



National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce الغرفة التجارية العربية الأمريكية الوطنية

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U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER HOSTS *IFTAR* DINNER IN HONOR OF THE ARAB DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY IN LOS ANGELES, CA

First-Ever Event at the InterContinental Hotel, Century City Attracts over 150 U.S. and Arab Government Officials, Diplomats, and Business Leaders

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti Highlights Importance of Arab Region as a Strong Trade Partner to Los Angeles

Los Angeles CA – The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) hosted its first Ramadan *Iftar* dinner in honor of the Arab diplomatic community. More than 150 government officials and business community leaders attended the high-profile gathering at the InterContinental Hotel in Los Angeles, including The Honorable Eric Garcetti, Mayor of the City of Los Angeles. Attendees shared a common interest to learn more about the Arab culture and about the traditions of *Ramadan*.

Ramadan for the Arab world and the Arab-American community holds a very special meaning. Muslims practice one of the five fundamental pillars of the Islamic faith during *Ramadan*, fasting. Every capable and healthy individual, except for children, seniors, travelers or the sick, abstain from food and drink from dawn till sunset. At the breaking of the fast, *Iftar*, Muslims follow certain traditions each day for one month of every year. They start their daily sunset meal with dates and milk following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and follow this by performing the 4th prayer of the day (*Maghrib*



Rim Elbayer-Aly, Director of NUSACC's Los Angeles office, greets the L.A. business community for the first *Ramadan Iftar* Dinner gathering at the InterContinental Hotel, Century City.



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Prayer) before heading back to the dinner tables to enjoy a meal shared with family and invited friends from all faiths.



The Honorable Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles, speaks to *Iftar* guests about the diversity of L.A., its multiple faiths and ethnic communities, and L.A.'s focus on expanding relations with the Arab region.

also particularly impressed with the number of non-Muslims and Chamber members who were very eager to share this special occasion with us tonight." The Arab-American community members attending the *Iftar* appreciated that the U.S.-Arab Chamber brought all Arab countries' representatives together under the same roof to celebrate such an important evening.

Elbayar-Aly welcomed invited guests, explained the concept of *Ramadan*, and outlined the evening's program, that included keynote speaker Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles; Mr. Salam Al Marayati, President of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC); and Mr. Amin Salam, NUSACC Vice President of Business Development. Garcetti broke the fast with the Arab and Muslim community in L.A., greeting the guests in the

David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO, noted that the U.S.-Arab Chamber has served as a bridge between cultures for more than 40 years and that the *Iftar* dinner represents a unique way of bridging gaps between the United States and the Arab world. He said, "*Iftar* is about refocusing our attention from normal daily activities and instead reflecting on and appreciating more fully our many blessings -- especially our valued guests, the people who make up our NUSACC family. NUSACC thanks you all for your friendship and your support. The ties and friendships we share are truly a treasure."

Rim Elbayar-Aly, Director of NUSACC in Los Angeles, said, "We are humbled that the Mayor of this great city could be with us today. I'm



Mr. Salam Al Marayati, President of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, explains the meaning of *Ramadan* and the Islamic faith interpretation of work in the holy book of the *Quran*.



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traditional Arabic greeting “*Assalamu Alaikum*” (*Peace be with you*) and wishing them a blessed *Ramadan*. He thanked NUSACC for the invitation and requested that guests join him in praying for peace in the world. Garcetti expressed how lucky he is to be Mayor of Los Angeles, where people come from anywhere in the world, speak any language, worship God in any manner, and find a community within minutes that feels like home.



Seated at the head table with Mayor Garcetti (second from right, moving counter-clockwise): H.E. Ali Al-Saboosi, UAE Consul General in L.A.; Gary Toebben, CEO of the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce; Janice Toebben (wife); and Amin Salam, VP of Business Development, NUSACC (right).

