigration and other laws to deny impunity to perpetrators of mass atrocities and that would enhance our ability to prosecute such perpetrators subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and remove those who are not citizens.

(i) The Department of Defense (DOD) shall continue to develop joint doctrine and training that support mass atrocity prevention and response operations and shall address mass atrocity prevention and response as part of its general planning guidance to combatant commands and services.

(j) The Department of State, the Department of the Treasury, DHS, the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (USUN), and other agencies as appropriate, shall coordinate with bilateral and multilateral partners on the deployment of mass atrocity prevention and response tools, including isolating and deterring perpetrators of mass atrocities through all available authorities (including administrative actions, visa authorities, and capacity-building support), as appropriate.

(k) The Department of State, in coordination with USUN, DOD, and other agencies as appropriate, shall work bilaterally, multilaterally, and with regionally based organizations to enhance effectiveness in the fields of early warning, analysis, prevention, response, and accountability, and shall work with international partners to build or encourage building the capacity of our allies and partners to prevent and respond to mass atrocities.

Sec. 6. General Provisions. (a) Members of the Board shall serve without any additional compensation for their work on the Board.

(b) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof, or the status of that department or agency within the Federal Government; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of OMB relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(c) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law, and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(d) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

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3. Daesh and Atrocities

On March 17, 2016, Secretary Kerry delivered remarks on Daesh and atrocities. His remarks, excerpted below, are available at

<http://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2016/03/254782.htm>.

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In 2014, the terrorist group Daesh began to seize territory in Syria and Iraq, overrunning major cities and committing atrocities. The United States responded quickly by denouncing these horrific acts and—more importantly—taking coordinated actions to counter them. In September of that year, President Obama mobilized an international coalition, now 66 members strong, to halt and reverse Daesh’s momentum. And that is what we are doing.

In the 18 months since, coalition airstrikes have helped to liberate Kobani, Tikrit, Ramadi, and other key cities and towns. We have pushed the terrorists out of 40 percent of the territory that they once controlled in Iraq and 20 percent in Syria. We have degraded their leadership, attacked their revenue sources, and disrupted their supply lines. And currently we are engaged, as you all know, in a diplomatic initiative aimed at trying to end the war in Syria. That civil war fuels Daesh, and in doing what we are doing now, we are working to further isolate, to weaken and ultimately to defeat them. We are working intensively to stop the spread of Daesh and its affiliates within and beyond the region.

All of this constitutes an extraordinary effort by a large segment of the international community and the United States. And that effort is fully warranted by the appalling actions of the organization that we oppose.

My purpose in appearing before you today is to assert that, in my judgment, Daesh is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims. Daesh is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions—in what it says, what it believes, and what it does. Daesh is also responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities.

I say this even though the ongoing conflict and lack of access to key areas has made it impossible to develop a fully detailed and comprehensive picture of all that Daesh is doing and all that it has done. We have not been able to compile a complete record. I think that's obvious on its face; we don't have access to everywhere. But over the past months, we have conducted a review of the vast amount of information gathered by the State Department, by our intelligence community, by outside groups. And my conclusion is based on that information and on the nature of the acts reported.

We know, for example, that in August of 2014 Daesh killed hundreds of Yezidi men and older women in the town of Kocho and trapped tens of thousands of Yezidis on Mount Sinjar without allowing access to food, water, or medical care. Without our intervention, it was clear those people would have been slaughtered. Rescue efforts aided by coalition airstrikes ultimately saved many, but not before Daesh captured and enslaved thousands of Yezidi women and girls—selling them at auction, raping them at will, and destroying the communities in which they had lived for countless generations.

We know that in Mosul, Qaraqosh, and elsewhere, Daesh has executed Christians solely because of their faith; that it executed 49 Coptic and Ethiopian Christians in Libya; and that it has also forced Christian women and girls into sexual slavery.

We know that Daesh massacred hundreds of Shia Turkmen and Shabaks at Tal Afar and Mosul; besieged and starved the Turkmen town of Amerli; and kidnapped hundreds of Shia Turkmen women, raping many in front of their own families.

