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Q: What is the purpose of the annual ATFP Gala?

Image Gallery

-  https://www.americantaskforce.org/sites/default/files/imagecache/img_gal_thumb/pictures/ [1]

A: Both ATFP and a resounding consensus of policymakers, officials, diplomats, analysts and other prominent Washingtonians strongly believe that the annual ATFP Gala has had a profound impact [2] on reshaping and redefining the image of Palestine and the Palestinians, and especially Palestinian Americans, in our nation's capital. Each and every gala has been centered on recognizing, through awards, the achievements of prominent and successful Palestinian Americans and their contributions to our country and our world. These outstanding Palestinian Americans have made important contributions in diverse fields such as national service in the government and the military, literature, the performing arts, scientific and technological innovation, entrepreneurship and business development, scholarship, philanthropy, and medicine. The existence of such accomplished Palestinian Americans has been largely unknown outside of the community, with a tiny number of exceptions. Highlighting their accomplishments and honoring their achievements is one way in which the galas serve to help mainstream Palestine, Palestinians and Palestinian Americans in Washington and beyond.

One of the purposes of the Gala is to change this, and highlight the all-American success story of numerous Palestinian Americans from all walks of life and every possible field and discipline. The Gala consciously seeks to move beyond the traditional binary stereotypes of Palestinians in the American imagination as either menacing terrorists or wretched refugees, and demonstrate that Palestinian Americans are an integral part of American society and culture. It is also to present the community with successful Palestinian Americans who can serve as role models for young people and future generations.

Moreover, the ATFP Gala has been a unique annual meeting place [3] for all of those involved in Middle East policy work in Washington, some of whom would never otherwise be in the same room, applauding the same things at the same times, and standing at attention in silence for both the American and Palestinian national anthems. Bringing all of these dignitaries, together with community members, under the banner of, and to celebrate, Palestine, is a unique achievement in and of itself. Even those otherwise skeptical of ATFP's

policies, from many different perspectives, agree that the Gala is a unique and invaluable institution in Washington that serves all of these purposes. One Washington insider noted, the ATFP Gala has become an indispensable "place to see and be seen."

Finally, the stature and comprehensiveness of the attendees at the galas confirms ATFP's deep engagement with all levels of Middle East policymaking, as do the high-level of its keynote speakers which have included secretaries of state [Condoleezza Rice](#) [4] and [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) [5], National Security Advisor [James Jones](#) [6], Palestinian Prime Minister [Salam Fayyad](#) [7], Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs [R. Nicholas Burns](#) [8], and White House Middle East Coordinator [Philip Gordon](#) [9]. The consistently lengthy, impressive and highly distinguished list of gala honorary host committee members, year after year, further demonstrates the credibility and stature ATFP has earned in policy-making and policy framing circles, the diplomatic corps, and among distinguished Arab and Palestinian Americans. (Link)

So, while the gala itself is far from merely symbolic, it also demonstrates through its attendees and speakers, the degree of engagement and integration ATFP has been able to secure in the Washington policy conversation on Palestine and the Middle East. It is the ultimate example of how to bring a Palestinian viewpoint to the Washington conversation, and to mainstream Palestine, Palestinians and Palestinian Americans in it. This annual evening reflects ATFP's low-key, high-impact policy work throughout the entire year. As a very senior American official once wrote to us, "The lights in Washington shine on Palestine this night."

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Links:

[1] <https://www.american taskforce.org/>

[2] <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/10/01/palestine-s-washington-showcase.html>

[3] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_-_0bKoUMk

[4] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzhlcAITUO8>

[5] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiPIrTSrK8I>

[6] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqMpyRPr3RU>

[7] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwUOknqSR0c>

[8] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wejgsm1011Q>

[9] http://www.american taskforce.org/in_media/pr/2013/10/31/1383192000

[10] http://www.american taskforce.org/faq_homepage