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## PRESS RELEASE

April 24, 2020

*For Immediate Release*

On the Occasion of Ramadan

**MICHAEL R. POMPEO, U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE**

On behalf of the American people, I extend my best wishes to Muslim communities in the United States and around the world as they mark the start of the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is a time of introspection, service, and compassion. In the United States, under normal circumstances, many mosques, homes, and community centers welcome friends and neighbors of different faiths to unite under one roof, echoing our shared American values of inclusion and charity.

This year, COVID-19 has abruptly changed the gatherings and celebrations of many Muslims throughout the world. Muslims who were planning on traveling to Mecca for Umrah pilgrimage to visit the two Holy Mosques of Mecca and Medina, have been encouraged to hold off on their plans in order to curb the spread of the disease. *Iftar* meals, cannot be shared, as they traditionally are, with extended family and friends; many will be moved to online platforms.

And in this sacred season, already reshaped by the pandemic, scapegoating of certain religious groups, including Muslims, has increased with the spread of COVID-19. We urge all governments and communities to use this time to focus on service and unity, to keep in mind the health and safety of the most vulnerable and the marginalized as we continue to fight to stop the COVID-19 crisis. Ramadan is a reminder for people of all faiths to strive for compassion, reflect on our own actions, and ensure all individuals are safe in times of hardship.

Under normal circumstances, many of our embassies and consulates around the world host *iftar* receptions to celebrate and honor the values of peace and friendship represented by Ramadan. This year, they will be engaging in creative ways that continue to demonstrate our common humanity and commitment to promoting religious freedom and inclusion at home and abroad. Once again, I wish Muslim communities around the world celebrating, a blessed and peaceful Ramadan.

*Ramadan Kareem*

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