



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HOSTS SIXTH ANNUAL *IFTAR* DINNER

*15 Arab Diplomatic Missions Participate in the Event,
with Sponsorships Provided by a Dozen Leading Entities*

*“America was built on the strength of our immigrant communities,
including Muslims, and we are proud of our many ethnicities and
religions.” – David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO*

*“May such healing times bring peace, respect, and stability.”
– Amin Salam, NUSACC Vice President*

Washington, DC – This week, the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) hosted its sixth annual Ramadan *iftar* celebration in honor of the Arab diplomatic community and the League of Arab States. Nearly 200 leaders of various backgrounds and faiths attended the distinguished gathering, which is widely recognized as the most elegant *iftar* in America. Fifteen different Arab diplomatic missions were represented, including Chiefs of Mission from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Palestine, Oman, and Yemen. The evening’s guest of honor was H.E. Senator Na’el Raja Al Kabariti, Chairman of the Jordan Chamber of Commerce and President of the Union of Arab Chambers.



Fifteen different Arab diplomatic missions were represented at NUSACC's annual *iftar*, including Chiefs of Mission from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Palestine, Oman, and Yemen.

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Lead Sponsors included the [Embassy of the United Arab Emirates](#), [Chevron](#), [Qatar Airways](#), and [The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company](#). The Ritz-Carlton in downtown Washington, DC has been a Lead Sponsor of this event since the first one was held in 2012, and six General Managers from Ritz-Carlton properties around the United States attended this year's dinner.

Additional sponsors included [Bank ABC](#), [Black & Veatch](#), [Blumberg Grain](#), [Cigna](#), [ExxonMobil](#), [Lockheed Martin](#), [PwC](#), and [Raytheon](#) – companies that are Platinum or “Platinum Plus” members of NUSACC. These companies were represented by senior executives, who were joined by U.S. Government officials, heads of community associations, and scores of business leaders from the Arab world and across the United States.

NUSACC President & CEO [David Hamod](#) said, “Our Chamber is proud to convene so many distinguished leaders from all walks of life. Events like these help us to set aside our differences and draw closer together as individuals, as families, and as humanity.”

The holy month of Ramadan is an occasion for fasting, self-reflection, and prayer for nearly two billion Muslims throughout the world, and *iftar* is the meal at sunset when Muslims break their fast. Fasting is seen as a way to cleanse the soul and to increase empathy for those who are less fortunate. In his welcoming remarks, for example, NUSACC Vice President [Amin Salam](#) expressed his hope that “such healing times bring peace, respect, and stability.”



David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO:
“NUSACC is proud that people of all
faiths are joining us in this *iftar* meal.”

***Iftar*: Bringing Communities Together and Honoring Arab Diplomats**

NUSACC's *iftar* dinner has become an annual meeting place for public and private sector leaders from the MENA region and around the United States. Participants in this year's celebration flew to Washington, DC from as far away as Abu Dhabi to the East and San Diego to the West. The annual *iftar* provides NUSACC with an opportunity to honor Arab diplomats and to celebrate its partnership with the League of Arab States, which formally recognizes NUSACC as a business gateway between the United States and the 22 countries of the Arab world.

The following Arab Chiefs of Mission attended the *iftar* dinner this year:

- Republic of Iraq — H.E. Dr. Fareed Yasseen
- Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan — H.E. Dina Kawar
- Republic of Lebanon — H.E. Carla Jazzar
- Islamic Republic of Mauritania — H.E. Mohameden Daddah

- Sultanate of Oman — H.E. Hunaina Al-Mughairy
- State of Palestine — H.E. Dr. Husam Zomlot
- Republic of Yemen — H.E. Dr. Ahmed BinMubarak

Recognizing the Arab diplomats in attendance, NUSACC Vice President Salam said, “Your being here with us tonight on this special occasion serves to remind us just how important our collective work is, how strong our relationships are, and why we need to keep collaborating and accomplishing even more together.”



Amin Salam, NUSACC Vice President: “May such healing times bring peace, respect, and stability.”

Some of the senior U.S. Government officials in attendance included Lieutenant General (ret.) Terry Wolff, Deputy Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce Skip Jones, and John Desrocher and Tim Lenderking, Deputy Assistant Secretaries of State for Near Eastern Affairs. Many

other U.S. Government officials attended, including former U.S. Ambassadors to the United Nations and numerous countries in the Islamic world.

Keynote Remarks by David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO

Hamod used the spiritual occasion of the *iftar* to extend his sincere sympathies and prayers to the victims and families involved in the recent attacks in Manchester and London, as well as victims in Aleppo, Baghdad, Tunis, Beirut, Bamako, Nairobi, Tel Aviv, Paris, Brussels, and other places affected by tragic acts of violence. “It troubles me deeply that these crimes were committed in the name of Islam,” he said. “I want to say categorically that this is not Islam. Such senseless killing has nothing to do with Islam, which holds deep respect for the sanctity of life in all its parts.”

“Today, we live in an age when ‘fake news’ fans the flames of intolerance,” Hamod continued. “Wherever we stand on the political spectrum – from far right to far left or somewhere in between – we must guard against the demonization of others whose cultures we do not understand. America was built on the strength of our immigrant communities, including Muslims, and we are proud of our many ethnicities and religions.”

Hamod emphasized the important role that religious and ethnic diversity has always played in America, “a nation whose ethos is built on giving everybody a second chance.”

Hamod shared some personal experiences growing up in a multicultural family. As a typical Norwegian / Irish / Lebanese American, he quipped, it seemed natural to “keep one foot in the mosque and the other foot in the Lutheran church.” Hamod credited his upbringing for enabling him to become the person he is today.

As a Midwesterner, Hamod shared stories about travels around the Heartland that brought him face-to-face with such communities as: Tripoli, Iowa; Arabia, Nebraska; Cairo, Illinois; and Elkader, Iowa, which was named after Emir Abdulkader Al Jezairi, a renowned historical figure from Algeria. “They say that one searches for one’s culture,” Hamod opined. “But in my experience, culture has often found me!”

Hamod described a recent trip to California, where he encountered the towns of Mecca, California and Bagdad, California. Seemingly in the middle of nowhere, Hamod came across a small shop – packed full of Middle Eastern goods – that specialized in producing milk shakes made with dates. It turns out that the shop is owned by a family from Syria that started over in the United States, achieving success by sharing parts of their culture.



The moral of the story, Hamod suggested, is that “everything comes full circle. Our cultures are not nearly as far apart as we sometimes think they are, and traditions are created to be shared.” In other words, he said, “No matter where you are in the world, you can be at home.”

Jordan's Ambassador, H.E. Dina Kawar (center left), with (from right to left): H.E. Na'el Raja Al Kabariti, Chairman of the Jordan Chamber of Commerce and President of the Union of Arab Chambers; the Very Reverend Joseph Rahal, Senior Representative of the Antiochian Archdiocese, St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church; and David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO.

In his concluding remarks, Hamod noted, “Tonight, NUSACC is proud that people of all faiths are joining us in this *iftar* meal. This is in the spirit of Ramadan and the humanity that brings us all together.” He concluded, “Let us count our blessings and celebrate not only

what is good in the world, but also what we can do – working together – to make the world a better, more tolerant place.

* * *

Highlights from the *iftar*:



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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.

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