

MIKE POMPEO

IMPACT: Currently the U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo has advocated U.S. intervention in the Middle East while employing inflammatory religio-civilizational language. Previously the Director of the CIA and a U.S. Member of Congress for Kansas, Pompeo has stated that Muslim leaders may be complicit in terrorist attacks for not sufficiently condemning them, and has maintained connections with anti-Muslim organizations.

- Mike Pompeo is the U.S. Secretary of State, a position he has held since his confirmation by the Senate in April 2018. **Pompeo was formerly the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), from January 2017 to April 2018, as well as a U.S. Congressman for the Fourth District of Kansas (2011-2017).** A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1986 and Harvard Law School in 1994, Pompeo served in the U.S. Army from 1986 to 1991, co-founded Thayer Aerospace, an aerospace manufacturing company, in 1998, and served as president of Sentry International, an oilfield equipment manufacturing company, from 2006 to 2010.
- **Under Pompeo's leadership at the State Department, the Trump Administration slashed the maximum number of refugees admitted to the U.S. to 30,000 in 2018, and to 18,000 in 2019, the lowest levels since the start of the program in 1980.** In accordance with the Trump Administration's Muslim Ban, the administration has blocked Muslim refugees in particular. Of all refugees resettled in the U.S. between Fiscal Years 2016 and 2018, Muslim refugees resettled in the U.S. deceased 91%.
- **Pompeo defended President Trump's racist tweets telling four freshman Congresswomen of color, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to "go back" to the "places from which they came."** Pompeo said that Trump is "absolutely not" racist, going on to say that he found it "deeply troubling" that the Congresswomen "blame America for so much of the trouble in the world."
- **Pompeo has advocated U.S. intervention in the Middle East while employing inflammatory religio-civilizational language.** In a July 2019 speech at the annual conference of the anti-Muslim religious organization Christians United for Israel (CUFI), **Pompeo mis-used Bible scripture to falsely interpret the Book of Esther as "evidence that Iran has for centuries been a hotbed of anti-Semitism,"** according to writer Bonnie Kristian. In a March 2019 interview with the *Christian Broadcasting Network*, in which **Pompeo was asked if Trump was like Esther, who was sent by God to save the Jews in the Bible, Pompeo responded that he "certainly believes that's possible."** In a January 2019 speech in Cairo, **Pompeo rhetorically linked the Word of God with what he perceives as America's role in the Middle East, stating, "In my office I keep a Bible open on my desk to remind me of God and His Word and the Truth. And it's the truth, lower-case 't,' that I'm here to talk about today. It is a truth that isn't often spoken in this part of the world . . . : America is a force for good in the Middle East."**
- In July 2018 and 2019, the State Department under Pompeo and Ambassador-at-large for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback held its first two annual Ministerials to Advance Religious Freedom. Though the State Department under Pompeo has been a vocal critic of China's "crackdown" on Uighur Muslims, it also **intervened on behalf of then-incarcerated British white nationalist Tommy Robinson. According to reporting in *Reuters*, the outlet "was unable to determine why the top U.S. official responsible for defending religious freedom would try to intervene with the British government on behalf of an activist who has expressed anti-Islamic views."**
- In November 2010, Pompeo was elected as a Tea Party Republican to the U.S. Congress from Kansas. Critics argue that the Tea Party "stigmatize[s] Muslims and seek[s] confrontation with Islam." The Center for American Progress (CAP) lists the Tea Party as a "grassroots organization" in the "Islamophobia Network." **Pompeo's congressional campaign tweeted a link to an article that described his political opponent, Raj Goyle, who is of Indian heritage, as "just another 'turban topper' we don't need in Congress or any political office that deals with the U.S. Constitution, Christianity and the United States of America!!!" Pompeo apologized for the tweet.**
- Amid a concerted effort from anti-Muslim groups to engender fear about sharia, **Pompeo co-sponsored congressional legislation in 2014 and 2015 to designate the Muslim Brotherhood a foreign terrorist organization.** Critics argue that such tactics "contribute to Islamophobia and infringe on American Muslims' right to religious freedom." Others argue that they criminalize, harass and intimidate American Muslim individuals and organizations.
- **In June 2013, two months after the Boston Marathon bombing, Pompeo delivered remarks in the House of Representatives, stating that "silence [in condemning these acts] has made these Islamic leaders across**

