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## Qatari foreign minister addresses ADC gala



By: M. Kay Siblani / Editor

**DEARBORN** - The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee held its annual banquet here this week themed "Opening Doors to Peace." Keynote speaker Shaykh Hamad bin Jassim ibn Jabr al-Thani, foreign minister of Qatar, received the organization's Global Peace Award for his country's outreach to the United States, Lebanon and Palestine with financial and in-kind assistance during times of disaster over the past year.

Qatar has spent \$100 million so far on relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina, including a \$17.5 million grant to New Orleans' Xavier University,

which serves mostly black Americans.

Qatar is paying to rebuild infrastructure, public buildings and all private and public schools in four of South Lebanon's hardest-hit areas: Ait al-Shaab, Ainata, Khiam and Bint Jbeil. In 10 days, new furniture is due to arrive in 35 schools, while residents in the coldest parts of the four areas should soon receive free heaters and diesel heating fuel, according to coordinators for the reconstruction programs.

Doha committed \$300 million for the reconstruction of Lebanon at the August 31 Stockholm donor's conference.

Qatar also distributed up to \$12,000 per family for home repairs in early October, and reconstruction should be completed in 18-24 months.

Qatar has also bolstered the U.N.'s peacekeeping efforts in Lebanon with a pledge of up to 300 troops. In doing so it broke ranks with other Arab states that remain wary of interposing Muslim bodies between Israel and Lebanon's Hizbullah guerrillas. That has made it easier for other Muslim countries, such as Indonesia and Turkey, to begin joining the force, which the U.N. wants to be 15,000-strong, some half of it from Europe. At the same time, Qatar became the first Arab country to heed Lebanese pleas to break Israel's blockade by launching daily flights to Beirut in defiance of Israel's demands that air traffic receive its prior clearance.

Qatar has also provided financial and diplomatic support to the Palestinians, particularly in the last year during the siege on Gaza.

Al-Thani praised the ADC for its efforts in fighting discrimination and promoting a positive image of Arab Americans and of the Arab world. He criticized U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and blamed the unrest it has caused for the lack of democracy in the region. "The ADC can play a key, vital role in creating a favorable climate for the spread of peace by convincing members of the U.S. Congress and administration to promote peace, not the logic of force,

especially in the Middle East region, which has not known peace and security for more than 50 years due to the ongoing tension, conflict, and use of armed force. This situation has denied us the stability that would enable us to soundly implement reform, democracy, and development plans in the entire region, where vital international interests shared by the United States and us are concentrated."

Also awarded by the ADC were Assad Jebara of Zanadi Jeans with the Arab American of the Year award; Attorney Shereef Akeel with the Guardian of Civil Rights award; Ned Fawaz, of the Lebanese International Business Council, with the Community Service award; and **Deanna Armbruster of Oasis of Peace**, with the Building Bridges award. A special tribute was paid to the late Imam Mohamad Karoub for a lifetime of dedicated service to the community.

ADC Regional Director Imad Hamad received an award for a decade of dedicated hard work at ADC - Michigan.

Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm sent greetings by video as did Senator Carl Levin, who praised Qatar for its policy of helping others. Other distinguished guests at the banquet included Congressman John Conyers and Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks-Kilpatrick. Former Congresswoman and ADC President Mary Rose Oakar introduced the foreign minister. ADC Deputy Director Rana Abbas spoke about the mission of the organization. Paula Tutman of WDIV emceed the evening.

The primary project of the Michigan chapter of the ADC is its Arab American Center for Civil and Human Rights (ACCHR), An Education & Resource Center, a permanent site that will enable the organization to strengthen its advocacy services to the community and broaden its influence throughout Michigan, across the United States, and around the world. ADC was able to purchase land and firm up plans for the center with a \$1 million contribution to the center from the Qatar Foundation and Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad.

Building of the two-story center will begin within the next two years. Architectural and interior design elements will honor the rich Arab culture that the organization promotes.

ADC says the center will allow it to better handle reception, registration and evaluation of discrimination complaints; advocacy, counseling, intervention and mediation of discrimination cases; educational and cultural sensitivity seminars for media and government agencies; programs for young Arab Americans; an information clearinghouse; an auditorium for meetings with elected officials and visiting dignitaries; and creation of a think tank that will develop educational materials for multi-media purposes.

Corporate sponsors of the gala were BP Oil, DTE, GM and Daimler Chrysler.