



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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U.S. – ARAB CHAMBER HOSTS THIRD IFTAR DINNER IN WASHINGTON, DC

*Signature Event at The Ritz-Carlton Attracts 200 Ambassadors,
U.S. and Arab Government Officials, and Business Leaders*

*Etihad Airways, a Lead Sponsor,
Donates Three Business Class Tickets*

The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) this week hosted its third annual *Ramadan Iftar* celebration in honor of the Arab diplomatic community and the League of Arab States. Upwards of 200 leaders of multiple faiths attended the event, a high-profile gathering held at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in downtown Washington DC. Attendees included Arab ambassadors, U.S. Government officials, representatives of the DC area business community, and dozens of ranking embassy officials.

Breaking the fast (*Iftar*) during *Ramadan* is a traditional event celebrated daily by more than 1.5 billion Muslims around the globe. *Ramadan* is a holy month of spiritual cleansing in which adherents of Islam rededicate themselves to God, worship, and reading the *Quran*, Islam's holiest book. The



Ambassadors, embassy officials, U.S. Government officials, and representatives of the DC area business community attended NUSACC's third *Ramadan Iftar* celebration.



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month-long period is marked by fasting, personal sacrifice, self discipline, and increased generosity, especially toward the underprivileged.

“People around the world, of all different faiths, can relate to the austerity of *Ramadan*,” said David Hamod, President & CEO of the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce. “This holy month enables us to put ourselves in the shoes of others who are less fortunate than we are. *Ramadan* makes us aware of the suffering of others, and many in the Arab world are suffering badly these days.”

By contrast, Hamod noted, “The breaking of the fast, *Iftar*, is joyous, an important part of healing. It reminds us to count our blessings.”

This message of humility also came through strongly in the remarks of Imam Adam Sbita, who requested a minute of prayerful silence to remember those around the world who are suffering.

The Imam also highlighted the role of *Ehsan*, “the sincerity that we have in this holy month of *Ramadan*. *Ehsan* means that you use every single avenue at your disposal to complete the task that is ahead of you with the utmost perfection. During *Ramadan*, fasting embodies this aspect of sincerity and integrity.”



The *Iftar* celebration was held at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in downtown Washington DC.



Imam Adam concluded, "When you fast, as our Prophet told us, God has written a reward for every action. This is the essence of *Ramadan*: Sincerity with God and building our lives around this sincerity."

Lead Sponsors: Ritz-Carlton and Etihad Airways

The two Lead Sponsors of this year's *Iftar* were the [Ritz-Carlton Hotel](#) and [Etihad Airways](#). Other sponsors, based in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, included Almisehal Group, Bin Dawood Group, Danube Group, and Dukhan Consulting.

The Ritz-Carlton hotels of Washington DC have hosted and co-sponsored the NUSACC *Iftar* since its inception. "Sponsoring the annual *Iftar* dinner with NUSACC is a very special experience for the four Ritz-Carlton hotels of Washington DC," noted Elizabeth Mullins, Ritz-Carlton's Vice President and Area General Manager. "We are honored to be part of this



wonderful celebration that brings together the diplomatic and business community in partnership, celebration and reflection."

"We are very fortunate to be part of this extraordinary community that celebrates and values the fact that diversity among us is our best asset," Mullins said. "From all of the ladies and gentlemen of the Ritz-Carlton Hotels of Washington DC, *Ramadan Kareem!*"

Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways offered three Business Class tickets on Etihad as prizes. Pictured with one of the winners, Kathleen Mistry, Mistry Enterprises (second from right) are (from left): David Hamod, Amin Salam, and Molly Shutt, NUSACC; and Haitham Subaihi, Vice President- Mid Atlantic, Etihad Airways.

With an unshakeable credo and corporate philosophy of unwavering commitment to service, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel

Company LLC has been recognized with numerous awards for achieving the gold standard of hospitality. The Maryland-based company, which operates 85 five-star resorts and luxury hotels in more than 30 countries, is the first and only hotel company twice honored with the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award from the U.S. Department of Commerce.



Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, the other Lead Sponsor of the NUSACC *Iftar* event, surprised the crowd by offering three Business Class tickets on Etihad. One by one, these were drawn from a large bowl of business cards and presented to the prize winners.

Haitham Al Subaihi, Vice President of Mid Atlantic (USA) for Etihad Airways, noted, "Etihad Airways' and NUSACC's partnership to host the *Iftar* is a symbol of our strong relationship and Etihad's support for NUSACC. It was a pleasure to share this special event in this special month with our special guests. *Ramadan* is the blessed month of strengthening the relationship between family and friends, putting aside differences, and cooperating to build a better bond between us and our partners."



David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO, offered welcoming remarks for the 3rd annual *Ramadan Iftar* celebration in honor of the Arab diplomatic community and the League of Arab States.

Al Subaihi concluded, "Following the great leadership of the UAE, we strive to build strong, sincere, and long-lasting relationships with all of our business partners. We would like to thank everyone who has helped with this event to bring us together and to build stronger bonds."

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, has won more than 170 awards, including "World's Leading Airline" at the World Travel Awards in 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, and 2009. Etihad's fleet of 88 aircraft operates more than 1,400 flights per week, serving an international network of 84 passenger and cargo destinations in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and North America.

Honoring the Ambassadors

The annual *Iftar* provides NUSACC with an opportunity to honor Arab embassies, particularly the Arab Ambassadors. Said Amin Salam, NUSACC's Vice President for Business Development and the driving force behind the annual event, "This special event is NUSACC's way of saying thank you to the ambassadors and other diplomats at the Arab embassies and consulates."



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He continued, “For nearly 50 years, our Chamber has served as the preeminent bridge for trade and investment between the Arab world and the United States. But without our stakeholders, clients and friends, we would not be the very successful organization that we are today.”



Imam Adam Sbita spoke about the significance of *Ramadan* for the Muslim world.

Ambassadors attending the *Iftar* appreciated NUSACC’s gesture.

“I was pleasantly surprised by the warmth of this event and by the efforts of NUSACC and the sponsors to look after their guests at this religious and cultural event,” said H.E. Lukman Faily, Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq to the United States. “The Chamber’s event helps us all to bridge two worlds and to promote better understanding of one another.”

H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, Morocco’s Ambassador to the United States, echoed that view. “I was very pleased that NUSACC brought together so many American friends to share this

intimate experience of breaking the fast,” he said. “This is an important tradition of Muslims worldwide, and I commend the U.S. - Arab Chamber for helping to strengthen the bridge between our cultures.”

In the same spirit, H.E. M’hamed Chelaifa, Tunisia’s Ambassador to the United States, noted, “All of us in the Arab diplomatic community appreciate the Chamber’s efforts to encourage understanding about the Holy Month of *Ramadan*. There are many misperceptions in the United States about the Arab and Muslim worlds.”

Ambassador Chelaifa concluded, “Events like these help to demystify our culture, bring us closer together, and highlight the many attributes that the world’s great religions share in common.”

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.