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Opening Remarks by Ziad Asali at ATFP Fourth Annual Gala

Ziad Asali

Ritz Carlton, Washington DC

ATFP Fourth Annual Gala: Palestine Alongside Israel: Liberty, Security, Prosperity

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 [AsaliJones.jpg](#) [2]

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our Gala tonight, the theme of which is "Palestine Alongside Israel: Liberty, Security, and Prosperity." These are our goals as an organization, and are also the foundations upon which peace can be built and sustained. Security and prosperity are the essential components and deliverables of peace. They are the facilitators of the quest towards peace and they are the fruits that all the people in the region will enjoy once it is reached.

Liberty, however, is the indispensable basis for ending the conflict. It is the moral engine that will drive security, prosperity and neighborly relations in the region. It is no coincidence that all the major political transformations in modern history – and our own Declaration of Independence stands as a shining example – have had the ideals of liberty as their core aim. Liberty has always been the organizing theme around which every burgeoning nation's aspirations have coalesced. It is the authentic expression of a people's need to assume mastery over their own fate. It is freedom and responsibility. It is choice and consequence. It is this sense of empowerment that allows societies to turn their energies towards building a better future for their children. Without liberty there will be despair, which inevitably gives rise to unrest, violence and extremism.

For Palestinians, liberty starts with attaining independence, but it does not end there. Without ending the occupation, all progress achieved in improving security and prosperity

cannot be sustained. The liberation agenda will continue until a Palestinian state is born. And it would not only be sincere and patriotic Palestinians who truly desire justice and liberty who will keep the dream of liberation alive. The present lack of liberty will continue to be cynically manipulated by many in Palestine and elsewhere to prolong and escalate the conflict, to undermine the state building effort and to erode Palestinian society itself. The occupation simply must end.

Yet many peoples have attained independence only to fall prey to despotism, chaos, bad or even failed governance, or close-minded obscurantism. For their own sake, courageous Palestinians have begun a new policy to build, in spite of the occupation, the foundations of a society and state in which every citizen is afforded both the rights and responsibilities of liberty. Through establishing the rule of law, good governance, efficient health and education sectors, and a free market, the Palestinians have taken control of their own future towards a democratic, secular state of Palestine. Their friends, and the true friends of Israel, and of peace, throughout the world, must support these efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This evening we are celebrating two things:

First is the commitment of our government and society to ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the creation of a Palestinian state to live alongside Israel in peace and security. Indeed, the presence of so many distinguished guests here tonight, including members of congress, current and former senior administration officials, leading journalists and analysts, as well as diplomats and high-ranking foreign officials is a testament to the deep belief in Washington ? and indeed the whole world ? in the necessity of peace. We at ATRP have always believed that our political system is open to all Americans who seek to advance the United States national interests. Tonight, we feel that this distinguished gathering amply demonstrates that we are on the right track.

Second ? and I may even claim more importantly ? this is an evening to celebrate the contributions of Palestinian-Americans. We are not only celebrating the United States as the land of opportunity, nor simply celebrating the resourcefulness of Palestinians in the face of challenges. We are also celebrating the marriage of the two and the resulting excellence and innovation. Tonight, as we have done in our previous three galas, we will honor three distinguished Palestinian-Americans. Yet in this room, and throughout the nation, there are countless other remarkable stories worthy of honoring. Tonight, we hope to give Washington and our fellow Americans a window into the story, passion, patriotism, hope and tenacity of Palestinian-Americans.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you again. Thank you all for joining us, and I hope you enjoy this evening.

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