



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

Remarks at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Secretary of State

Doha, Qatar

February 14, 2010

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much. It is, indeed, an honor to be here, to be part of this U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

And I thank you for all of the kind words and good wishes for my husband, who is doing fine. He is in great shape. All is well, or I would not be here this evening. And he sends his best greetings to each and every one of you, and particularly to you, Your Highness. I told the Emir that, on my way to the airport today, the last instruction I received from my husband was to give his very best regards to you, Your Highness. And it is a great pleasure to convey them, both publicly and privately, and to be here with you and with the Prime Minister and the government of Qatar to, once again, engage again in this important effort to strengthen the dialogue between our countries and our people.

I want to thank Strobe Talbott and Martin Indyk and the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution, for hosting this event, but for doing so much more beyond it to actually pursue the dialogue and its result. Because the work on the issue that you are doing, from Religious Leaders in Diplomacy to Science Cooperation and New Media, is exactly the kind of leadership and engagement we need right now. And I know that the Prime Minister's inspirational words yesterday and tonight reflect Qatar's ongoing commitment to promoting mutual understanding and the progress that it holds out for us.

Since I became Secretary of State a little more than a year ago, I have had the privilege of traveling to 46 countries around the world, including many that have a Muslim majority. And while much of my time on these trips is devoted to working with governments and high officials, I also make it a point to meet with citizens, as well: civil society leaders in Indonesia, young women on a television program in Turkey, students in an English-language program in Ramallah, citizens sharing their ideas for their own future, and for the hope of a better tomorrow.

I traveled to Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Kuwait. I have met with Islamic leaders in Nigeria. I visited Tatarstan on my trip to Russia. And I have met with an array of people and groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan. And I have helped to launch the American Pakistan Foundation, to bring more Americans into the work of supporting a strong and democratic Pakistan.

And in Morocco, at the Forum for the Future, I reinforced America's support for civil society and announced programs designed to empower individuals and communities through greater economic opportunity, entrepreneurship, science, technology, and education. I am very grateful to have had this chance to meet with so many people. And I have been grateful also to hear, to have the chance to listen to what is on your mind, just as I have heard from many American Muslims over the years who have done so much to enrich my own nation. I hope that these trips help to underscore the importance that the United States places on engaging effectively and energetically, not only with governments in Muslim-majority countries, but with Muslim communities everywhere.

Now, this engagement is not new to the United States. It has been important throughout our history. A strong relationship between our country and many others is a hallmark of what we believe is essential to global security, prosperity, and peace. President Obama and I believe that this is both a strategic imperative and a reflection of the bonds we share—the values, the hopes, the ambitions we hold as mothers and fathers, students and workers, business leaders and social advocates, and members of the human family.

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The ties between the United States and Muslim countries and communities stretch back to America's earliest days. Morocco was the first nation to recognize American independence. Later, we supported the emergence of independent Muslim-majority states after decades of colonial rule. Americans helped establish what are still some of the finest universities in this region. And we, in turn, have been enriched by a long tradition of educational exchanges. Soldiers and sailors from U.S. and Muslim-majority countries have stood side by side in peace-keeping missions worldwide, and we have worked together to rebuild after devastating natural disasters, including the 2004 tsunami, the 2005 earthquake, and now, of course, in Haiti. And the United States joins with other nations to protect Muslims in Bosnia and Darfur from violence and suffering.

So we have a lot to reflect on that is already the substance of our relationship, and what we have accomplished together. But we know that our shared purpose and values have often been obscured by suspicion and misunderstanding. It is time, as President Obama said in his speech in Cairo, for a new beginning based on a commitment to open dialogue and equal partnership, a new beginning that confronts the tensions between us and commits all of us to doing the hard work necessary to resolve them, a new beginning that acknowledges we each have a role and a responsibility in solving the common problems we face.

Now, in the eight months since the President's speech, many around the world have answered that call. But others worry that the United States' commitment is insufficient or insincere, that we have not fully embraced the spirit of mutual respect and partnership, or that we will fail to translate that spirit into the concrete steps needed to achieve real and lasting change in the world.

Now, I understand why people might be impatient. But building a stronger relationship cannot happen overnight or even in a year. It takes patience, persistence, and hard work from all of us.

It is important to remember that President Obama's vision was not one of a single country seeking to write a new chapter on our own. It was a call for all of us to take responsibility for retiring stereotypes and outdated views and for bringing a renewed sense of cooperation to.

We recognize that there is not one approach that works for all people in all places. The concerns of a mother in Indonesia may differ from that of a student in Egypt or a businessman in Doha or an imam in England. But while their concerns may be different, they all matter to us.

