



Atlas Freedom Dinner Toast to Freedom

By Ziba Ayeen

Good evening Ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to be with you this evening as a member of the Atlas team to celebrate the victory over communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

I have just returned from two conferences held by our partners in Turkey and in the Gulf state of Qatar.

I was delighted to witness the economic development in the region first hand.

Yes, oil revenues have been a factor in the economic boom, but the Gulf region is especially benefiting from free-market ideas and policies.

Dubai may be the 21st Century's "Hong Kong", proving that prosperity is the result of being friendly to trade, investment, and entrepreneurship.

I am very proud to be a part of Atlas's effort to shape the future of the Middle East, by discovering and training Intellectual Entrepreneurs and supporting libertarian think tanks to promote these ideals.

Some of you may believe that, in our times, the West and the Muslim world are at odds, just as the United States and the Soviet Union were during the Cold War.

Of course there are many challenges to be dealt with in the Middle East. There are those who would do everything possible to keep the ideas of democracy out of the region. But we must not allow the extremists on either side to dictate policy.

The Middle East and the Islamic world have had a long tradition of trade, commerce and a history of religious tolerance. Keeping that historic perspective in mind, the Middle East region is more likely to be an ally rather than an enemy.

The future of the region can be promising – if we can succeed by encouraging local leaders, entrepreneurs, academia and businessmen who cherish the ideas that lead to peace and prosperity.

While in the region these last weeks, I found that young people were eager to learn more about the United States in general and free market ideas in particular.



Those who didn't know of Atlas seemed surprised and pleased that an American foundation would be interested in their education and future.

And those who did were happy to see the continuous support of Atlas.

I asked many of those young students I met what they liked most about the US? What is it about the United States that inspires respect and admiration?

They talked not only of our technological advancements, and scientific discoveries, but the overwhelming response regarding what inspired them about the US was The Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and respect for the rule of law.

These ideals have set the US apart from other nations who have reached almost parallel technological and scientific advancements but only decades ago were ruled by communists, socialists and fascists.

It is the ideals of the United States that are appealing to the people of the Middle East.

I hope you will raise a glass in honor of these ideals, and with hope, Atlas can succeed in helping the young people of the Middle East become the future leaders of their societies.

This toast took place at Atlas's Annual Freedom Dinner on November 12, 2008