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TOWNINTERVIEW

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
With Al Jazeera

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Carnegie Mellon, Qatar

SHEIKH ABDULLAH AL THANI: (In progress) American university to partner with Qatar Foundation. The U.S. is, of course, a country with which we have close ties. Many a Qatari, myself included, have been educated there. We have a sense of gratitude to the U.S. for the important role of education in our lives. We have a sense of friendship from our years of study in your country.

But this relationship is not based on sentiment alone. From the very outset, quality has been the hallmark of Education City. No one anywhere disputes the fact that some of the best education in the world is to be found in the U.S. Qatar Foundation is proud to be building Education City with six U.S. university partners, (inaudible) leaders and the disciplines they are teaching and researching here in Qatar. We thank them for their significant role in this partnership. Already we are producing graduates of the finest caliber who are making their mark in Qatar and in the region. I am confident that even greater achievements lie ahead.

And now, it is a great honor for me to introduce our distinguished guest. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has held significant public positions over several decades. She has had a prominent legal career. She is a former senator from the State of New York. And, of course, former First Lady. She is a champion of social justice, and particularly the rights of women. Now she is a very active Secretary of State in the Administration of President Barack Obama.

Madam Secretary, thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to visit us in Education City. I know all of us, but especially our students, are delighted to welcome you today. On behalf of Qatar Foundation, welcome to Education City.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you so much, Your Excellency. And it is, indeed, a great honor and a pleasure to be welcomed here to Education City. I have been following the progress of Education City from the United States, and I am delighted to be able to see with my own eyes the extraordinary commitment of the Qatar Foundation, of the Emir, the Sheikh, and of the people of Qatar to the importance of education, and to this really extraordinary partnership between our two countries. It is, for me, a personal privilege to be here and to see so many of the students who are part of this wonderful educational experience.

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I am looking forward to our discussion today, and to have a chance to share ideas, to answer questions, to explore in an educational setting some of the important matters that are being faced, not only here in the country and region, but globally, as well.

I was privileged yesterday to participate in a dialogue, the World Islamic Forum, that is sponsored by the Brookings Institution and the Government of Qatar. And there I gave a speech outlining some of the changes that we are undertaking in the United States under the leadership of President Obama based on the vision that he set forth in his Cairo speech about a new beginning for relations between the United States and the world that is often described as -- not just here in the Middle East, but in the higher globe -- as the Muslim-majority, Islamic.

But what I look for are ways that we can celebrate our differences, but narrow our areas of disagreements, and find the common cause in the pursuit of what are very human objectives of peace and prosperity and opportunity. And that is particularly important as we look into the future. Because in many places in the world, the majority of the population is under the age of 25. And so, the decisions that are made here at Education City, in my own country, in settings like this, are really about what kind of future we will help provide for those of you who are students here today.

So, I am looking forward to the conversation. We have a very distinguished interviewer, who maybe should join us, or -- you're going to come up here, or stand there? Okay, good. So, I am going to turn it over to the professionals here, and then we will start the interviewing and the town hall.

But again, thank you for welcoming me here at Education City.

(Applause.)

MR. FOUKARA: Madam Secretary, if the criteria for judging U.S.-Muslim relations is the issue of Palestine, as millions of Arabs and Muslims seem to feel, they would say that those relations, taking that criterion into consideration, are not in very good shape right now. What say you to that?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, first, I am delighted to be part of this exciting interview and town hall at Al Jazeera. And thank you for participating.

The first thing I would say is that, obviously, our relations with people around the world is much broader than any one issue, even an issue as important as the future of the Palestinian people and the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. I think it is a mistake to only look at the United States and our role in working with other countries through any single prism. But I accept the fact that this is a critical issue. It's a critical issue to us.

One of the very first decisions that President Obama made was that the United States would not be on the sidelines, that we would actively participate in trying to bring the parties into negotiations that would lead to a final resolution, and that it would result in a state for the people of Palestine, that they would have a chance to have their own future, fulfill their own dreams and aspirations, and that it would provide security for the people of Israel, that they too would be able to live side-by-side, in a two-state solution.

