



[Secretary of State Pompeo Conducts Controversial Visits Across the Middle East and Comes Under Fire for His Convention Address](#)

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo embarked on a controversial trip to the Middle East this week in the aftermath of the normalization agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. Pompeo began his trip in Israel, which includes scheduled visits to Sudan, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, with the possibility of further stops in Oman and Qatar. Pompeo came under fire for also delivering a recorded address to the Republican National Convention from the city of Jerusalem during his diplomatic trip, in an attempt to shore up President Trump's evangelical base. Pompeo himself is an outspoken evangelist who has previously drawn criticism for inserting his personal beliefs into American foreign policy. Critics have accused Pompeo of using his trip to the Middle East as a political ploy ahead of the upcoming November election, which in turn delegitimizes the Middle East peace process as a whole. Traditionally, the United States' diplomatic corps has remained neutral in domestic partisan politics, but Pompeo has broken from this policy, much to the chagrin of many former foreign policy officials.

Pompeo's trip to the Middle East during the Republican National Convention, and his address to the convention from Jerusalem has been criticized as being politically motivated. Rep. Joaquin Castro, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee has opened an investigation into Pompeo's RNC address and whether it was lawful. Castro called for Pompeo to address the subcommittee during a briefing upon his return to the United States, and also submit answers to written questions from the committee. Pompeo has argued that his speech was made in his personal capacity, but the House investigation will ultimately decide if that is the case. The trip's politicization has also been condemned as being detrimental to the peace process in the region. President Trump has previously been brazen in his declarations of how foreign policy improves his electoral standing, claiming that the controversial decision to relocate the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was done for his evangelical supporters. Furthermore, former diplomats have warned that the Trump administration's policies are pushing a bipartisan solution to the Middle East peace process further away, as it will be difficult to undo potentially harmful policies. Secretary Pompeo's trip to the Middle East embodies this, as he seeks to shore up President Trump's support among right-wing Jewish and evangelical voters, at the expense of securing lasting peace in the Middle East that is acceptable to all parties.

The agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates to normalize relations between the countries has been extolled by the Trump administration as an unquestionable success in its mission to secure peace in the Middle East. However, the agreement has been widely condemned by the Palestinians and other Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, for its blatant disregard of Palestinian priorities. The Trump administration's eagerness to broker the negotiations between Israel and the UAE, and Secretary of State Pompeo's trip to the Middle East to encourage additional countries to normalize relations with Israel, also indicate its desire to further support Israel, which remains wildly popular among President Trump's evangelical base.

During his multi-stop trip, Secretary Pompeo met with Sudanese Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok on Tuesday, after flying on the inaugural direct flight between Tel Aviv and Khartoum. Hamdok told Pompeo during their meeting that his transitional government did not have a mandate to normalize relations with Israel, and any decision on the subject would have to wait until after elections were held. The two also discussed removing Sudan from the list of countries judged to be state sponsors of terrorism, but Hamdok urged the United States not to tie the two issues to each other. Pompeo also met with the leaders of Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates on his trip, although he was told that normalization with Israel would be a long process.