We know that in areas under its control, Daesh has made a systematic effort to destroy the cultural heritage of ancient communities—destroying Armenian, Syrian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic churches; blowing up monasteries and the tombs of prophets; desecrating cemeteries; and in Palmyra, even beheading the 83-year-old scholar who had spent a lifetime preserving antiquities there.

We know that Daesh's actions are animated by an extreme and intolerant ideology that castigates Yezidis as, quote, "pagans" and "devil-worshippers," and we know that Daesh has threatened Christians by saying that it will, quote, "conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women."

Shia Muslims, meanwhile, are referred to by Daesh as, quote, “disbelievers and apostates,” and subjected to frequent and vicious attacks. In December, a year ago, a 14-year-old boy named Usaid Barho approached the gate of a Shiite mosque in Baghdad, unzipped his jacket to show that he was wearing an explosive vest and he surrendered to the guards. He had been recruited by Daesh in Syria, and joined to serve Islam, but he was told after his recruitment that, unless he obeyed every order, Shiites would come and rape his mother. Daesh said of Shias, and I quote, “It is a duty imposed upon us to kill them, to fight them, to displace them, and to cleanse the land of their filth.”

One element of genocide is the intent to destroy an ethnic or religious group, in whole or in part. We know that Daesh has given some of its victims a choice between abandoning their faith or being killed, and that for many is a choice between one kind of death and another.

The fact is that Daesh kills Christians because they are Christians; Yezidis because they are Yezidis; Shia because they are Shia. This is the message it conveys to children under its control. Its entire worldview is based on eliminating those who do not subscribe to its perverse ideology. There is no question in my mind that if Daesh succeeded in establishing its so-called caliphate, it would seek to destroy what remains of ethnic and religious mosaic once thriving in the region.

I want to be clear. I am neither judge, nor prosecutor, nor jury with respect to the allegations of genocide, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing by specific persons. Ultimately, the full facts must be brought to light by an independent investigation and through formal legal determination made by a competent court or tribunal. But the United States will strongly support efforts to collect, document, preserve, and analyze the evidence of atrocities, and we will do all we can to see that the perpetrators are held accountable.

I hope that my statement today will assure the victims of Daesh’s atrocities that the United States recognizes and confirms the despicable nature of the crimes that have been committed against them.

Second, I hope it will highlight the shared interest that otherwise diverse groups have in opposing Daesh. After all, the reality of genocide underscores even more starkly the need for a comprehensive and unified approach to defeating Daesh both in its core in Syria and Iraq and more broadly in its attempt to establish external networks.

Part of our response to Daesh must, of course, be to destroy it by military force, but other dimensions are important as well, and we dare not lose track of that. In the past two and a half years, the United States has provided more than 600 million in emergency aid to Iraqis who have been displaced from their communities by Daesh. We are working closely with local authorities to assist in the recovery of cities that have been liberated and whose residents face grave challenges—both material and psychological—and people who desperately need help in rebuilding their lives. We are funding the investigation of mass graves, and supporting care for the victims of gender-based violence and those who have escaped captivity.

We continue to engage with the government of Baghdad to make sure that its security forces and other institutions are more representative and inclusive. And we are coordinating with our coalition partners to choke off Daesh’s finances and to slow its recruitment of foreign fighters. And we are preparing for future efforts to liberate occupied territory—with an eye to the protection of minority communities. In particular, the liberation of Mosul, of Nineveh province in Iraq, and parts of Syria that are currently occupied by Daesh, and that will decide whether

there is still a future for minority communities in this part of the Middle East. For those communities, the stakes in this campaign are utterly existential. This is the fight that Daesh has defined. Daesh has created this. Daesh has targeted their victims. Daesh has self-defined itself as genocidal.

So we must bear in mind, after all, that the best response to genocide is a reaffirmation of the fundamental right to survive of every group targeted for destruction. What Daesh wants to erase, we must preserve. That requires defeating Daesh, but it also demands the rejection of bigotry and discrimination—those things that facilitated its rise in the first place.