And during the past year, the Obama Administration has worked to alter the tone and deepen the substance of our relationships with people from all regions and all backgrounds. We are and will remain committed to the President's vision for a new beginning. And that commitment is reflected in both what we are doing and how we are doing it. We are forging new policies and partnerships that reflect our common principles. And our new approach rests on three core pillars: relations based on mutual respect, mutual interest, and mutual responsibility; a shared commitment to universal values; and broad engagement with governments and citizens alike.

It is this convergence of policies and principles that I would like briefly to talk to you about tonight.

The first and critical area is our ongoing efforts to advance a comprehensive peace in the Middle East—one that brings peace for Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese, as well as the full normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab states. Central to these efforts is the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-state solution.

I fully understand the importance that this issue holds for people not only in this region, but around the world. It is also important to me. Every day, we see the human cost of the conflict: the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the daily indignities endured by Palestinians after decades of occupation, the constant threat of violence that Israelis bear, as well as the opprobrium that comes with years of trying to protect her citizens.

This conflict is an obstacle to security, prosperity, and opportunity for Palestinians, Israelis, and all nations in the region. And the goal of a comprehensive peace is fully in the interests of the United States. So, we are committed to our role in ensuring that negotiations begin and succeed. That is why President Obama appointed George Mitchell as Special Envoy for Middle East peace during his first week in office, and why Senator Mitchell has made monthly visits to the region. This is hard work. Some of you in the audience know that from firsthand experience. But our resolve is strong, and we are determined to settle this conflict once and for all.

I know people are disappointed that we have not yet achieved a breakthrough. The President, Senator Mitchell, and I are also disappointed. But we must remember that neither the United States nor any country can force a solution. The parties themselves must

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resolve their differences through negotiations. And the United States stands ready to play an active and sustained role, and to support the parties as they work to resolve all permanent status issues including security for Israelis and Palestinians, borders, refugees, and Jerusalem.

We support a two-state solution, with Israelis and Palestinians co-existing peacefully and with mutual security. We believe that through good-faith negotiations, the parties can mutually agree on an outcome which ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable state based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish state with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meet Israeli security requirements.

And we recognize that Jerusalem is a deeply important issue to Israelis and Palestinians, to Jews, Muslims, and Christians everywhere. We believe it is possible to reach an outcome that both realizes the aspirations of all parties for Jerusalem, and safeguards its status for the future.

For our part, the United States has encouraged Israel to stop the growth of settlements to preserve the chance for a two-state solution. We do see the current Israeli settlement moratorium as a positive step in this direction, and we look for further steps. The United States' policy on settlements has not changed; we do not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements.

We have encouraged the Palestinians to pursue their home-grown plan to build their institutions, end incitement, improve security, to lay the foundation for a future stable, democratic Palestinian state. We are supporting President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad in their efforts to build, train, and reform their security forces, and we commend their progress to date.

The principle of shared responsibility extends to Israel's Arab neighbors, as well as countries around the world. We all have an obligation to support this effort by helping to make real the benefits that peace can bring. The region and the international community can make clear to the Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese that we support comprehensive negotiations that produce results. The 2002 Arab Peace Initiative is vital to our efforts to promote a comprehensive peace. And it lays out a vision of a better future for all the region's people. It is time to renew its spirit today and move to specifics.

A second issue that demands our cooperation based on the principles I've outlined is Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

In his inaugural address, President Obama endorsed a new era of diplomatic engagement, including with those nations who have at times been hostile to the United States. We have proven our willingness to engage. For example, we are resuming high-level contacts with the Syrian government. And we are preparing to send an Ambassador back to Damascus for the first time since 2005.

We have pursued extensive efforts to reengage with Iran, both through direct communication and through greater participation in multilateral efforts. Our goal has been, that after 30 years of hostile relations with Iran, we need to begin to build a more constructive relationship.

Our position regarding Iran's nuclear program is simple. We believe that all states, including Iran, start with the same rights and the same responsibilities. And according to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, nations have the right to nuclear power so long as they accept the responsibility of demonstrating unequivocally that their programs are used solely for peaceful civilian purposes.

But Iran has consistently failed to live up to its responsibility. It has refused to demonstrate to the international community that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful. And last year, the world learned of a secret nuclear facility near the city of Qom. The IAEA Board of Governors responded with a resolution criticizing Iran that received wide support.

