

February 16, 2018

## **Tillerson comments on threats from Hezbollah and Syria**

The United States is concerned about Syria creating further opportunities for threats to Israel, Jordan and Turkey, and instability in the region, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Tuesday. The Jerusalem Post reported that Tillerson, speaking in an interview with Michel Ghandour of Al Hurra TV, commented that the threats Israel is confronted which emanate both from Hezbollah in Lebanon and from Syria. "We take the threats to Israel seriously and we take a view that Israel has every right to defend itself from those threats." Asked about the issue of Iran's influence in the region, Tillerson asserted that the U.S. believes the future of responding to the Islamic Republic's influence in Syria is through the political process. "We want to use our presence to also be a stabilizing force to support talks in Geneva under the U.N. Security Council resolution process, allow the Syrian people to write a new constitution, allow them to hold free and fair elections. And through that process, we believe Syria will strengthen its independence and will take its own actions to reduce and ultimately reject the influence of Iran inside of Syria." Tillerson continued, "It is our view – I think it's the view by and large of the international community – that Iran's presence in these countries is not helpful. We ask Iran to withdraw and send their forces home, and that's what we believe is the right pathway for the future."