



APR 11 2005

U. S. AGENCY FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Jim Zogby, President
Mr. George Salem, Chair
The Arab American Institute
1600 K Street NW – Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Messrs. Zogby & Salem:

Thank you for your letter of March 18, 2005 to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice regarding outreach activities to Middle Eastern American communities. I have been asked by the Secretary to respond to your letter. We regret the delay in responding.

In your letter you raise concerns regarding activities organized by the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Director of Public Liaison for Middle Eastern & MEPI Affairs, Mr. Walid Maalouf. Dramatic events in the Middle East over the past few years have led both the Congress and the Administration to encourage public diplomacy efforts both here and abroad. The purpose of all these efforts is not to exclude anyone; quite the opposite. Our objective is to reach out to all Americans of Middle Eastern descent regardless of their religion, culture, tradition or ethnic background.

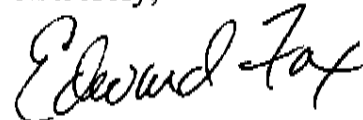
The Department of State and the USAID have responded with a variety of outreach activities to various Middle Eastern American communities. In 2004, for example, the Department of State and USAID jointly conducted the following public outreach activities to your community:

- Produced the first Arab and Middle Eastern American NGO Conference (held in Washington, DC on October 25, 2004) to explain better U.S. foreign assistance programs targeting the Arab and Muslim world with particular emphasis on Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Organized or attended Iftaar celebrations in Washington and around the country (during the holy month of Ramadan); and

- Planned and implemented the Arab and Middle Eastern American Media Summit (held in May, 2004) to describe U.S. foreign assistance programming currently reaching the Arab and Muslim world including the Middle East Partnership Initiative.

All outreach activities of USAID's Office of Public Liaison are fully coordinated with the Department of State, including meetings, interviews, speeches and potential participants. As in the past, I can assure you that the Arab American Institute will continue to be invited to participate in these ongoing outreach efforts to help educate the public about the generosity of the American people.

Sincerely,



J. Edward Fox
Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Legislative and
Public Affairs



March 18, 2005

Hon. Condoleezza Rice
United States Secretary of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

This year, the Arab American Institute celebrates its 20th anniversary. For the past 20 years we have worked to build a community of Arab Americans, both immigrants and descendants of immigrants from many countries of the Arabic speaking world. It is a community based, not on ideology, but on a shared cultural heritage.

During this two-decade period we have faced difficult challenges. There have, for example, been some who sought to exclude Arab Americans or to stereotype us. Additionally, within our community we have had to deal with the divisive ideologies and identifications of "exile" groups who have sought to import their religious, factional or national identities and establish them here.

Despite all of this, our efforts to create a unified American ethnic identity have succeeded. Today, Arab Americans have become established as a mainstream component in the political, social and cultural life of our nation.

From our meeting with President Reagan to receive his congratulations at our 1985 founding meeting, to our leadership's close ties with succeeding Administrations and with both the Republican and Democratic parties, our efforts have received recognition and respect.

We are proud that identifying with our efforts are such distinguished Arab Americans as Governor Mitch Daniels (R-IN), Senator John Sununu (R-NH), Congressmen Nick Rahall (D-WV), Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Ray LaHood (R-IL), and former Cabinet members Spencer Abraham and Donna Shalala.

Given this history, we are troubled by some of the comments made by Mr. Walid Maalouf in a February 2005 interview with a Lebanese newspaper, *An-Nahar* and sent out in a USAID mailing. In the interview, Maalouf, who is described as "the director of public diplomacy for the Middle East at USAID", makes comments about US policy in the Middle East, which, apparently, is what his position calls on him to do. He also speaks with justifiable pride about his personal success story in realizing the American dream. All of this is not our concern. What we take issue with, however, are comments Maalouf makes about the nature of the Arab American community.

In the interview, he makes the following claims:

1. that Arab American organizations were formed with "objectives relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict." (Note: this is a position taken historically by some who sought to reduce "Arab Americans" to a single issue political lobby and deny that we were a legitimate heritage-based ethnic community).
2. that since "newcomers" (i.e., recent immigrants) "did not want to be called Arab Americans. . .they established [their own, mainly Lebanese] organizations."
3. that "several Arab Ambassadors told [Maalouf] that you alienate people when you call them Arab American or Muslim American. This is why [Maalouf] believes that 'Middle Eastern American' is the best name for our community. Or . . .Palestinian American, Egyptian American, and so on."

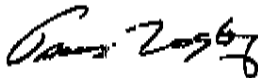
These views reflect the very "exile" politics with which we have had to contend over the past several decades. While we do not necessarily object to recent immigrants playing out their politics in the US by forming groups that support factional agendas from where they refer to back home, these efforts, even in their totality, do not define our community.

It's not up to Maalouf or unnamed "Arab Ambassadors" to define us; we have done that for ourselves.

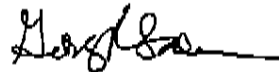
Now, if this were merely a matter of Maalouf's personal views, we would not be writing to you, but we have observed, in the recent past, efforts made by Maalouf to make his views operational. In meetings he has organized at USAID, he has assembled an assortment of "exile" groups and leaders, while ignoring or excluding our community's mainstream leadership.

We have had a good relationship with the Department of State over the years and have always been treated respectfully by the Secretary's office, NEA and Public Affairs. Because we want that relationship to continue, we hope that you can address the concerns we raise here.

Sincerely,



James J. Zogby
President



George R. Salem
Chair

Enclosure

Cc: Amb. Richard Boucher
Mr. Andrew Natsios
Mr. Edward Fox