“We know that there are different issues in our city, country and around the world, but Los Angeles is a symbol of a mutual place where we can come back to the fundamentals that unite us all,” Garcetti noted. “I want to thank the U.S.-Arab Chamber for having a presence here, which builds a bridge between the Arab World, the Arab-Americans and the rest of the United States. The success of our city will be based on our ability to continue to

build these bridges. Angelinos don’t just ‘tolerate’ these communities; they embrace them and revel in them.”

Mr. Salam Al Marayati, President of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, followed the Mayor’s remarks by explaining the true meaning of *Ramadan* to the audience. He quoted from the *Quran*, Islam’s holiest book, and from the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which stress the importance of balance between work and worship for Muslims. Al Marayati noted, “The *Quran* always combines faith with work, growing in faith AND working for righteousness.” He continued, “*Ramadan* is the opportunity for us to become masters of ourselves, by delaying gratification, which is a sign of greatness.”



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Los Angeles as a Trade Partner to the Arab Region

Garcetti expressed his gratitude for having his International Trade Team of specialists work closely with NUSACC's office in L.A. He also highlighted the importance of the Arab region as a strong trade partner for the Golden State in general, and for Los Angeles in particular.

Noted Garcetti, "Los Angeles is a great local hub to the rest of the world, being the Western capital of the United States, the Northern capital for Mexico, and the North Eastern capital for the Pacific Rim. I am very pleased with the relationships that were built during my first year as a Mayor of Los Angeles – with Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and other Arab countries." The L.A. region is the 17th largest economy in the world, with a GDP of three quarters of a trillion U.S. dollars. "This incredible economic drive is heavily linked to our ability to make those connections from trade, investments and tourism," Garcetti remarked. "So it is my plan to you, as leadership of the Chamber, to look at these opportunities for us to make that real."

The Mayor was pleased to note, "I'm proud that our region has a significant Muslim and Arab population, so we can continue to grow our partnership with Middle Eastern countries – bright futures exist between us." He went on to say, "It is a tremendous thing that Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have established consulates here, and we do welcome them. We now also welcome Emirates Airlines, Etihad Airways and Saudia Airlines to LAX, and I hope to welcome Qatar Airways in the upcoming months. Each flight, by the way, is worth half a billion dollars for our economy each year." In conclusion, Garcetti said,



VIPs at the Iftar Dinner: Upper Row (left to right): Amin Salam, VP of Business Development, NUSACC; H.E. Elhusseini Abdelwahab, Consul General of the Arab Republic of Egypt; Gary Toebben, CEO of the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce; H.E. Ali Al-Saboosi, Consul General of the United Arab Emirates.

Bottom Row (left to right): Rim Elbayar-Aly, Director of NUSACC's office in Los Angeles; Hon. Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles; Rouaida Bourgi, Lebanese Consulate Representative.



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"But more than the financial impact, it is the cultural exchange that we gain. We have much to learn about this region, and we also have more to teach."

Elbayar-Aly remarked, "NUSACC is now enjoying a greater and stronger presence in Los Angeles, thanks to the excellent partnerships that were formed during the past year. These partners include Etihad Airways, InterContinental Hotel, the City of Los Angeles, the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Department of Commerce, Port of Los Angeles, Los Angeles World Airports, and many more private and government sector entities. NUSACC is a great organization, led and run by an excellent team of experts who play an integral role in promoting business and trade between the U.S. and the Arab world."

Lead Sponsors: Etihad Airways & The InterContinental Hotel

The two Lead Sponsors for the Los Angeles *Ramadan Iftar* were [Etihad Airways](#) and the [InterContinental Hotel](#), Century City.

Etihad Airways has been partnering with NUSACC on several events during 2014 to promote the new launch of their direct daily flight from Abu Dhabi to Los Angeles



NUSACC Team with Chamber members in Los Angeles: (from Left to right): Rim Elbayar-Aly, NUSACC Director, Los Angeles; Ed Perez, President, Forceprotector Gear LLC.; Rosaura Arroyo-Perez (wife); Shawn Monien, Director of Strategic Planning, Forceprotector Gear LLC.; Kim Monien (wife); Amin Salam, NUSACC VP of Business Development.

