



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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

*One-of-a-Kind Ramadan Tradition, the Most Elegant Iftar in America,
Brings Together Leaders from All Walks of Life*

*“During this holy month, we reassess our humanity, and we reassess
our humility. During Ramadan, we also reassess our ethics and
morality.” – Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat*

Washington D.C. – In the final days of Ramadan, the holy month observed by Muslims all over the world, the National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) hosted its eighth annual *Iftar* dinner in honor of the Arab diplomatic community and the League of Arab States. Twenty-nine diplomats from 16 Arab nations attended the event, including Chiefs of Mission from countries in North Africa and the Arabian Gulf.

Held at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in downtown Washington DC, the *Iftar* drew senior government officials, business executives, and community leaders of multiple faiths from around the USA. **To see a three-minute video of this event, please click [here](#).**



Senior Arab Embassy officials, U.S. Government representatives, business leaders, and *Iftar* sponsors from around the United States attended NUSACC's annual Ramadan *Iftar*.

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Sponsors, led by The [Ritz-Carlton Hotel](#) and the [Embassy of the United Arab Emirates](#), help to make the event possible each year. Additional sponsors this year included [Black & Veatch](#), [Chevron](#), [Lockheed Martin](#), [PhRMA](#), [Pragma Corporation](#), and the [Wolf Trap Foundation](#), which is featuring the [Caracalla Dance Theater of Lebanon](#) on Wednesday, June 12.

The Importance of *Iftar* During Ramadan

Breaking the fast (*Iftar*) during Ramadan is a traditional event performed daily by the estimated 1.8 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 month-long period is marked by fasting, personal sacrifice, self discipline, and increased generosity, especially toward the underprivileged.



David Hamod, President and CEO of NUSACC.



**H.E. Madjid Bouguerra, Ambassador
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**

"My heartfelt thanks to NUSACC and to you personally, David, for keeping this wonderful tradition. Once again, through this successful Iftar Dinner, NUSACC has shown that it is a true bridge-builder between the United States and the Arab countries."

"This Iftar goes far beyond symbolism. It is a demonstration of the continued commitment in service to both Americans and Arabs. There is no better way of bringing Americans and Arabs closer than to get them together at Iftar, during this holy month of Ramadan, a special month when we all are called to join efforts in the spirit of togetherness, in order to build tolerance, friendship, cooperation and peace."

David Hamod, NUSACC's President & CEO, noted, "The Golden Rule tells us that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Actions speak louder than words, and how we treat others reflects on our own humaneness." So, in the spirit of Ramadan, he suggested, "Whatever one's faith and whatever one's 'tribe', let us be remembered for our respect and tolerance."

NUSACC *Iftar*: Attracting Leaders from All Walks of Life

It has become fashionable in recent years to host *Iftar* dinners as a way to strengthen relationships between Muslims and other communities. The NUSACC *Iftar*, now in its eighth year, was the first of its kind. Today, it is widely regarded as the most elegant *Iftar* in America, in large part because of the event's association with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.



“I am incredibly humbled and honored to represent a company that is built on commitment to service, both in its hotels and its communities,” said George Munz, General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, D.C. “Together with NUSACC, we created a special *Iftar* dinner that cultivated a sense of community. On behalf of the ladies and gentlemen of The Ritz-Carlton, we are thrilled to continue to strengthen our relationship with the National U.S. - Arab Chamber of Commerce, and we look forward to working together to celebrate global communities.”



George Munz, General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton.

The [Ritz-Carlton](#), the Luxury Brand Leader of Marriott International, was a leading sponsor of this year’s NUSACC *Iftar*.



H.E. Sheikh Abdulla Bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Ambassador Kingdom of Bahrain

“The holy month of Ramadhan provides the best opportunities for our diverse communities, throughout the Arab world and across the United States, to break our fast with a unified message of peace. NUSACC’s annual *Iftar* blends diplomacy and commerce and creates synergies between the United States and MENA region in a mutually beneficial way.”

The NUSACC *Iftar* is also recognized as one of the most important events of the year to celebrate the Arab diplomatic corps in the United States. As in the past, the [UAE Embassy](#) was a leading sponsor of this year’s NUSACC *Iftar*.



H.E. Yousef Al Otaiba, the UAE Ambassador to the United States.

“Inclusion and tolerance are values that were ingrained in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Emirati society since before our country’s founding in 1971,” noted H.E. Yousef Al Otaiba, the UAE Ambassador to the United States. He went on to say, “These founding values have remained an integral part of the UAE’s identity, especially as Emiratis celebrate 2019 as the ‘Year of Tolerance.’”

Honoring the Diplomats

NUSACC’s *Iftar* dinner provides an opportunity to gain a better understanding of Islamic customs and traditions. The event also honors Arab embassies and consulates, as well as 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. Nearly 30 Arab diplomats attended this year’s dinner, representing the following nations:



Rabih Mogharbel, Vice President of Business Development, NUSACC.