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- America potentially complicit.** Muslim groups and others criticize this claim that Muslims should do more to condemn terrorism, saying that this narrative overlooks both the fact that Muslims do condemn terrorism, and that they shouldn't have to. During his 2013 remarks, **Pompeo also commended Zuhdi Jasser, a self-described "Muslim Reformer."** The Center for American Progress (CAP) lists Jasser as an "anti-Muslim validator" in the "Islamophobia Network."
- **From 2013 to 2016, Pompeo appeared over a dozen times on CSP's Secure Freedom Radio.** In a May 2016 appearance, Pompeo stated, "We don't have to say that all Muslims are bad. But . . . we're going to have to have a broader approach in order to keep Americans safe." Gaffney has described Pompeo as "one of the most intelligent men I know in public life." **In February 2015, Pompeo spoke at an invitation-only roundtable discussion organized by CSP, along with 35 other "distinguished counter-jihadists,"** including Nonie Darwish, Andrew McCarthy, Sen. Ted Cruz, Geert Wilders, Zuhdi Jasser, Clare Lopez, David Yerushalmi, and Rep. Steve King.
 - In a February 2015 appearance on *Secure Freedom Radio* to discuss then-President Barack Obama's summit on countering violent extremism, **Gaffney suggested that Obama might have an "affinity . . . for the cause" of violent extremists. Pompeo agreed, saying "Every place you stare at the president's policies and statements, you see what you just described."** In a May 2016 appearance, Gaffney said, "You spoke about the jihad. And one other facet of it, as I know you are aware, Congressman Pompeo, is the Muslim Brotherhood piece of this, the civilization jihad." **Pompeo responded, "There's broad agreement that there is a threat from radical Islamic terrorism. And we have to understand that it is not only those who are violent but those who are aiding, that is providing encouragement, resource [sic], financial and otherwise."**
 - **According to ACT for America's Brigitte Gabriel, Pompeo "has been a steadfast ally of [ACT for America] since the day he was elected to Congress."** Pompeo was awarded ACT's "highest honor," the National Security Eagle Award for 2016. That same year, Pompeo sponsored the room at the U.S. Capitol for ACT's "Legislative Briefing" in conjunction with its annual national conference. Pompeo spoke at these briefings in 2016, 2015 and 2013.
 - While Pompeo has cautioned against equating Islam with terrorism, **critics argue that Pompeo's rhetoric and positions contribute broadly to a "clash of civilizations" between the 'West' and Islam narrative—a common anti-Muslim trope.**
 - In 2014, during a speech to a church group in Wichita, Pompeo said, **"This threat to America" is from a "minority within the Muslim faith" who "will continue to press against us [Christians] until we . . . make sure that we know that Jesus Christ is our savior is truly the only solution for our world [sic]."** At another Kansas church in June 2015, Pompeo stated, **"We are engaged in a struggle against radical Islam" and that "this evil is all around us."**
 - **In March 2016, Pompeo released a statement criticizing the Islamic Society of Wichita for inviting a speaker who he alleged was connected to Hamas,** which the United States has designated as a foreign terrorist group. Claiming American Muslim groups have associations with terrorist groups is a smear tactic and historical oversimplification that journalists and academics have criticized and debunked. **Pompeo called on event to be cancelled and said that he was "disappointed and disturbed" by the timing of the Muslim group's event — which fell on Good Friday.**
 - In a September 2016 op-ed published in the Wall Street Journal, titled, **"What We Learned in Scandinavia about Migrants,"** then-Representative Pompeo and Senator Tom Cotton juxtaposed Trump's immigration platform with the immigration policies of Norway and Sweden, respectively. They wrote that Sweden's policy of offering permanent residence to asylum seekers led to "economic, social, and political upheaval" and "failures" that "have been repeated in Germany, France, Austria and elsewhere."
 - In January 2017, when asked by the Senate confirmation committee for Pompeo's nomination to CIA Director about permitting waterboarding and other forms of torture, Pompeo responded "absolutely not." But in post hearing responses to lawmakers, journalists pointed out that Pompeo backtracked.
 - **Pompeo claims Guantánamo Bay "has been a goldmine of intelligence about radical Islamic terrorism."** The 2014 Senate Intelligence Committee Study on CIA Detention and Interrogation Program found that torture was not an

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“accurate means of acquiring intelligence” or “accurate information.” Since its opening in January 2002, 779 Muslims (including 21 children) have been tortured and held in indefinite detention.

Bridge Initiative Factsheet