International Airport. These include a first-ever "[Trade Connect](#)" workshop series, which highlighted business opportunities in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates; the [inauguration of Etihad Airways' new non-stop service from Abu Dhabi to Los Angeles](#); and the L.A. *Iftar* dinner.

Another strong partner of the U.S.-Arab Chamber is the InterContinental Hotel Group, where many of NUSACC's key events are held around the nation. The excellent service, the team's superb eye for detail, and its special decorations and cuisine for the Iftar dinner helped deliver an



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authentic atmosphere that offered the guests a true feel for *Ramadan*. A global company with nine hotel brands, over 4,600 hotels, and nearly 674,000 rooms in almost 100 countries around the world, the InterContinental Hotel Group truly knows how to deliver hospitality.

Honoring the Arab Consulates:

The first *Ramadan Iftar* in Los Angeles provided NUSACC an opportunity to honor the consulates in Los Angeles. Amin Salam flew in from NUSACC's headquarters in Washington, DC to join Ms. Elbayar-Aly in welcoming the Los Angeles community to the Chamber's first *Iftar* in Los Angeles. Noted Salam, "This is the first *Ramadan Iftar* dinner in Los Angeles to honor the Consulates General of the Arab World. We are very privileged to have a presence in Los Angeles, where we can celebrate such events with our partners, in one of the world's most iconic cities -- a global city and a prominent platform for trade and investment, entertainment, media, fashion, science and technology, sports, education, medicine, research -- and a major trade partner to the MENA region."

Consuls General who attended the *Iftar* appreciated NUSACC's gesture. His

Excellency Abdulla Ali Alsaboosi, Consul General of the United Arab Emirates in Los Angeles, remarked, "It was a wonderful night and I was truly honored to celebrate my first *Ramadan* in Los Angeles with Mayor Garcetti, as well as many people from different faiths and cultures." He continued, "Amin Salam and Rim ElBayar-Aly did an amazing job hosting the *Iftar* by making everyone feel so welcomed. Mayor Garcetti and Mr. Salam Al-Marayati had everybody's attention with their thoughtful speeches. A truly memorable night!"

H.E. El Husseini Abdelwahab, Egypt's Consul General in Los Angeles, agreed: "I would like to express my deep gratitude for this kind invitation. The *Iftar* event demonstrated



Hon. Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles, shaking hands with Amin Salam, NUSACC VP of Business Development.



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enthusiasm, great dynamics, and the capability of reaching out to all sectors of the Los Angeles community. The presence of excellent organizations in the event is notable as well. I am sincerely impressed by the sincere effort and great success that Ms. Elbayar-Aly personally exerted in promoting the U.S.-Arab ties. I wish NUSACC the best of luck with their upcoming endeavors to reinforce the economic and commercial ties between the U.S. and the Arab world."

Mayor Garcetti ended his remarks by saying, "God bless each one of you and let *Ramadan* be a time of reflection and renewal. As for the relationship between Los Angeles and the Arab region, may we mark this gathering as the most beautiful chapter we have written yet."



Etihad Airways, the Lead Sponsor, offered a Raffle Drawing for two business-class tickets from LAX to Abu Dhabi, UAE. Pictured from Left to right: Amin Salam, NUSACC VP of Business Development; Rim Elbayar-Aly, NUSACC Director, Los Angeles; Mohamed Hassan Rahma, Etihad Airways Manager, Sales Development - Western USA.

The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, widely regarded as the voice of American business in the Arab world, is in touch with business communities across the United States and serves as the U.S. point of contact for the national chambers of commerce in the 22 Arab nations. On a daily basis, NUSACC works closely with leaders throughout the Arab world, as well as high-level decision makers in the U.S. business community, public policy research centers, multilateral institutions, nongovernmental organizations, media, and the U.S. Government.