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Secretary Pompeo's Remarks to the Press

REMARKS

MICHAEL R. POMPEO, SECRETARY OF STATE**PRESS BRIEFING ROOM****WASHINGTON, D.C.**

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Turning to Afghanistan: The signing of the U.S.-Taliban agreement in Doha, together with the realization of the U.S.-Afghan joint declaration in Kabul, laid the groundwork for the road ahead toward a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

We know that the road ahead will be difficult. We expected it; we were right. The upsurge in violence in parts of Afghanistan over the last couple days is unacceptable. In no uncertain terms: violence must be reduced immediately for the peace process to move forward. Indeed, President Trump discussed this very issue directly with Taliban deputy leader Mullah Berader on Tuesday of this week.

And while a reduction in violence is paramount, we also continue to press all sides to stop posturing, start a practical discussion about prisoner releases, knuckle down and prepare for the upcoming intra-Afghan negotiations. The future of this peace process isn't just about what we do, or what the Taliban does. It's about getting the Afghan people together to solve this problem that has plagued Afghanistan for now 40 years.

We, the United States, has opened a door for you, the Afghan people, to come to the table to determine the future of your country. We'll stand with you; we're ready to support you. Do not squander this opportunity.

In other news related, I received word this morning that the ICC Appeals Chamber authorized an investigation into the activities of the Taliban and U.S. and Afghan personnel there. This is a truly breathtaking action by an unaccountable political institution masquerading as a legal body.

It is all the more reckless for this ruling to come just days after the United States signed a historic peace deal on Afghanistan, which is the best chance for peace in a generation. Indeed, the Afghan Government itself pleaded with the ICC not to take this course. But the ICC politicians had other goals.

I will reiterate one more time: The United States is not a party to the ICC, and we will take all necessary measures to protect our citizens from this renegade, unlawful, so-called court.

This is yet another reminder of what happens when multilateral bodies lack oversight and responsible leadership and become instead a vehicle for political vendettas. The ICC today stumbled into a sorry affirmation of every denunciation made by its harshest critics over the last three decades.

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