“Our Chamber is proud to partner with the Arab embassies and consulates across the United States,” noted Rabih Mogharbel, NUSACC’s Vice President for Business Development. “We support these diplomats on a daily basis and, without their support and encouragement, NUSACC could not do its job effectively.”

Offerings of the Imam

Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat – President of the Islamic Affairs Council of Maryland, and Founder of the Civilizations Exchange & Cooperation Foundation – offered remarks after dinner.

“Ramadan has a special significance in our lives for one extremely important reason,” he said. “This is the month in which the final message of Almighty God was revealed. So, the night on which the Holy Quran was revealed became a night of honor.”

He went on to say, “Ramadan enables us to reconnect with this message, sent down from heaven to earth During this holy month, we are expected to reassess our entire situation. We reassess our humanity, and we reassess our humility, being humble with everyone.”



Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat, President of the Islamic Affairs Council of Maryland.



H.E. Wafa Bughaighis, Ambassador State of Libya

“It was an honor to attend NUSACC’s 2019 Annual *Iftar* Dinner. The great work that the National U.S. - Arab Chamber of Commerce promotes is paramount to strengthening cooperation between the United States and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).”

“Partnerships among these countries are vehicles to further economic growth, which creates jobs, reduces poverty, and increases commercial opportunities. Although challenged by conflict in parts of the region, MENA countries improve their access to the USA and developed country markets in order to enhance their participation on the world economic stage, thereby stimulating trade and laying groundwork for a better future.”



Amb. James Smith, NUSACC Board Member and CEO of Crosswinds Strategic Consulting, LLC.

“In Ramadan, we also reassess our ethics and morality,” Imam Bashar said, “because when a nation loses its moral compass, it is destined to fail. That is why the Holy Quran reminds us that we should watch our tongues: No cursing, no gossiping, no backbiting, and no insulting others, especially when one is fasting.”

“The last thing that I would like to talk about is spirituality,” he said, “the kind of spirituality that counts when you are sitting one-to-one with the Creator of the heavens and the earth.”

“This includes preparing oneself before we move to the next life,” Imam Bashar suggested, “by praying, meditating, and reflecting on one’s relationship with the Almighty.” He concluded, “Be good to your neighbors, be good to your friends, be good to your fellow citizens, and be a good human on the surface of the earth. Ramadan Mubarak!”



H.E. Hunaina Al-Mughairy, Ambassador Sultanate of Oman

“During this holy month, we take a step back from our busy lives to appreciate what we have been given, as well as to reconnect with our spiritual side. This is a time when we, as people, are reflecting on the future of our world and our planet.”

“Events like the annual Iftar prove that NUSACC acknowledges the need for a more united world, to bolster our partnerships at the societal level, and to provide Americans with a better understanding of Arab culture and traditions. With 1.8 billion Muslims in the world, we deeply appreciate the Chamber’s efforts to strengthen relations between the Arab world and the United States of America.”

Concluding Remarks

In his concluding remarks, NUSACC’s David Hamod shared stories from the Arab world that revolve around compassion, hospitality, and wisdom – three attributes prevalent in the Middle East and North Africa, yet ones that are rarely seen on U.S. nightly news. “Many Americans have never been to the MENA region,” he said, “but there are many positive and deeply-rooted traditions in that part of the world.”



Richard Ashooh (right), Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Commerce, with David Hamod.



**H.E. Fayçal Gouia, Ambassador
Republic of Tunisia**

“The annual NUSACC *Iftar* is a ritual that I try to honor every Ramadan. Not only do I enjoy the spiritual and elegant environment that the Chamber and the Ritz-Carlton Hotel delicately design, but I also meet high profile people from the official and business communities in Washington. Bravo, NUSACC, for a job well done.”

He continued, “America is a young country, and it’s worth reminding ourselves that the Arab world is composed of ancient cultures that have survived and thrived for millennia.”

“There are times when we, as Americans, think we have all the answers,” Hamod concluded. “At times like those, it behooves us to listen to the voices of the region, who have wisdom borne of long experience.”



Nancy Ziuzin Schlegel,
NUSACC Board Member
and Vice President of
International Government
Affairs at Lockheed Martin.



Iftar Sponsors



**H.E. Dr. Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak, Ambassador
Republic of Yemen**

“The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce *Iftar* was a superlative event. Thank you, NUSACC, for affording me the opportunity to join you. You are a great storyteller, David, and I thoroughly appreciated your Yemen story. Everyone at the Iftar enjoyed the beautiful message about compassion, hospitality, and wisdom that you experienced from your travels. These are spiritual aspects of our region that are all too often forgotten in the day-to-day news coverage of the Middle East and North Africa.”

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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.