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## Q: ATFP is controversial and there seem to be misperceptions and false claims about it. What have informed people said about the Task Force?

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A: Many distinguished officials and noteworthy practitioners have commended the work and approach of ATFP throughout the years. The following is a small sample of such positive statements:

### **President Barack Obama (October 29, 2013)**

"Peace is necessary, peace is just, and peace is possible. The support of the Palestinian and Arab-American communities and of important groups like yours is critical to making it a reality. Congratulations, again, on the 10th anniversary of ATFP." ([Obama's letter of congratulations and support to ATFP](#) [2])

### **White House Middle East Coordinator Phil Gordon (October 29, 2013)**

"ATFP is a remarkable organization. In many ways, this organization is the embodiment of what President Obama said in his historic address in Jerusalem in March: 'You must create the change that you want to see.' Your efforts to develop partnerships with a wide and diverse array of stakeholders are a model for public engagement in a city not always known for civility or reaching out across party lines. One need look no further than the many different organizations represented here tonight to see this approach at work. You are known and respected not just for what you do, but for how you do it.

Your work has also carved out space for a nuanced, informed policy discussion, helping

provide the American public with a better understanding of the Palestinian narrative and its importance for the United States. Your work has served to reinforce what the President emphasized during his visit to Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Bethlehem: that the creation of a Palestinian state living alongside Israel in peace, security, and dignity is not only in the interest of Palestinians and Israelis, it is in the national security interest of the United States.

ATFP has made the case for peace through thick and thin. We need your passionate commitment now more than ever." ([ATFP Gala 2013](#) <sup>[3]</sup>)

### **Former US ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis (October, 2013)**

"If you don't have you Palestinians don't have somebody in Washington who has access, is seen as a moderate voice, a sensible voice for compromise and for a solution that can get access to the policy makers and the Congress, then you are just cutting off your arm to spite your face. ATFP can provide the kind of analysis and arguments to balance a bit the scales in the minds of their interlocutors, and it does so in all sorts of ways -- but most effectively in face to face contexts." ([ATFP Interview](#) <sup>[4]</sup>)

### **Wilson Center VP and former senior State Department official Aaron David Miller (October, 2013)**

"What makes ATFP in my judgment probably the most effective organization committed to Palestinian national objectives in Washington and in the United States is its integrity, pragmatism and vision." ([ATFP Interview](#) <sup>[5]</sup>)

### **Former White House Chief of Staff, Gov. John Sununu (October, 2013)**

"When Ziad came to me and said he was going to start an organization which he called the American Task Force on Palestine to represent the Palestinian plight in this city I was thrilled to hear it. ATFP is the most respected voice for the cause of Palestinians in Washington and frankly in America today. They are respected, they are listened to, they are invited to the councils." ([I Can See Palestine ATFP Video](#) <sup>[6]</sup>)

### **President of AMIDEAST, Amb. Theodore Kattouf (October, 2013)**

"This is an American organization that understands the Middle East and it's given the Palestinian-Americans a seat at the table they never had." ([ATFP Interview](#) <sup>[7]</sup>)

### **Former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad (October, 2013)**

"I think it's a really a very important role I salute them for all they do. Palestinians Diaspora have been, and continue to be, a very important element of the overall Palestinian effort." ([I Can See Palestine ATFP Video](#) [6])

**Hamid Alkifaey, *Al Hayat* (November 13, 2013)**

"Many see ATFP as blazing the trail for the creation of a broad, genuinely effective Arab lobby that could advocate successfully for Arab issues, particularly the Palestinian one, and gather supporters and partners." ([Al Hayat](#) [8])

**Walid Issa, a young Palestinian activist from the West Bank (October, 2013)**

"We are group of like-minded young professionals in Minnesota, Palestine, and Israel who believe in peace. We have joined forces with ATFP to make it happen." ([I Can See Palestine ATFP Video](#) [6])

**Palestinian-American Congressional staffer Bassima Alghussein (October, 2013)**

"Yes, we have big dreams and its very helpful to know that they are engaged, organized and committed likeminded people in the Arab-American community that can help us all work together to achieve our hopes for ourselves and our country." ([I Can See Palestine ATFP Video](#) [6])

**Palestinian-American entrepreneur and philanthropist Talat Othman (October 29, 2013):**

"And to you, Ziad, thank you. Your team and the board exhibited courage, resoluteness and stayed with your mission for a free, independent and prosperous Palestine." ([ATFP Gala 2013](#) [9])