This means that, as more areas are liberated, residents will need help not only to repair infrastructure, but also to ensure that minorities can return in safety, that they are integrated into local security forces, and that they receive equal protection under the law. Our goal, after all, is not just to defeat Daesh—only to find that in a few years some new terrorist group with a different acronym has taken its place. Our purpose is to marginalize and defeat violent extremists once and for all.

Now, that is not easy; we know that. As President Obama and I have consistently said—it won't happen overnight. But today, I say to all our fellow citizens and to the international community, we must recognize what Daesh is doing to its victims. We must hold the perpetrators accountable. And we must find the resources to help those harmed by these atrocities be able to survive on their ancestral land.

Naming these crimes is important. But what is essential is to stop them. That will require unity in this country and within the countries directly involved, and the determination to act against genocide, against ethnic cleansing, against the other crimes against humanity must be pronounced among decent people all across the globe.

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4. Pursuing Justice for War Crimes In Syria

On April 14, 2016, Ambassador Power delivered remarks at an informal meeting on “Syria: War Crimes and the Pursuit of Justice” at the UN. Her remarks are excerpted below and available at <http://2009-2017-usun.state.gov/remarks/7226>.

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[W]hen the war is finally over—and it will end, even if some days a settlement seems very elusive—Syria will be home to literally millions of victims The last five years have brought a catalogue of cruelty that few could have dreamed up, even if they were writing the worst horror movie imaginable ... Illegal detentions, often involving torture, rape, murder; chemical weapon attacks against civilians; bombs landing on schools, hospitals, and civilian neighborhoods; sieges of entire cities; starving people to death willfully when you have the power with a pen—a pen stroke—to allow food to people you know are going to die if they don't get food, and you just

simply don't sign the form. The Assad regime is the leading perpetrator of these crimes by a long shot, but ISIL and other armed groups, of course, are responsible for their share of atrocities.

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The Syrian people will be the best placed to choose the right balance of justice, accountability, and reconciliation processes ... and people who've worked on international justice, the conversations you're having, the thinking you are doing is going to prove useful someday. The documentation, the secure storage, the analysis, the reporting on the atrocities, the work of the commission of inquiry—the many, many reports that they have done. Such information can be used to support future prosecution—whether at the international level or eventually, again though it seems far-fetched now, in credible domestic courts.

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And even if you don't yet have a lot to point to in the way of people being held accountable for the horrors that they have inflicted on your people, there are other trials that you can point to. You can point to the recent conviction of Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader who thought that he would be immune and inoculated. He had an attitude much like that you've encountered on the streets of Syria. The trial of the former Chadian dictator Habre, where his victims who never thought that they would ever be able to confront him in a courtroom, able to do so all these years later.

...[J]ustice can be painstakingly slow, the victims and the potential witnesses can feel rightly desperate and demoralized and feel like the international community has let them down. But it is our job to take what you all have begun and turn it into something real for people who deserve justice, who want reconciliation but need accountability as a foundation for that reconciliation. And I think this session is just a chance for us to remind the perpetrators who are strutting around Syria today, feeling as if they have that impunity, that their actions have not gone unseen and they will not go unpunished. ...

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Cross References

International tribunals, **Chapter 3.C.**

Sokolow, **Chapter 5.A.2.**

Human Rights Council statement on Israel, **Chapter 6.A.3.a.**

Human Rights Council actions on Syria, South Sudan, Burundi, **Chapter 6.A.3.**

Women, peace, and security, **Chapter 6.B.2.b.**

Water, peace, and security, **Chapter 6.B.2.b.**

Criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on missions, **Chapter 7.A.2.**

UN-African Union cooperation, **Chapter 7.A.8.**

Suspension of bilateral channel with Russia for Syria cessation of hostilities, **Chapter 9.A.4.**

Protecting Syrian cultural property, **Chapter 14.B.**

Syria-related sanctions, **Chapter 16.A.2.**

Sanctions, **Chapter 16.A.**

Civilians in armed conflict, **Chapter 18.A.3.a.**

Syria chemical weapons, **Chapter 19.D.1.**