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ATFP President Ziad Asali's Introduction for Sec. Clinton at Fifth Annual ATFP Gala

Ziad Asali
Washington, D.C.
ATFP Fifth Annual Gala
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[1]

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TRANSCRIPT

Dr. ASALI: Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my singular honor to welcome, on behalf of the board of directors of the American Task Force on Palestine, our keynote speaker this evening.

We are often told "It cannot be done!" How many of us have heard that? How many of us have given up without trying? How many of us have stopped to wonder what would have happened if we had not?

In this nation of immigrants, a country which celebrates new ideas and imagination, we learn to believe that our sons and daughters can do anything they want. However, who among us has been brave enough to want what has never been? And who among us has acted upon that desire?

Secretary Clinton has.

Hillary Rodham Clinton is the 67th Secretary of State but the only one who was ever First Lady. Presidential spouses can't run for the Senate and they certainly can't run for President themselves. However, in the words of Nelson Mandela, "It always seems impossible until it is done."

Secretary Clinton was certainly destined for success as a graduate of Wellesley College and

Yale Law School. Those achievements alone have given a generation of women who have come behind her the courage to seek positions of leadership and strength.

However, she has sought to be so much more than a role model. She has transformed the way in which expectations are defined and achievement evaluated.

While others were discussing the glass ceiling in Wall Street and K Street, Hillary Clinton refused to be stopped by any ceiling. When so many tried to define her in terms of what other women have done, she chose to define herself in terms of what is asked of a leader. She has brought this courage to redefine the possible to her role as a national leader and a global diplomat.

Madam Secretary,

Throughout your distinguished public career, people have often said that your goals were impossible. Yet with boundless courage and tireless drive, you beat long odds and overcame overwhelming obstacles.

The Palestinians too are creating something which is difficult, they too chafe against a history which has discouraged veering from its path, and they too are being told that it cannot be done. Like people everywhere, Palestinians simply deserve a country where they can be first-class citizens. They have taken upon themselves the responsibility of building the institutions, and the state, of Palestine, the indispensable state for peace. Your bold statement that our country must assure that the "Palestinians build the institutions of their future state, an effort which must continue during the negotiations" is one that we at ATFP applaud and support without reservation.

Our legacy as we help them establish their state, by ending the occupation and the conflict, may also seem impossible until it is done.

Madam Secretary,

We welcome your leadership, your example and your drive in pursuit of that goal. We look forward with great anticipation to hearing your remarks this evening.

We understand that you have the choice among many forums to express the views and policy of this administration. We are indeed grateful that you have decided to be with us here tonight.

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