**Palestinian-American businessman and technological innovator Jesse Aweida (October 29, 2013)**

"You know we talked about this ten years ago, how it would be nice to have an organization here in Washington that really speaks for the Palestinians. And I was there with Ziad and the others at the time. It was a great idea. Time goes fast. That was ten years ago. I just want to add that the American Task Force on Palestine under the leadership of Ziad has really given the Palestinian state and situation credibility all over the place. And it was said before, and its true, it *is* happening and hopefully we can continue to benefit from that." ([ATFP Gala 2013](#) [10])

**Philanthropist Maria Aweida (October 29, 2013)**

“We are sincerely grateful to have been a part of ATFP for such a long time and we are grateful to the members and particularly to the leadership for its very sane, and thoughtful and practical approach to bringing Palestine into focus for the powers that be.” ([ATFP Gala 2013](#) [10])

**Prof. Saliba Sarsar, Associate Vice President for Global Initiatives at Monmouth University (October 29, 2013)**

“ATFP is a beacon of moderation and wisdom shining light on the path to the two state solution and to peace while defending human dignity, promoting human security and standing up for what is right for Palestine and for American national interests toward Palestine. To Dr. Ziad Asali, Mrs. Naila Asali, the ATFP Board of Directors, Senior Fellow Hussein Ibish and Executive Director Ghaith Al-Omari, and ATFP’s Staff: Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! I am, and we all, are grateful to you for the vision and for energizing the light, you are indeed the unsung heroes. I would not be standing in front of you this evening without the inspiration and support of ATFP and of others.” ([ATFP Gala 2013](#) [11])

**Rep. Justin Amash (October 29, 2013)**

“Thank you to the American Task Force on Palestine. Congratulations on your 10-year Anniversary. I really believe in your mission which is to promote peace in the Middle East and to promote peace in Israel and Palestine.” ([ATFP Gala 2013](#) [12])

**Palestinian-American engineer and activist Faris Ghawi (October, 2013)**

“ATFP provides us young Arabs here in the US with an established and successful organization that we can build on and replicate.” ([I Can See Palestine ATFP Video](#) [6])

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton (October 19, 2011)**

"As friends and supporters of ATFP, we recognize that the cause of peace cannot be the work of governments alone. I commend everyone at ATFP, and those of you who support its mission, for your tireless commitment to our shared goal – two states, the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, living side-by-side in peace and security." ([Letter from Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) [13])

**Middle East Special Envoy, Amb. David Hale (October 19, 2011)**

"The American Task Force on Palestine plays a critical role in advancing the cause of peace. As Secretary Clinton emphasized when she spoke here last year, the ATFP’s mission is

quintessentially American, and, Ziad, your leadership has made this mission a reality." (ATFP Sixth Annual Gala <sup>[14]</sup>)

### **Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad (October 19, 2011)**

"I want to start by again reiterating my thanks to you, Ziad and the American Task Force on Palestine, for the work that you do. It is indeed a privilege to take part in this important function, and to support the excellent work that you do in providing a bridge for us Palestinians, the Palestinian Authority, and the Palestinian people to this very important nation, and to this capital in particular. I know a lot of people have spent too much time trying to pigeon-hole the ATFP, and some having problems with it being perceived or seen as a bit right-of-center. Some actually may find it rather frank for me to call it "just a bit right-of-center" when they think it is a lot right-of-center. To me, what is important in this business is not whether you are right-of-center or left-of-center. What is important is in this business for you to be right at least fifty percent of the time, and by that standard ATFP makes it handily. This is a bar that the ATFP as a matter of fact clears with a substantial margin to spare, full of professionalism and integrity, providing the kind of effective bridging operation that we very much need. Particularly, I feel at this time, when our relations with the United States are going through a period of strain, if I may be frank, in characterizing them against the backdrop of the recent activity involving the United Nations, as you know." (ATFP Sixth Annual Gala <sup>[15]</sup>)

### **Renowned artist and designer Nawaf Soliman (October 19, 2011)**

"I want to sincerely thank the ATFP team for their outstanding efforts to highlight the cause and contributions of Palestinians at large." (ATFP Sixth Annual Gala <sup>[16]</sup>)

### **An unnamed administration official quoted in *Foreign Policy Magazine* (October, 2011)**

"They've been critical in getting sustained and high levels of support from both Republican and Democratic administrations. They have pretty high access, they can pass messages, they can work quietly with the Hill, they're not media attention seekers, they are trusted and they try to work behind the scenes." (Foreign Policy <sup>[17]</sup>)

### **Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton (October 20, 2010)**

"Thank you very much, Ziad, for that introduction and for your leadership of this important organization, and for you and the steadfast support that ATFP has given to the cause of peace."