In October, in our continuing efforts at engagement, the United States, for the first time, joined the so-called P-5+1 in meeting with Iran in Geneva. These were the highest level discussions between the United States and Iran in more than 30 years. We went to Geneva with the hope that Iran would seize the opportunity to begin to resolve our differences, and to pursue greater political and economic integration with the international community. We joined Russia, France, the United Kingdom, China, and Germany to endorse an offer to provide Iran with fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor, which creates medical isotopes for medical treatment. This offer demonstrated a good-faith commitment to working with Iran toward a future civil nuclear program for peaceful purposes.

Iran agreed in principle, but then refused the IAEA's terms. Now, Iran has announced that it will increase its enrichment activities to produce up to 20 percent enriched uranium, in violation of successive United Nations Security Council resolutions. And its explanation

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doesn't add up. It could have the very enriched uranium it says it seeks by accepting the international IAEA offer. So this has only deepened the international community's doubts about Iran's nuclear intentions, along with increasing isolation of Iranian government. Furthermore, since the meeting in Geneva in October, Iranian officials have refused every offer to meet on its nuclear program. So these actions, understandably, have caused us to wonder: What does Iran have to hide? Why is Iran refusing to live up to its international obligations, which would lead to political and economic integration with the international community that would actually benefit the Iranian people?

Iran leaves the international community little choice but to impose greater costs for its provocative steps. Together, we are encouraging Iran to reconsider its dangerous policy decisions. We are now working actively with our regional and international partners, in the context of our dual track approach, to prepare and implement new measures to convince Iran to change its course.

And of course, our concerns about the Iranian government's intentions are intensified by its behavior toward its own people. The world has watched the events of the past several months in Iran with alarm. We know of the large-scale detentions and mass trials, political executions, the intimidation of family members of the opposition, and the refusal to extend Iranian citizens the right to peaceful assembly and expression, as we have seen again in just the last few days.

The United States joins other nations in condemning these events. If the Iranian government wants the respect of the international community, it must respect the rights of its people.

The third issue where our policies and principles converge is of great concern to all of us: violent extremism.

Many of the nations represented here today and many more worldwide have already experienced firsthand the devastating effects of violent extremism. In particular, the groups who operate from bases in Afghanistan and the border region with Pakistan have killed people of many faiths in many countries.

In just 2009, in Pakistan, roughly 2,000 civilians were murdered by Al Qaeda and its allies. These included people participating in peaceful religious processions in Karachi and women and children gathered at a local market in Peshawar.

Extremists have recently attacked pilgrims in Iraq with the intent of destabilizing the government and reigniting civil war. In Nigeria, extremists are exacerbating Muslim-Christian tensions. In Somalia, they are working to take down the government. And in Yemen, Al Qaeda seeks to exploit internal and regional divisions to create a new base for global terrorism.

Many faith leaders and citizens from Muslim communities have voiced their outrage at those who claim to kill in the name of God. And we share this view. And are determined to prevent extremists from driving wedges between Muslims and non-Muslims—in America or anywhere. We all have a stake in this fight, and the United States is committed to working in partnership with Muslim-majority countries as we face this threat together. Because Islam is—and must be—an important part of the solution in confronting violent extremism.

Dozens of countries are doing their part in Afghanistan to fight Al Qaeda and its allies, to protect the democratic government, and to improve economic and educational opportunities. Among our partners there are Turkey, which has sent more than 1,500 troops; Jordan, which runs medical facilities that have treated thousands; the United Arab Emirates, which is supporting humanitarian operations; and Saudi Arabia, which has pledged financial support.

Now, the United States and 42 other nations may have increased our military presence, but we have also increased our civilian effort to help the government strengthen its ability to lead, especially in Afghanistan's once-thriving agricultural sector. And we are supporting Afghan leaders with the delicate, difficult work of reintegrating into society members of the Taliban—but only those who renounce violence, lay down their weapons, and sincerely want to help build their nation's democratic future.

For too much of Afghanistan's history, countries and outside groups have used it as a place to achieve their own ambitions, with little regard for the rights, talents, and dreams of the Afghan people. The United States has no interest in occupying Afghanistan. We also have no intention of abandoning Afghanistan. When international forces leave Afghanistan, our civilian presence will continue, so we can foster a long-term partnership.

That same commitment to partnership and shared responsibility is at the heart of our work in Pakistan. We stand with Pakistan's democratic government and people as they work to defeat the insurgents who are targeting their own citizens. We are not motivated by our own notion of what Pakistan needs, but by what Pakistan and Pakistanis tell us they need.

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The United States passed landmark legislation last year that tripled civilian aid to Pakistan, under the leadership of Senator Kerry, who addressed you yesterday. We are working to help with their energy problems, to solve the power shortages that have caused so many blackouts, and also to improve access to water, their agricultural productivity, transportation, and education.