We have worked over this past year with both parties, as well as other interested countries, to try to bring that about. And I am hopeful that this year we will see the commencement of serious negotiations that will cover

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every issue that is outstanding. Obviously, those are the ones that have to be decided between the parties; no one can dictate to either the Israelis or the Palestinians what the outcome should be. They must make those decisions themselves. But the United States is very focused on being a facilitator and a help in every way possible to achieve that outcome. And we are working hard on it, we are working hard on it every day. And we hope that we will see the kind of break-through this year that everyone is anticipating.

MR. FOUKARA: Madam Secretary, a lot of people look at the issue of settlement into West Bank, and they wonder if the United States gives priority to the concerns of the few thousand settlers over its interests and its relations with over a billion Muslims. How do you account for that?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, the fact is that we do not, that our position is that settlement activity is illegitimate, and that the final resolution of borders has to be worked out that will give both sides, the Israelis and the Palestinians, the secure borders that they deserve to have. And both sides recognize that development and swaps will be necessary in order to achieve the outline of the Palestinian state. But, of course, it will be based, as I have said many times, on the 1967 lines, with the agreed swaps, and taking into account subsequent developments. Those are the very clear parameters that the United States believes that the parties should negotiate over.

So that is, then, our condition. It remains our condition. And we think the best way to resolve the ongoing concerns that are reflected in the question and the feelings that so many people have is to get the parties into a negotiation facilitated by the United States, and to assist them in whatever way we can to reaching a resolution on borders, on refugees, on security, on Jerusalem that will, once and for all, end the conflict.

MR. FOUKARA: Madam Secretary, I have a few more questions, so I will be talking to you again, one-on-one, in a little while. But for now I would like to take a few questions from the audience, if that is okay with you.

QUESTION: Hello, Madam Secretary. My name is Kasi Irae. I am from Iran. But I was born and raised in Dubai. My question is about the war in Iraq. So, ever since -- throughout high school and subsequently in my university years, I have been watching the Iraq war. People are dying, you know, bombs are going off, and there are several (inaudible). And something I just -- I wonder if America were -- if Iraq didn't have any oil. And my question is, would America be in Iraq if Iraq didn't have any oil?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think that what is happening in Iraq is very important on a number of fronts. And we are going to be leaving Iraq, and when we leave Iraq, as has been agreed to with our military -- and we are on schedule to do that -- we will, hopefully, have a relationship with Iraq as we would have with any other country. We hope to have a strong civilian partnership.

And I think that the short answer to your question is we will be in Iraq as we would be in any country, whether or not they have natural resources. And the Iraqis themselves are making the decision about the future of their oil industry. You may have followed the recent bidding that has been done, giving contracts to countries from all over the world, companies from China to Europe to the United States to the Middle East.

That's the way it should be. The people of Iraq, through their democratically elected government -- something they did not have in the past -- should be making those decisions for themselves. That is really what the United States hopes will be the future of Iraq, that it will remain democratic, a strong democracy, a pluralistic society, where every part of the country gets to participate, that there isn't any tilting of power for or against any group

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within Iraq, and that, as part of their democratic future, the Iraqi people will have the benefit of their oil revenues. Not one group, not any individual, but the Iraqi people.

And it is my hope that that becomes the reality for the Iraqis, that they benefit from their own natural resources, that they invest in education cities, that they build great health care facilities and housing for people. That is what we hope for them, and that is the direction that the Iraqi Government seems to be headed, themselves.

So, the United States is very pleased at the progress that Iraq is making. And the oil industry is broadly dispersed among many different companies and countries, at the decision of the Iraqis themselves. That is the way it should be, in our view.

MR. FOUKARA: Can I take the next question in Arabic, and preferably from a female voice, if that's okay?