"We meet at a time when we rightly can join together to celebrate the achievements and the mission of the American Task Force on Palestine and the four extraordinary Palestinian Americans that are being honored tonight. A soldier, a poet, a playwright and a builder – each story is unique but together they represent the talent and dynamism of the Palestinian American community and the Palestinian Diaspora around the world. In big cities and small towns across America, Palestinian Americans are contributing to the richness of our culture,

the strength of our economy, and the liveliness of our democracy.

The American Task Force on Palestine is also contributing to our country and our tradition of citizens gathering together to express their views and help shape the national debate.

Now, when it comes to the conflict in the Middle East, it is all too easy for positions to harden into dogma, for tempers to flare, for rhetoric to outpace reality. But you have provided a welcome voice of reason and a steady advocacy on behalf of a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

You have helped us see past the false choices of this conflict: Being pro-Palestinian does not mean you must reject Israel's right to exist. (Applause.) And being pro-Israel does not mean you must deny the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. (Applause.) The path to security and dignity for both peoples lies in negotiations that result in two states living side by side in peace and prosperity, and a comprehensive peace in the entire region.

As this organization has emphasized, that outcome is also in the interests of the United States, as well as the people of the region, and even people around the world. But most of all, it is in the interests of both Palestinians and Israelis." (ATFP Fifth Annual Gala [18])

#### **Senior American military officer and professor Dr. Peter Mansour (October 20, 2010)**

"What I learned from this experience is that genuine progress in difficult conflicts requires finding willing partners in the quest for peace. When extremists control the agenda, then politics become frozen. And that in a nutshell is the purpose of groups like the American Task Force on Palestine – a moderate voice for Palestinian-Americans and a willing partner in the search for a lasting peace in the Middle East. May God bless the voices of moderation in that endeavor." (ATFP Fifth Annual Gala [19])

#### **Award-winning poet Ms. Naomi Shihab Nye (October 20, 2010)**

"Deepest thanks to Naila and Ziad Asali for your gracious consideration and your advocacy for Palestine and peace." (ATFP Fifth Annual Gala [20])

#### **Executive VP, Booz Allen Hamilton, Mr. Ghassan Salameh, (October 20, 2010)**

"Six years ago, after 32 years in this country and only after I made Sr. Partner, I finally got the courage to publicly admit that I am Palestinian American. The fear of being labeled of being stereotyped, the fear for my kids, and the fear for my job stopped me from coming out - and for years I was tormented by it. I want to thank Ziad and the work he and many of you are doing to give people like me the courage to be unafraid, to be proud to be Palestinian American, to be able to openly speak about the suffering of Palestinians, and at the same time be a loyal U.S citizen who cares deeply about this great country." (ATFP Fifth Annual Gala [21])

### **Anne Selden Annab (April 5, 2010)**

"ATFP's website is a treasure trove of up to date, highly relevant information, news and opinion concerning Palestine. They don't use cheap tricks- they use hard work, careful analysis and diplomacy to do what they can to help end the contentious Israel/Palestine conflict...for every one's sake. They are Golden Rule people through and through: By wisely nurturing a totally civilized, reasonable and sustainable conversation they are creating real respect for a real Palestinian state." ([Anne Selden Annab's Blog](#) <sup>[22]</sup>)

### **National Security Advisor Gen. James L. Jones (October 15, 2009)**

"As Ziad mentioned, we first met in 2007 when I was appointed Special Envoy for Middle East Security and we also worked together on the US-Palestinian Partnership. Ziad has been a great friend ever since, and he has served this body as President with distinction. May ask you to join me in recognizing his record of service to this organization and the cause of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Ziad, thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am deeply honored to represent President Obama at the Fourth Annual Gala of the American Task Force on Palestine. For six years, ATFP has been an independent and influential voice in promoting an end to the conflict in the Middle East through a negotiated agreement for two states, Israel and Palestine. ATFP has taken a clear stand against violence, no matter what the cause, and no matter the victims or the perpetrators. It has partnered with USAID and other US agencies, NGOs and think tanks to help improve life in the West Bank and Gaza in very, very concrete and meaningful ways. It has worked to bring the Palestinians closer to fulfilling their legitimate aspirations for statehood, and to unleash the extraordinary potential of the Palestinian people." ([ATFP Fourth Annual Gala](#) <sup>[23]</sup>)