We are also making steady progress with our plan to responsibly end the war in Iraq, in partnership with the government and people of Iraq. Our combat troops were out of Iraq's cities by the end of last June, as we planned. We are on track to meeting our deadline of ending our combat mission by the end of this August. This month, the number of American troops fell below 100,000 from a high of more than 170,000, and that number will continue to drop as we take all of our combat troops out of Iraq.

As we decrease our military presence, we're bolstering our long-term civilian relationship. Iraq and the United States have signed a Strategic Framework Agreement that includes partnerships in education, science and technology, trade, and agriculture. And we are providing support leading up to the national elections next month.

Iraq's journey to democracy has not been easy. Just in the past few weeks, brutal attacks have killed dozens of people. But those attacks have failed to deter the determination of the Iraqis to hold their elections. And the next months are sure to be testing. Many countries can and should help Iraq through its challenges, and to reintegrate Iraq fully back into the region. Iraq does have the potential to become a force for regional stability and prosperity.

Two other issues regarding global security and violent extremism deserve greater explanation: the prison at Guantanamo Bay, and the new security regulations for international flights landing at American airports.

In one of his first acts as president, President Obama directed that the detention facility at Guantanamo be closed, recognizing that Guantanamo had become a symbol of the wrong way to make America more secure. Now, we had hoped that this task would be completed within a year. That has proven impossible. But we will close Guantanamo. And we will close it in a way that is both responsible and consistent with basic standards of justice. Our progress has been slow because this is difficult. It depends in part on the willingness of other nations to take in detainees, and we are very grateful to those nations that have already done so, and we ask others to please consider doing so, in order to help us expedite the closing of Guantanamo.

As to our new airline security regulations, they have raised legitimate questions that need to be considered within the larger reality. All responsible nations have a stake in stopping extremists who would use violence, who would seek to exploit the ease and freedom of global air travel. So we all have to work together to strengthen airport security, while treating people fairly and respectfully. This is a difficult balance to strike. And the United States, like many countries, are still working to find the best way to ensure the safety of all travelers while also preserving their dignity. The current situation is far from ideal, and we are regularly reviewing our security measures and we will modify them as circumstances and the risks of attack warrant. I can only ask for patience and understanding from travelers in the meantime.

Because airline security is a small piece of a larger issue. Without security, no community can thrive. But security requires more than strong borders, safe skies, or friendly neighbors. True and lasting security takes root in places where people have the opportunity to find jobs, to be educated, to raise healthy families, and benefit from the scientific and technological breakthroughs that have transformed the way we live in the 21st century. When these opportunities are absent, frustration and anger often follow.

So that's the fourth issue I wish to address: opportunities for young people. In many parts of the world today, from Latin America, to Africa, to Asia, including many Muslim-majority countries, people under 25 make up more than half the population. They deserve the chance to make their mark on the world and be a part of positive change.

President Obama and I believe that education and innovation are the currency of this century. That's why he announced a new era of engagement with Muslim communities to expand educational opportunities, support entrepreneurs, and promote advances in science and technology. Our goal is to identify excellent ideas and successful projects in Muslim communities and then invest in them, help to scale them up, and to connect innovators and entrepreneurs, so that they can support and enhance each other's work.

We are creating a Global Technology and Innovation Fund, which we will launch this spring, that will provide hundreds of millions of dollars in capital to small and medium-sized businesses throughout the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. In April, President Obama will host a two-day Summit on Entrepreneurship in Washington, which will bring together innovators and entrepreneurs and business

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people from 50 countries on 5 continents, along with their American business counterparts, to work to establish a network that can support these kinds of advances.

And to promote science exchanges, we have launched our science envoy program. One of our envoys, Dr. Ahmed Zewail, a Nobel Prize-winning chemist, has already visited Egypt and Turkey. And another, Dr. Elias Zerhouni, a former director of America's National Institutes of Health, is here at this forum.

To extend the benefits of past breakthroughs to more people, we are working closely with the OIC to eradicate polio. We are collaborating with Qatar and others to create economic opportunity to fight hunger, poverty, and disease. And I especially want to highlight Qatar's initiatives to boost food security and output through hydroponics, innovative agricultural techniques, solar-powered desalinization of water for irrigation. That can prove to be a model for many parts of the world.

We have to continue to expand and strengthen outreach to students. And that is why we have increased funding for educational exchange programs for Muslim students. NASA, our space program, has partnered with the Arab Youth Venture Foundation in Dubai to give Arab and American engineering students the chance to work together on NASA missions. And we encourage higher-education partnerships like those between American universities in the U.S. and Qatar and the UAE, which benefit students and faculty on both sides.