QUESTION: Hello, Madam Secretary. (Inaudible.) I was wondering in regards to your (inaudible) in Doha, the campaign is pretty much emphasizing to cut off support for Iran's nuclear program, since you have evidence that they are, indeed, building nuclear weapons. How do you plan to implement that, especially in the Middle East? (Inaudible) the vast majority of the companies (inaudible) Iranian, and you have much (inaudible) Iranian. How do you (inaudible) that issue?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you. I think it's important to remember that when President Obama went into office a little over a year ago, he made it very clear that we wanted -- the United States wanted -- a different relationship with Iran. We have not had a very good relationship for over 30 years. And President Obama decided that it was time to try to change that. And I agreed, that we wanted to reach out to the Iranian leadership and look for ways that we could begin to cooperate and have something of a more normal government-to-government, people-to-people relationship. And President Obama has reached out, and has publicly and privately made it clear that we are extending a hand. But it is a two-way street to have any kind of engagement.

We also believe that Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons was very destabilizing for the entire region. People of Iranian descent may live in Qatar, but I think part of the reason why we're so focused on the nuclear threat from Iran is that it would be very destabilizing to all the countries in this region. And we believe that it is in violation of Iran's obligation under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and violation of a number of United Nations resolutions for Iran to pursue nuclear weapons.

We have made it clear -- and it's on the front page of the paper in Doha, what I said yesterday -- that Iran, as any country, has a right to peaceful, civil nuclear power. We drew that distinction. Unfortunately, there has not been the kind of response that we had hoped for from the Iranian leadership.

And, therefore, we have pursued a dual track approach. The engagement offered is still there. But it is important for us to work with like-minded countries here in the Gulf, in the broader region, and around the world who share our concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions. And the world community has made those concerns very clear. We have worked with Russia and Germany and France, the United Kingdom, and China to continually, over the course of this past year, make clear that we did not believe that Iran should pursue nuclear weapons.

So, where are we today? Well, on the nuclear front we see Iran being exposed for having a secret facility at Qom. We see Iran refusing an offer from Russia, the United States, and France to help it get the enriched

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uranium it needed to run something called the Tehran Research Reactor, which makes medical isotopes, something that we are willing to support Iran to do, for medical purposes. We see the president of Iran ordering the nuclear program to do its own enriching, and to begin to move toward the level of enrichment that certainly is troubling to us, because of what it well could be, with respect to nuclear weapons. We hear a lot of very negative language coming out of Iran.

And we are deeply concerned about the way Iran is treating its own people, and the way that it has executed demonstrators, imprisoned hundreds and hundreds of people whose only offense was peacefully protesting the outcome of the elections. Sitting here in this extraordinary campus, where you are encouraged to think and speak freely, it is hard to imagine what it must be like now to a young person in Iran, who wishes to have the same opportunities.

So, we are still hoping that Iran will decide to forgo any nuclear ambitions for nuclear weapons, and begin to respect its own people more on a daily basis, provide opportunities that the young students of Iran deserve to have for their future. But we cannot just keep hoping for that. We have to work to take action to try to convince the Iranian government not to pursue nuclear weapons.

And so, that is our policy. And that is what we are attempting to do. And we think it is very important for this region, but it is also important for the world.

MR. FOUKARA: Madam Secretary, as a follow-up to what you said about giving young people in Iran an opportunity, a lot of Arabs and Muslims look at Gaza. They look at the young people in Gaza, and they say, "Well, aren't those also worthy of an opportunity? And is the U.S. working to (inaudible) on Gaza, so that they can enjoy that opportunity?"

SECRETARY CLINTON: And they are right. That is exactly how we view the situation in Gaza. We consider it a humanitarian crisis. It is something that I have worked on, ever since I became Secretary of State. The United States has contributed many, many hundreds of millions of dollars to try to assist the people of Gaza. We have worked to encourage the lifting of the boycotts, and tried to get more important materials into Gaza. And I deeply, deeply feel the terrible situation that all the people of Gaza are experiencing.

