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# ATFP and AAI Head Coalition of Arab American and Humanitarian Groups in Summit on Palestinian Aid

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## Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Information: [Hussein Ibish](#)

[2] February 20, 2006 - 12:00am

Washington, D.C., February 21 -- The American Task Force on Palestine (ATFP) and the Arab American Institute (AAI) co-chaired a daylong summit of Arab American leaders and organizations in Washington, D.C. on Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss the humanitarian and political consequences of suspending U.S. aid to the Palestinians and what can be done to inform the U.S. government about this issue.

Participants included over 50 community leaders representing more than a dozen prominent Arab American and Palestinian American organizations traveling from ten states. The summit kicked off with a strategy session for community leaders and representatives of aid organizations, including American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), AMIDEAST, and Mercy Corps. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's **John E. Sununu** (R-NH) and the House International Relations Committee's **Darrell Issa** (R-CA), briefed community leaders on the status of current legislation affecting Palestinian aid and other concerns regarding the relationship between the United States and the Palestinian people.

Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs **David Welch** and the National Security Council's Senior Director for Near East and North African Affairs **Michael Doran** met the delegation and answered questions about the U.S. position on aid to the Palestinians. Both Welch and Doran said that U.S. policy was still being formulated on the issue and that their meeting with summit attendees was meant to seek the input of the Arab American and humanitarian aid community. Asst. Secretary Welch agreed to the formation of a working group including leaders from the Arab American community and aid organizations to foster

continued dialogue between community leaders and State Department officials. They also emphasized that humanitarian aid to the Palestinians would not be affected.

AAI Chairman and ATFP Board Member **George Salem** presented Welch with a letter, addressed to Secretary of State **Condoleezza Rice** and signed by 24 organizations urging the U.S. not to suspend its foreign assistance program to the Palestinians.

A press conference was held immediately following the summit that included presentations by Drs. James Zogby (AAI), Ziad Asali (ATFP) and Peter Gubser (ANERA). The media event was covered by CSPAN 2.

Summit participants included leaders from: American Federation of Ramallah, Palestine; American Diaspora Alliance for Israeli-Palestinian Peace; Birzeit Society, El-Bireh Palestine Society, Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation; Imagine-Life; Institute for Palestine Studies; Mercy Corps; Network of Arab American Professionals; Palestine Center; Palestinian American Congress; Palestine Children's Relief Fund; United Palestinian Appeal; Union of Palestinian American Women; ACCESS; ANERA and AMIDEAST.

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