### **Amb. Robert Pelletreau (October 15, 2009)**

"All of us who are supporters of peace... must be actively engaged in speaking out, as the Task Force is speaking out, and continue to speak out and never give up, and never give up, and never give up!" ([ATFP Fourth Annual Gala](#) <sup>[24]</sup>)

### **Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (October 15, 2009)**

"It is my sincere pleasure to congratulate you on the achievements and successes that your organization has made during the short period since its establishment. As an American Palestinian organization that promotes the fundamental values and ideals of the American people, you have been instrumental in advocating the just cause of peace and freedom for your Palestinian brethren. The work you are undertaking to support a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on a two-state solution is highly commended and appreciate it." ([Letter from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas](#) <sup>[25]</sup>)

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs Chair, Rep. Howard L. Berman (October 15, 2009)**

"I want you to know how much I, as Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, value my association with you and your colleagues at ATFP. Your integrity, your knowledge of the issues, and your unswervingly principled stand on behalf of peace and fairness -- as well as your deep commitment both to the land of your birth, Palestine, and your adopted homeland, America -- have all had a powerfully positive impact on discourse in Washington about the Middle East. You and your colleagues have also been an important influence on my own thinking about Middle East peacemaking and that of many of my colleagues in the Congress." (Letter from Rep. Howard L. Berman <sup>[26]</sup>)

**USAID Administrator Henrietta H. Fore (October 12, 2008)**

"I first want to offer my congratulations to Dr. Ziad Asali and the American Task Force on Palestine for their impressive achievements over the last five years. In addition to the dollars raised for noteworthy causes such as the Palestinian health institutions, Dr. Asali has been deeply involved in the support of the Palestinian Investment Conference in Bethlehem this past May, and the Palestinian Business Investment Forum on October 14th. ATFP's work in developing lines of communication among the United States, the Palestinian Territories, Israel, and regional communities continues to make an important difference." (ATFP Third Annual Gala <sup>[27]</sup>)

**Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James K. Glassman (October 12, 2008)**

"I want to compliment you, Ziad, and the American Task Force on Palestine, for the tremendous work that you are doing to advance peace in the Middle East through the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state living in peace alongside Israel. I also want to applaud you for the establishment of the American Charities for Palestine and for your service as co-chair of the US-Palestinian Partnership, a critical public-private initiative to promote educational and economic opportunity for the Palestinian people." (ATFP Third Annual Gala <sup>[28]</sup>)

**Dr. Adnan M. M. Mjalli (October 12, 2008)**

"I want to thank you and thank Dr. Ziad Asali for finally, and his team, Naila and the ATFP team, to really bring the things that we have been looking for for a long time as Palestinians who came to this country. It is about time that Palestinians will start to think and act like Americans, and this is really the gist of the American Task Force on Palestine.

It is so important that Palestinians in this country think and act as Americans and appreciate the American system, the American way of doing things. After all, we are Americans. This country has provided us and given us the opportunity that was not given to us by any other country in the world. So, for that, that is why I do really appreciate the message, the depth of the message, that the American Task Force on Palestine has to send, and is sending and will send for the future to come." (ATFP Third Annual Gala <sup>[29]</sup>)

**President George W. Bush (October 17, 2007)**

"I appreciate the American Task Force on Palestine and its members for your dedicated efforts to support peace in the Middle East. By working together, we can build a brighter future for the Palestinian people and a more peaceful world for our children and grandchildren." ( [Letter from President Bush](#) <sup>[30]</sup>)

**Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (October 17, 2007)**

"In its short existence, ATFP has become a prominent voice for the interest of both the American and the Palestinian people. It has become a voice that defines peace and the two-state solution as a core of a very real common national interest for both peoples. ATFP is a constructive voice that reflects the bright contrast between the silent majority's desire for peace and prosperity and the vocal minority that thrives on exclusion, disengagement and blind criticism. Your efforts, and those of similar minded Arab and Palestinian-American organizations, will continue to be of the utmost importance whether now as attempts to reach peace are underway or in the future as we embark on building the Palestinian state." ( [Letter from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas](#) <sup>[31]</sup>)