We have begun to deal with the immediate necessities of food and medical supplies. But we need housing for people to live in. We need hospitals rebuilt. We need schools that can function and provide an education. And we are continuing to push very hard for that to be realized. And we hope that once we get into the negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, we will see more progress.

We would also love to see Hamas renounce violence, agree to recognize Israel, and be part of that future. Because, clearly, we want to see a secure and stable policy in place that would include Gaza. And that can only happen if Hamas decides that it wishes to be part of the solution, going forward.

So, this is a very, very serious humanitarian challenge that we feel very strongly about, and are working to try to address. That is part of the larger political challenge that we think can only be resolved through finally ending the conflict and creating a state for the Palestinian people to live in peace and security and pursue the kind of everyday activities, like educating their children, that should be the birthright of everyone.

MR. FOUKARA: Just for the sake of diversity, I am going to try to find and get a question in Arabic (inaudible), Madam Secretary.

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QUESTION: (Speaks in Arabic.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I hope so. That is certainly our goal. And it is President Obama's vision and hope that we would overcome stereotypes and misinformation, misconception. Because, clearly, the raw diversity of the Islamic world is something that Americans are learning more about, and recognizing to a greater degree.

But I think we have work to do. And so what we are trying to achieve is a broad program of outreach. And I have two young people here with me today, and I will ask them to stand up, so that you can see them. One of them is our new special envoy to the OIC, Rashad Hussein, who the President has just appointed. He is a trusted advisor to the President, works in the White House and in the State Department on behalf of this important position. The other is Farah Pandith, who is our special representative to the Muslim community, particularly young people. And Farah has been working non-stop, traveling the world, talking with and listening to young people in Muslim communities from Morocco to Malaysia. It has been a very concerted and broad outreach.

So, both of these young people are part of President Obama's and my outreach, because we want to have the kind of conversation we are having today. We will not agree on everything. I don't know any family that agrees on everything, let alone countries that have differences in experience and cultural views and the like. But we believe it is very important to have this kind of dialogue.

We are also investing hundreds of millions of dollars in more educational opportunities for Muslim students to come to the United States, because the young woman's question raises one of the challenges. After 9/11, as some of you may know, America became very focused on protecting our citizens, and made it more difficult for people to come to study and work in the United States. We are trying to, you know, reverse that.

We are also sending out science and technology envoys. We have Nobel Prize winners and other very distinguished scientists who are traveling the world, coming to countries, talking about what we can do in partnerships on science and technology. Entrepreneurships is an important area of our emphasis. And at the end of April, April 26th to 27th, President Obama will host an entrepreneurship summit at the White House, where we are identifying and bringing young people from across the Muslim world to be part of that networking and opportunity experience.

So, we are working hard on this, and we would hope that many of the Muslim communities around the world will, you know, reciprocate by inviting American students, inviting American professors, inviting American business leaders, media personalities, because that is the kind of dialogue that we think will help to move us beyond this very narrow focus that we, unfortunately, see too much of in the past.

MR. FOUKARA: How do you feel about veering to this side a little bit now?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Indeed. Don't want to leave anyone out.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, why did the current U.S. Administration turn its back on UN and NATO central European allies' calls, specifically, in the context of the missile shield program, and instead chose to accommodate Russia's demands, which are more appropriate for the Cold War era?

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SECRETARY CLINTON: Very good question, because I have the opportunity to explain our policy. And for those of you who may not have followed this issue, in the prior Administration of President Bush, a decision was made to deploy a so-called missile shield into Europe, particularly central and eastern Europe, as a defensive measure against potential missile attacks, particularly nuclear attacks.

When the Obama Administration came in, we conducted a very thorough review of the prior policy. And we concluded that it was not aimed at immediate threats, so much as longer-term threats, and that we could, with some changes in the architecture of the missile defense, be much more effective. And so we adopted a new approach. We did not eliminate missile defense, we changed how we were going to deploy it, and the various technologies that would be used for it. And you may have noticed in the last week there were announcements of placement in Poland and Romania.

