

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 2018

The Honorable Bob Corker
Chairman
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert Menendez
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Corker and Ranking Member Menendez,

We write to express concern about the nomination of Mike Pompeo to serve as Secretary of State. Our Secretary of State occupies a unique role as the United States' chief diplomat and principal representative to foreign governments, and therefore must have the confidence of partners and allies in order to build coalitions and promote a peaceful, prosperous, and secure world. We believe that Mr. Pompeo's long record of anti-Muslim statements and close alliances with anti-Muslim organizations and activists will render him ineffective as a statesman to Muslim leaders and populations around the world.

In order to succeed as Secretary of State, Mr. Pompeo must develop strong relationships with foreign leaders and be trusted to fairly convey their positions on sensitive issues to the U.S. government. Unfortunately, Mr. Pompeo has already demonstrated prejudice in representing the positions of the American Muslim community. Despite the numerous condemnations of the Boston Marathon bombing by Muslim religious and community leaders, Mr. Pompeo falsely suggested that American Muslim leaders were "potentially complicit" in the terrorist attack. Mr. Pompeo is therefore unlikely to be considered a fair arbitrator in representing the positions of Muslim communities abroad.

As Secretary of State, Mr. Pompeo would be tasked with promoting religious freedom and human rights abroad. It is difficult to believe that world leaders will take Mr. Pompeo's efforts seriously when he has sought to expand surveillance of American Muslim communities here in the United States and has stated that the "threat to America" was caused by "people who deeply believe that Islam is the way." In addition, he has used his past position as a Member of Congress to promote religious intolerance, unfairly accusing a minority of Muslims of "abhor[ing] Christians"¹ and thus working to spread fear and hate. He also used a speech to read a prayer that mourned that America "worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism and endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle."² Mr. Pompeo's past statements and initiatives will undermine his credibility in furthering religious freedom and human rights for all.

¹ "Mike Pompeo: 'threat to America' caused by 'people who deeply believe that Islam is the way,' (online at <https://vimeo.com/192276878/33c5857cb8>)

² "Summit Church God and Country Rally 2015," (online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO0opXYM52w>)


If confirmed, Mr. Pompeo will also need to negotiate and overcome differences with partners, friends, and potential adversaries. Mr. Pompeo's ability to do this successfully with the Muslim world will be limited by his longstanding alliances with anti-Muslim activists and organizations. Mr. Pompeo is a "steadfast ally" of Brigitte Gabriel, who runs ACT for America – the largest anti-Muslim hate group in the United States according to the Southern Poverty Law Center³ and Anti-Defamation League⁴ – and alleges that a practicing Muslim cannot be a loyal citizen of the United States of America. We are practicing Muslims and Members of Congress, and we find it deeply offensive that Ms. Gabriel questions our loyalty based on our religion. Mr. Pompeo is also a close ally of Frank Gaffney, the President of the Center for Security Policy, who argues that adherence to Islamic law should be considered an act of sedition and prosecuted. Mr. Gaffney has also called for Congressional hearings along the lines of those held by the Cold War's House Un-American Activities Committees to expose Muslim conspiracies.⁵ While a Member of Congress, Mr. Pompeo appeared on Mr. Gaffney's radio show over 20 times.⁶ We are disturbed that someone recently honored by such individuals could be tasked with representing American values abroad.

In summary, Mr. Pompeo will regularly be required to liaise with Muslim leaders and Muslim communities abroad, especially during this time of conflict, tension, and unprecedented humanitarian need throughout much of the world. We need a credible Secretary of State, not one hobbled by a history of anti-Muslim sentiment and discrimination. We need a Secretary of State who represents American values and ideals, not one who promotes bigotry and alienates marginalized communities. We thus urge you to oppose Mr. Pompeo's confirmation as Secretary of State.

Sincerely,



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress

³ "ACT for America" (online at <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/act-america>)

⁴ "ACT for America" (online at <https://www.adl.org/resources/profiles/act-for-america>)

⁵ "Center for Security Policy" (online at <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/center-security-policy>)

⁶ "Mike Pompeo at State Would Enable Trump's Worst Instincts," online at (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/11/pompeo-trump-tillerson/547217/>)