These demonstrate our commitment, but our scale of success depends upon whether we can work closely with other governments, particularly governments willing to invest to build sustainable economies that are based not only on natural resources, but on the energy and ingenuity of the people.

And we want more partnerships with the private sector, universities, foundations, and people-to-people engagement. Our Special Representative for Muslim Communities, Farah Pandith, who leads our engagement with Muslims worldwide, not just in the places you would expect it, but in Europe, as well, is here today. And we are very pleased that President Obama announced our Special Envoy to the OIC, Rashad Hussein, who is also here, who will help drive progress across the range of issues that the OIC addresses.

But beyond any of these programs or partnerships—beyond national security or economic growth—we have to look at the intangible rights endowed to all human beings that provide a strong foundation for broad-based progress and greater understanding. And that is the fifth and final issue that I wish to address. Among them are the right to practice the religion of your choice freely; to have a say in your government and be treated fairly under the law; and the right to equality for women and girls. Like many nations, the United States cherishes these rights, in part because we've had our own challenges in protecting and advancing them. And we seek to be a partner to people in other countries as they strive to obtain these rights for themselves.

This year, we rejoined the United Nations Human Rights Council. And one of our first acts was to work with Egypt on a Freedom of Expression resolution—a much-needed declaration of principle at a time when that freedom is jeopardized by new efforts to constrain religious practice. Respect for different faiths is essential to the success of pluralistic societies, as is the right to speak freely. So we stand for the vigorous defense of both freedom of religion and expression, and believe that the best way to promote tolerance and respect for all religions is through legal protections against discrimination and hate crimes, along with outreach to minority religious groups, and public education campaigns. That is why we are now working with countries on the Human Rights Council to put forth an affirmative agenda that will help make these principles a reality.

Democratic reform advances these freedoms and many others. And it, too, is a critical element of progress. We share the belief that people can best fulfill their potential when they have a say in the decisions that shape their lives; when they are free to share and access information; speak, criticize, and debate, including on the Internet, which has become a vital tool for activists for democracy and women's rights.

We supported and will continue to support those who build the foundations of democracy: transparent and trustworthy institutions, the rule of law, a vibrant civil society that shines a light on government abuses and those overlooked corners of society where the powerless and disenfranchised can be found.

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But none of this can—or should—be imposed from the outside. It must emerge from citizens themselves. And as nations strive to build and strengthen governments that reflect the will of their people, grounded in their own traditions, they can count on the United States to be their partner.

But the will of the people means the will of all the people—men and women. Women’s rights are an issue of singular importance to me personally and as Secretary of State.

So many studies have shown that educating women and girls leads to healthier families, improved economic growth, greater prosperity. As the Egyptian poet Hafez Ibrahim said, “A mother is a school. Empower her and you empower a great nation.” I could not agree more. And many Muslim-majority countries are demonstrating that. They are proving that women’s rights and national progress go hand in hand. And yet, in many countries across the world, we still see the subjugation of women continue. And what do we find? Poverty, poor health, and social unrest.

Even today, in 2010, women are still targets of violence. And all too often, religion might be used to justify it. But there is never a justification for violence against women. It is not cultural. It is criminal. And it is up to religious leaders to take a stand for women, to call for an end to honor killings, child marriages, domestic and gender-based violence. No country can achieve its full potential when half the population is left out or left behind.

Now, the five challenges that I have discussed tonight are critical to our dialogue. But there are certainly others that I am sure will be raised in the questions, and be part of our continuing discussion. But I came to this forum because I believe that talking and listening to each other are essential to any progress we hope to make. We have to have a meaningful dialogue. The power of conversation has been proven time and time again to me. Wherever I go, whether it’s Pakistan, Indonesia, or Iraq, I ask for an open dialogue and I invite honest criticism. And that’s exactly what I have gotten.

People ask hard questions about my country’s policies, about our intentions, even our basic values. And I listen. And then I respond. Sometimes I correct what I believe are false statements. Sometimes I offer explanations or alternate views. Sometimes I agree with the questioner. And others I disagree passionately. And in almost every instance, I come away convinced that we’ve reached greater understanding. And that understanding serves as the base for whatever else we expect to do together.

Open and rigorous dialogue helps create the conditions for change. That’s what the President did in Cairo. That’s what we are doing here in Doha. But on its own, dialogue is not enough. Both President Obama and I believe that our policies must match our principles, and that it is results, not rhetoric, that matter in the end. And that is why I look forward to working with all of you in the weeks and months ahead to build, strengthen, and advance our understanding and our partnerships, on behalf of our countries, on behalf of all people everywhere.

Thank you very much.

Source: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/02/136678.htm>

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