Now, our belief is that there is a greater potential threat from Iran, with its missile -- with the development of its missile program, and with other potential rogue regimes or networks of terrorists who get a hold of missiles, than there are from a European-Russian conflict. We just do not see that as a problem, going forward. We may have political difficulties that we have to work out between the United States and Russia, or between Europe and Russia, but we don't see that as a kind of long-term threat, the way we unfortunately see Iran with its missile development, and its (inaudible) nuclear weapons.

So, the missile shield, which would protect into the Caucasus and down to Turkey, would provide some additional guarantee against threatening behavior. And we also are talking at length with a lot of our friends in the Gulf, as to what more they need defensively, in the event that Iran pursues this nuclear ambition.

So, we still are very committed to missile defense, but we think we have a better plan that is more effective than the one we inherited.

QUESTION: May I follow up? During the Aegis program, the Navy-based program that is going to be implemented now, didn't it fail most of its tests, the most recent one being (inaudible)?

SECRETARY CLINTON: But it succeeded in most of its tests. I mean, that's why you test, you know. You test -- there were some radar problems with it, and it didn't hit a target. But we have a lot of data that shows it being successful. So I think you can rest assured that we are going to have a very robust, respected missile defense system that is of the variety that we think will actually meet the threats that are on the horizon.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. FOUKARA: Just as a follow-up to what you said about Iran, Madam Secretary, you said in your speech before the U.S.-Islamic World Forum that more pressure should be applied to Iran. And there are a lot of people in the Middle East wondering if the United States is planning, at any one time, whether before the withdrawal from Iraq or after the withdrawal from Iraq, planning to launch a military attack of one kind or another against Iran.

SECRETARY CLINTON: No. We are planning to try to bring the world community together in applying pressure to Iran through sanctions adopted by the United Nations that will be particularly aimed at those enterprises controlled by the Revolutionary Guard which we believe is, in effect, supplanting the government of Iran. I mean, that is how we see it. We see that the Government of Iran, the supreme leader, the president, the parliament, is being supplanted, and that Iran is moving toward a military dictatorship. Now, that is our view.

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And so, what we are trying to do is to send a message to Iran, a very clear message, that we still would be open to engagement, we still believe that there is a different path for Iran to take. But we want the world united in sending an unequivocal message to Iran that, "We will not stand idly by while you pursue a nuclear program that can be used to threaten your neighbor, and even beyond." And we hope to try to influence the decision making within Iran. And that is our goal.

MR. FOUKARA: So, Madam Secretary, now you are saying there is no plan on the part of the United States to launch an attack? Not in the immediate future, not in the middle term, not in the long term?

SECRETARY CLINTON: We are interested in changing Iran's behavior and -- now, we will always defend ourselves, and we will always defend our friends and allies. And we will certainly defend countries here in the Gulf who face the greatest immediate nearby threat from Iran. But we have pursued a dual track, not a triple track, but a dual-track approach of engagement and potential pressure, and that is what we're focused on.

MR. FOUKARA: Madam Secretary, I would like to take a short break with your permission and with the permission of the audience, a very short one. When we come back, we will take more questions from the audience.

(Applause.)

MR. FOUKARA: (Speaks in Arabic.)

QUESTION: (Speaks in Arabic.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, our goal, eventually, is to have a Middle East free of nuclear weapons. In fact, the President has set a goal of eventually (inaudible) zero nuclear weapons in the world. I mean, that is our stated goal. We know that it will take time, and we are negotiating right now with the Russians to reduce our nuclear arsenal, because we are very committed to demonstrating our -- the importance that we place on this goal. So that is our goal.

Now, I have spent a lot of time talking with the leaders, and leading influential people from the Gulf and the broader Middle East. And they worry a lot about Iraq having nuclear weapons. And they tell me all the time that this is something that would cause them to have to react. And they don't want to. That's not something that they want to spend their money on, that they want to be involved in. But, on the other hand, they don't want to live in a region where they feel threatened.

