

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Statement by President Obama, Mrs. Obama on Nelson Mandela Day

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
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Statement by the President and Mrs. Obama on Nelson Mandela International Day

As the people of the world celebrate Nelson Mandela's 93rd birthday on July 18, Madiba continues to be a beacon for the global community, and for all who work for democracy, justice and reconciliation. On behalf of the people of the United States, we congratulate Nelson Mandela, and honor his vision for a better world.

Nelson Mandela said, 'There is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.' A man who devoted 67 years of his life to public service, Madiba sets the standard for service worldwide, whether we are students, shopkeepers or farmers, cabinet ministers or presidents. He calls on us to serve our fellow human beings, and better our communities.

Michelle, and my daughters, Sasha and Malia, recently met Madiba during an official visit to South Africa that focused on service, youth leadership, education and healthy living. Their time with Madiba was the most moving part of their trip. Mandela's legacy exemplifies wisdom, strength and grace, and on the anniversary of his birth we salute the example of his life.

In 2009, the United States was honored to join 192 other United Nations member states in the creation of Nelson Mandela International Day. As the global community honors Madiba on July 18 through individual and collective acts of service, we honor the man who showed his own people, and the world, the path to justice, reconciliation and democracy.

Secretary Clinton Says Turkey Can Be Model for Emerging Democracies

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — Turkey's democratic and economic progress in recent decades has been "remarkable," and the country can serve as an example to its neighbors in the Middle East and North Africa, which are undertaking their own reforms, says Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Clinton spoke at a coffeehouse in Istanbul July 16 where she took questions from her Turkish audience. Istanbul is the first stop as Clinton begins 12 days of travel to Europe

and Asia, including stops in Turkey, Greece, India, Indonesia and China, to discuss a range of issues with government officials and organizations.

"I just want to see Turkey get stronger and more prosperous and have your democratic institutions be even more durable and be an example for so many of the countries that themselves are trying to figure out how to make political and economic reforms," she told the coffeehouse audience.

The country's impressive 11 percent annual gross domestic product growth rate in the first quarter of 2011 over the first quarter in 2010 is due to its political and economic openness and the development of its infrastructure, including in poorer parts of the country, she said.

Turkey's combination of internal and external growth creates a much stronger economic foundation than those of economies that are largely export driven, Clinton said. Turkey's growing consumer base and middle class will help sustain its economic success, Clinton said. Turkey's economy can be "an engine for economic growth in the region," she added.

"The more Turkey can demonstrate entrepreneurial activity, the more others can learn from you," she said.

Asked about the Turkish's government's arrest of journalists, Clinton said she has and will continue to raise the importance of press freedom with the Turkish government, but she also urged Turkish citizens to make their own voices heard, saying their participation will "strengthen Turkish democracy."

Turkish democracy "is a model because of where you came from and where you are," she said, and added that she believes the country's Kurdish population can be integrated in a way that allows Kurds full participation while maintaining their cultural identity.

But, she said, the United States does not support terrorism by groups such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The use of violence and terror "is not the way you make change in democratic societies," Clinton said.

Clinton said Turks have a confidence about their future, and that "can be a base for making some of the tough decisions about how you integrate Kurds, for example, how you develop other parts of the country."

In remarks with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu July 16, Clinton said Turkey's upcoming constitutional reform process will give the country an opportunity to address concerns over free expression, religion and minority rights, as well as advance the

country's prospects to join the European Union.

"We also hope that a process will include civil society and parties from across the political spectrum," Clinton said.

"I think across the region, people from the Middle East and North Africa particularly are seeking to draw lessons from Turkey's experience," Clinton said. "It is vital that they learn the lessons that Turkey has learned and is putting into practice every single day. Turkey's history serves as a reminder that democratic development depends on responsible leadership, and it's important that that responsible leadership helps to mentor the next generation of leaders in these other countries."

Secretary Clinton Says More Effort Needed to Combat Religious Intolerance

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged countries to follow up on the U.N. Human Rights Council's adoption of a resolution that protects freedom of expression and seeks to end the friction between free speech and religious defamation.

Speaking at the high-level meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on combating religious intolerance, held in Istanbul July 15, Clinton praised the OIC and the European Union for helping to pass a resolution that takes "a strong stand for freedom of expression and worship, and against discrimination and violence based upon religion or belief."

The resolution, passed March 24, relaxed broad prohibitions on free expression that had been imposed in the name of preventing religious defamation.

"Together we have begun to overcome the false divide that pits religious sensitivities against freedom of expression, and we are pursuing a new approach based on concrete steps to fight intolerance wherever it occurs," Clinton said.