**President of AMIDEAST, Amb. Theodore Kattouf (October 17, 2007)**

"Dr. Ziad Asali and his dedicated staff are making significant sacrifices to promote what everyone here understands what is needed: a two-state solution based on justice, mutual security, and peaceful coexistence." ( [ATFP Second Annual Gala](#) <sup>[32]</sup>)

**Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Amb. R. Nicholas Burns (October 17, 2007)**

"I want to thank, Ziad Asali, and the American Task Force on Palestine for your leadership. Thank you for your support for our efforts to achieve a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians and to see the establishment, at long last, of an independent Palestinian State. You have truly been a voice for moderation and peace." ( [ATFP Second Annual Gala](#) <sup>[33]</sup>)

**Renowned physician Dr. Theodore Baramki (October 17, 2007)**

"This is a wonderful mission and Dr. Asali and his colleagues ought to be congratulated for the efforts that they have put forward. I'm proud of the mission that you are accomplishing. And let us continue to go forward." ( [ATFP Second Annual Gala](#) <sup>[34]</sup>)

**Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (Oct. 11, 2006)**

"I would first like to thank Dr. Ziad Asali for that wonderful introduction. But more importantly, I would like to thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to this very important cause, and for your friendship and counsel over my time as Secretary of State. Thank you very much for all that you do.

I know the commitment of the Palestinian people to a better future. I know firsthand the commitment of President Abbas and moderate Palestinians to that future. And I know the commitment of the people in this room and of the American Task Force on Palestine that one day indeed there will be a Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel.

I can only tell you that I, too, have a personal commitment to that goal because I believe that there could be no greater legacy for America than to help to bring into being a Palestinian state for a people who have suffered too long, who have been humiliated too long, who have not reached their potential for too long, and who have so much to give to the international community and to all of us. I promise you my personal commitment to that goal." (ATFP Inaugural Gala <sup>[35]</sup>)

### **Prince Turki Al-Faisal (Oct. 11, 2006)**

"You are shining examples for your fellow Palestinians and Americans across the globe. Those of you who we are celebrating tonight did not achieve your accomplishments by talking about them. You stood up to your critics and overcame your challenges. We all commend you. And I firmly believe we will all be able to look at each other some day and celebrate the actions we took to help bring peace and security and resolution to the challenges that face us today. God willing, this will be the case. But first we need to act." (ATFP Inaugural Gala <sup>[36]</sup>)

### **Former White House Chief of Staff, Gov. John Sununu (Oct. 11, 2006)**

"I urge you to understand that events like this, support like this, and the impact of ATFP, does not happen by accident. It happens because you continually support the organization. Let staff members be hired, let messages be crafted, and let distribution of information take place that helps the United States craft a policy in the right direction. There are those pulling on the other side of the rope who do it very well, and what we have to do is to begin to emulate that process, so that there is a fair and balanced tug on the rope, that will make a difference in a short period of time." (ATFP Inaugural Gala <sup>[37]</sup>)

### **Sen. Carl Levin (Oct. 11, 2006)**

"The ATFP is filling a much-needed role in Washington by promoting awareness of the importance of Palestinian statehood to American security. It is keeping the hope for two states, Israel and Palestine, living next to each other in peace and security vibrantly before us and for not allowing us as Americans to give up hope and to be in a state of despair because we are not yet there in the Middle East. We will get there and this organization will help us to get there." (ATFP Inaugural Gala <sup>[38]</sup>)

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[36] [http://www.american taskforce.org/remarks\\_prince\\_turki\\_alfaisal\\_atfp\\_inaugural\\_gala](http://www.american taskforce.org/remarks_prince_turki_alfaisal_atfp_inaugural_gala)

[37] [http://www.american taskforce.org/remarks\\_governor\\_john\\_sununu\\_atfp\\_inaugural\\_gala](http://www.american taskforce.org/remarks_governor_john_sununu_atfp_inaugural_gala)

[38] [http://www.american taskforce.org/remarks\\_senator\\_carl\\_levin\\_atfp\\_inaugural\\_gala](http://www.american taskforce.org/remarks_senator_carl_levin_atfp_inaugural_gala)

[39] [http://www.american taskforce.org/faq\\_homepage](http://www.american taskforce.org/faq_homepage)