So, our goal is to try to convince countries not to pursue nuclear weapons. And Iran signed a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. And they really bound themselves not to do so, and now are, we believe, reconsidering if not violating that.

So it is an ongoing challenge that we think the world has to face up to. The Non-Proliferation Treaty conference will be held in May. President Obama is hosting, in April, a nuclear security summit. And maybe it's because we have to worry about all kinds of scenarios all the time. We know that a lot of countries around the world share our concerns. And, therefore, we want to talk about how we prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, how we control nuclear material that could fall into the wrong hands. We have reason to believe that al-Qaeda would be very interested in getting its hands on nuclear material to make a nuclear bomb.

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And this is not the Cold War. In the Cold War the feeling was that you could deter each other, that no rationale actor, no rationale state would use a nuclear weapon on another, because they would immediately be destroyed. So that has kept everything in balance. When you have people who are willing to kill themselves, and kill many others at the same time, that upsets the balance. So it's not like it was 40 years ago. Now we are looking at threats that are much more difficult to evaluate and control, which is why we would like to move everyone towards a world in which we don't have nuclear weapons. We know that will take time, but we are pursuing it, and we are committed to it.

MR. FOUKARA: (Inaudible) question is what if Qatar or another ally of the United States decides to go for nuclear capability? How would you handle that?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, we would do everything we could to discourage it, because even though we have great relations with our friends here in the Gulf, we don't think it is smart for more countries to be developing nuclear weapons.

And, given the legitimate concerns and even fears that some countries might have that others would have it and they wouldn't have it, we would work to provide more defensive capability. Going back to the young man's question about missile defense, we would do more to try to persuade our friends that they would be protected, and that they wouldn't have to do this on their own. So that would be our response.

MR. FOUKARA: Israel. Everybody in the region knows that the Israelis have nuclear weapons. What if another state, another ally of the United States, decides openly that they want to have nuclear capability for military purposes? How would you handle that?

SECRETARY CLINTON: I would give you the same answer. I mean, we have had these conversations, as you might guess, going back many years. A number of countries that thought about it -- and this is public information -- like a Brazil or South Africa, decided not to pursue it. I mean it is a very expensive undertaking. It requires enormous commitment of technical expertise and financial resources. And in this world, as it exists today, it is not at all certain that it makes you safer.

So, I think a lot of countries who have done the balancing test have concluded not to pursue it. If a friend, an ally of ours, were to say, "Look, I worry about living in a neighborhood where a country that we are not friendly with has it and we don't have it," which is only a conversation that I think has been really active in the last year or two because of Iran, which is the focus of these conversations, again, we would say, you know, "We would hope that you would not do that," and we would try to reassure our friends that we would provide the defense and provide them with the defensive capability that they need to protect themselves from whatever that threat might be. That, I think, is the best way for us to proceed, and for our allies and friends to proceed.

MR. FOUKARA: (Speaks in Arabic.)

QUESTION: (Speaks in Arabic.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, we have to look at how we can best work with or influence or coexist with Iran. And that is really at the heart of your question: What is the best way to get along with Iran?

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I can only tell you what so many leaders tell me, which is that they worry about Iran's intentions. They worry about whether Iran will be a good neighbor, and will live peacefully. They know that Iran has funded activities that are against a lot of countries and people in the region. They know that Iran directly funds terrorist activities. So I think people have reason to worry.

And the question is, what can Iran do in order to allay the worries and the fears of their neighbors? And that is what we are trying to encourage Iran to consider. And yet, I don't see much progress there, to be honest. I just wish that we could tell you that there was more progress.

And I don't know whether the reaction that the Iranian Government had to the election, and now the opposition trying to express itself -- which we fully support their right to do so -- has made the Iranian Government even, you know, more unwilling to open up and talk with their friends and their neighbors about how to prevent the concerns from escalating. I wish that Iran would take a different approach. The United States, under President Obama, would really welcome a positive, normal relationship with Iran. But you can't do that unless there is something coming back to you. And there hasn't been. So, I wish that we could be having a town hall in Tehran. I wish that we could be having this conversation with members of the opposition and members of the government, and students from all points of view. But we are not.