"The resolution calls upon states to protect freedom of religion, to counter offensive expression through education, interfaith dialogue and public debate, and to prohibit discrimination, profiling and hate crimes, but not to criminalize speech unless there is an incitement to imminent violence," she said. Clinton urged countries to begin implementing the measure.

The secretary said no country, including the United States, "has a monopoly on truth or a secret formula for ethnic and religious harmony." There are still Americans who "feel vulnerable or marginalized as a result of their religious beliefs," and "wide ripples of intolerance" can spread from the actions of only a few incendiary people,

Clinton said.

In response, "we are focused on promoting interfaith education and collaboration, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, protecting the rights of all people to worship as they choose and to use some old-fashioned techniques of peer pressure and shaming, so that people don't feel that they have the support to do what we abhor," she said.

In addition, Clinton announced that the Obama administration plans to invite relevant world experts later in 2011 for "a series of meetings to discuss best practices, exchange ideas and keep us moving forward" on implementing the resolution.

Clinton said the need for religious tolerance around the world is as important as ever in 2011. The transitions to democracy in the Middle East and North Africa "have also exposed ethnic and religious minorities to new dangers," she said, and established democracies still need to work to fully protect their religious diversity, prevent discrimination and protect freedom of expression.

"For all of these reasons, this gathering and the shared commitment it represents is vitally important," she told the OIC meeting. "It is one of these events that has great ramifications far beyond this room."

U.S. Recognizes TNC as Libya's "Legitimate Governing Authority"

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced that the United States will recognize the Transitional National Council (TNC) as "the legitimate governing authority for Libya" and expects that the move will help the TNC obtain more funding as it struggles against Muammar Qadhafi's regime and makes plans for the country's political transition.

Speaking in Istanbul July 15, Clinton said that pending the creation of an interim authority, "the United States will recognize the TNC as the legitimate governing authority for Libya, and we will deal with it on that basis."

"In contrast, the United States views the Qadhafi regime as no longer having legitimate authority in Libya," she added.

The secretary joined representatives of more than 30 countries, the TNC, the Arab League, the African Union, NATO, the European Union, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of the Islamic Conference for a meeting of the Libya Contact Group, which is trying to support the TNC while increasing pressure on Qadhafi

to relinquish power.

Clinton said that following the resolution of some legal issues, U.S. recognition of the TNC will enable it to access "additional sources of funding," and U.S. officials "will be consulting with the TNC and our international partners in the most effective and appropriate method of doing this."

In response to the Qadhafi regime's violence against Libyan civilians, the Obama administration froze assets of the Libyan government beginning February 25, and the U.S. Treasury Department says it has seized approximately \$30 billion from Libya's leaders.

Clinton welcomed the direct financial support that countries have been providing to the TNC, as well as their contributions to the temporary financial mechanism that has been established to facilitate financial contributions and other in-kind assistance to the TNC.

State Department deputy spokesman Mark Toner said July 15 that the TNC needs funding "to exist as a de facto government," including paying bills and handling operational and security costs.

"We recognize them as the legitimate government of Libya. And so as such, we're going to take steps to make sure that they're able to carry out their functions," Toner said.

A State Department official who asked not to be identified said July 14 that the United States has also been providing nonlethal assistance to the TNC through the Libyan Information Exchange Mechanism (LIEM) in Benghazi. The LIEM is coordinating assistance and provides "a mechanism to help make sure we're matching what the TNC needs with what we are able to provide," the official said.

According to Secretary Clinton's prepared remarks at the Libya Contact Group meeting, the U.S. decision to recognize the TNC comes after the group provided assurances that it will pursue a process of democratic reform that is geographically and politically inclusive in the aftermath of the Qadhafi regime. It also pledged to uphold Libya's international obligations, and to disburse funds in a transparent manner to address the humanitarian and other needs of the Libyan people, she said.

"The United States appreciates these assurances from the TNC, which reinforce our confidence that it is the appropriate interlocutor for us in dealing with Libya's present and addressing Libya's future," Clinton said. She added that the United States "will help the TNC sustain its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya, and we

will look to it to remain steadfast in its commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms."

The secretary said that as Qadhafi continues to hold power and orders attacks on his people, his isolation will deepen and he will pay increased costs as his command centers and weapons are targeted by the international coalition.

"Qadhafi and those around him know what is required. The terms of a cease-fire are clear," Clinton said. "Qadhafi must stop attacks or the threat of attacks, remove his troops from all of the places they have forcibly entered and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance."

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