

U.S.-Arab ties affects the battle against terror

Arab and American leaders debated the ramifications of where the U.S.-Arab partnership will head in a new administration.

As global threats continue, the U.S. should rethink its ties with Iran and consider partnering with other Arab countries to combat terrorism, a noted businessman, philanthropist and author told a U.S.-Arab conference today.

Khalaf Al-Habtoor said he is concerned that the U.S. has formed a close partnership with Iran, which he thinks is the world's largest sponsor of terrorism, instead of working with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which consists of six Arab states, to combat terrorism.

"The GCC countries have been good friends of America, yet the U.S. government is leaning towards Iran's side nowadays, which is a cause of concern," he said.

Al-Habtoor said that citizens in poorest countries are usually at a higher risk of being drawn towards joining terrorist groups. As a result, he announced a donation of \$20 million towards a program dedicated to combating poverty and terrorism.

"This money can go towards programs that can help people steer away from terrorism to productivity," Al-Habtoor said.

He encouraged other leaders to donate as well and join him in helping those in poverty attain education, shelter, health to keep them from terrorism.

"Together we can change the world, we can really solve this if we join hands," he said.

With the U.S. Presidential elections around the corner, advocacy groups explored the implications the U.S.-Arab relations might face with the next U.S. president.

The National Council's annual Arab-U.S. policymakers conferences date as far back as October 1991, where the inaugural gathering of its kind was held.

Al- Habtoor' recently published book, *Is anybody listening?*, focuses on his thoughts on the American policy towards the Middle East. The forward was written by Jimmy Carter, former U.S. president, and the introduction by John Duke Anthony, CEO of the national council on U.S.-Arab Relations.

Tying U.S-Arab foreign policy to the upcoming elections, Al-Habtoor said that he hopes the next president will branch out and make connections with GCC countries in order to work on a common problems impacting the world.

“I pray that your next president restore our faith in America and its interest again. Let’s hope that the American dream comes back into reality.” he said.

Al-Habtoor also suggested key points the next administration coming into office should work on:

- Combating terrorism by taking down ISIS
- Helping Syrians by taking down Bashar Al- Assad

“Whoever gets in the White House is going to affect everything, the new president policy is going to empower our enemies or weaken them,” Al- Habtoor said.