So, our challenge is, how do we try to influence Iran to be a good neighbor and to treat its own people fairly and decently? And anyone who has answers to those questions, I really would love to hear them.

MR. FOUKARA: Madam Secretary, we want to get off the subject of Iran, and use your time with us to talk to you about other topics. I have one question for you before I go back to the audience.

Madam Secretary, you are obviously a Secretary of the United States of America. Part of your job is to look after the interests of the state that is your country. But you are also a human being. We all, as human beings, feel the need to see justice, whether in the Israeli-Palestinian issue or any other issue. How do you find that balance, between being the Secretary of State and just Hillary Clinton?

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I find the balance because I think that my country and the people of the United States want very much to see other people around the world have the same rights and opportunities that we have. And it is heartbreaking when you see people mistreated or abused or deprived of those rights, or suffering from natural disasters or war or oppression or other terrible events.

We can't be everywhere at all times, despite the size and the reach of the United States. But the United States has been extremely generous and concerned about meeting the needs of people. And I personally believe strongly that that is part of our obligation on this earth, to reach out and provide help and support to those in need. So, I think that the balancing act is not that hard. The prioritizing is hard, because there is so much need, and there are so many people who are suffering.

I took a very long trip to Africa last summer, and had a wonderful visit in many different places. But you go to a place like Eastern Congo, where more people have died in the conflict in Eastern Congo than any conflict since World War II -- more than 5.5 million people -- yet we rarely talk about it. We rarely see it on television. Women are raped and mutilated. People are driven from their homes. It is a horrible humanitarian disaster. And we are struggling to try to figure out a way to end the fighting, and to give people a chance to go back to their small homes and grow their food and raise their children, which is just the kind of common, everyday living that everyone should be entitled to.

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So, when you look around the world, there are so many challenges that -- the balance is not the hard part. It's trying to figure out what we can constructively do, how the United States can best intervene, how we can bring people together, how we can work with others to end suffering in Darfur, or to try to provide a better life for girls to go to school in Afghanistan. It is a very long list. But I think you have to keep your heart open, and you have to keep your mind alert to try to find opportunities to help wherever you can.

MR. FOUKARA: (Speaks in Arabic.)

QUESTION: (Speaks in Arabic.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Well, I think that women everywhere should be able to pursue an education, and to have the opportunity to make important choices for themselves. But not every woman everywhere wants the same things in life. And we have to be respectful of our differences. But I do believe that there are certain basic rights that every woman and girl should have, and then for women to choose how to pursue your life, how to live with your family, and all of these choices that are so important to us.

I have been very blessed over many years to have a number of close friends and associates of women who have been from Gulf countries or other places in the world, who are Muslim, who have a great pride in their heritage, but who also are very independent and very strong-minded, and who make their own way in life.

And I think that the education that you are receiving here is absolutely critical, because you will then have more opportunities. And it's not so much about what one wears as what is in one's mind and one's heart, and the kind of person one becomes. And I think that should be the emphasis as to how we look at girls and women's lives around the world.

And, you know, I have spent a lot of time working in Afghanistan. When President Karzai became president, there were a little less than a million children in school, and they were all boys. Now there are closer to 7 million children, and 40 percent of them are girls. And many families, even though they are conservative, want their daughters, just as their sons, to be educated.

And so, that's what we should be striving for. And that's why what Education City represents -- and I am sure you are aware of this -- is so important, not only in Qatar, not only in this region, but far beyond. And the fact that young women and young men go to school together, study together, learn together, sends a strong message to the entire world.

So, that is my hope, that each young woman has a chance to fulfill her God-given potential, just as I hope the same for each young man.

MR. FOUKARA: Madam Secretary, I just want to say thank you. I hope we will have another opportunity to do something like this down the road. And I want to thank the Qatar Foundation, and everybody who has taken part in this program. Thank you.

(Applause.)

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