

# American

## NEWS & VIEWS

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## President Obama's Message on Hajj and Eid ul-Adha

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
November 15, 2010

### Statement by the President on Hajj and Eid-ul-Adha

Michelle and I extend our greetings for a happy Eid-ul-Adha to Muslims worldwide and wish safe travels to those performing Hajj. This year, nearly three million pilgrims from more than 160 countries - including the United States - have gathered in Mecca and neighboring sites to perform the Hajj rituals and stand together in prayer.

On Eid, Muslims around the world will commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, and distribute food to those less fortunate - a reminder of the shared values and the common roots of three of the world's major religions.

On behalf of the American people, we extend our best wishes during this Hajj season - Eid Mubarak and Hajj Mabrouh.

## African Journalists Look at American Politics and Media

By Charles W. Corey  
Staff Writer

New York — More than 30 African professionals were among the 150 journalists from around the world participating in the recent Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists. During their almost three weeks of traveling throughout the United States, they witnessed firsthand the U.S. midterm elections and the important role a free and independent press plays in a democratic society.

Some of the African journalists spoke with *America.gov* on November 10 during the last stop of their tour in New York City.

Dagnachew Teklu Woldemariam, senior correspondent for the African Press Agency in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, said the Murrow program was a great opportunity to witness the U.S. midterm elections. "We have seen how the election was carried out. How it was free and how it was carried out peacefully."

He also said he learned how the media are protected by the courts in the United States, "which is new for me. We have not seen such a democratic and free media in the majority of African countries."

Woldemariam said, "I think it is part of the culture of a democracy to have a free and democratic media. That is crucial to improving any democracy."

Julius Kanubah, legislative reporter/producer for Star Radio in Liberia, told *America.gov*, "We are returning home with a fresh look" at how journalists work, and said that what is most important is "accurate, credible reporting" with balance.

Noting that his country recently passed its own freedom of information act for journalists, he said freedom of the press is "highly important" to everyone in a free and open society.

Awazi Kharomon, a journalist from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, appreciated the opportunity to meet with other journalists from around the world.

"It has been very important to be here to see American life firsthand and the organization of the American government," he said, noting that in each of the four cities he visited, he discovered another America.

But the importance of a free press is the most important lesson he will take home with him, Kharomon said. "To see that in this country journalists are free to write, to say what they want and there is no organization to stop them from doing their job — that is the most important thing I discovered while in this country. Freedom of the press is the most important thing for a democracy. There is no democracy without freedom of the press."

Amadou Ndiare Diallo, political reporter for the Guineaactu.com news website in Guinea agreed that the Murrow program was a great experience.

During the midterm elections, he said, he saw in Nevada how a candidate was very scared of what the results might be. "For us in Africa, the leader already knows the results" because they are usually predetermined, he said.

For Anthony Mulowa, chief reporter of the *Times of Zambia*, the Murrow program was "quite useful. ... We started in Washington, D.C., where we saw how the American government operates at the federal level, and then went to individual states and got an insight into the diversity of American society."

He said it was very apparent that the laws are different in each state, but, "ultimately, at the end of the day they link up as the United States of America. It is quite a complex society but made simple."

In the United States, he observed, "people respect the media" and freedom of the media is "important to everyone."

Mulowa said he wants to return home to be an “advocate of free media in Zambia, where we can have good laws, better laws” with regard to the press.

Caesar Abagali, senior reporter with the Ghana News Agency, told *America.gov* that a free press is important because “it allows the public to be part of the governing process. Without a free press, the public would not know what their government is doing.”

Mwesigwa Catherine Kizza, feature editor of the *New Vision* newspaper in Uganda, said one of her favorite parts of the program was in Florida, where she saw a university journalism school actually changing a community by covering stories that had long been ignored because they occur in an area with a high crime rate.

That program, she explained, is “enriching the experience of the students and also bringing more positive news out of that neighborhood and changing it. Every day, the students go to that neighborhood and look for stories. It is a different way of learning. I thought in my own environment, there are so many forgotten places or places nobody wants to go; ... if all the journalism schools had that kind of project ... it would be great because most times most journalists are all fighting to get into the same overcrowded newsrooms,” while many areas go without coverage.

The Edward R. Murrow program invites journalists to travel to the United States to examine journalistic principles and practices. Named for the late pioneering broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow, it is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Since its inception in 2006, the program has welcomed more than 600 foreign journalists. Participants meet in the nation’s capital, then travel in smaller groups for academic seminars and field activities with faculty and students at one of the prestigious partner schools of journalism.

The 150 journalists from 125 countries who participated in this year’s program also visited various American cities to observe U.S. media coverage of state politics and government, as well as American civic life and grass-roots involvement in political affairs in smaller towns.

### **Jordanians and American Expert Discuss Midterm Election Politics**

By M. Scott Bortot  
Staff Writer

Washington — As Americans headed to the polls November 2, international relations students at the

University of Jordan spoke with political scientist Michael Cornfield via a digital video conference to learn more about the American electoral process.

High on their list of questions: How would the results of the midterm elections affect the peace process?

“The Obama administration remains committed to a multilateral solution to Middle East peace, and ... control of U.S. involvement in that process remains mostly the prerogative of the executive branch,” Cornfield said.

With more than 10 years’ experience in talking about American politics to international audiences, Cornfield fielded questions in the hour-long program on such issues as the campaign process and American opinions of President Obama.

“They were concerned that Americans had soured on Obama ... and they were concerned that they have heard a lot of the anger directed at Obama,” he said. “They saw how much Americans embraced him when they elected him president in 2008, and now they wanted to know whether or not Americans have given up on him.”

Cornfield said that although “a solid and vocal minority of Americans” dislikes the president’s policies, most Americans “indeed respect and admire him, even those who question some of his policy motives.”

Despite respect for the president, many Americans expressed their political discontent by voting against his party in the midterm elections.

“Usually, the president gets repudiated after his first two years,” Cornfield said. “And that was certainly the case here. It is usually the case that the out party [Republicans], the party that doesn’t control the presidency, gains seats.”

The rise of the “tea party” affected the election’s outcome. The tea party movement takes its name from an anti-tax protest by angry colonists in 1773 called the Boston Tea Party. Cornfield described the current effort as a movement within the Republican Party whose name resonates with Americans of all walks of life.

“Most Americans learn in elementary school that the country began when colonists rebelled against a government that was heavy-handed and taxing them too much, and that is what the words ‘tea party’ mean to most Americans,” he said. “The tea party is just a different kind of name for this type of activist movement within a party.”

But the tea party does not represent the first time that a movement influenced voting within an American political

party. Cornfield said the last midterm elections saw a group that organized electronically.

"It would be comparable to what happened in 2006 when you had what was called the Netroots, which were a bunch of people who vote Democratic who were extremely upset over the course of the [Iraq] war and the president's performance on Katrina," he said, referring to the 2005 hurricane that devastated New Orleans.

Even before the new Congress takes over and debate heats up over such issues as health care, Cornfield said, the old Congress will grapple with how to deal with tax cuts set to expire December 31.

"You have this awkward situation where the old Congress, even though many of them have been defeated [and] are going to have to give up that power in January, they are still going to have to make some very big and fast decisions about how Americans are going to get taxed," he said.

Cornfield told the Jordanians that Americans face tough economic times and that many have lost money invested in their homes and pension plans. In such times, American investment patterns might change.

"Those concerns, which I think are higher than have been in my lifetime ... would be a factor in how Americans are dealing in the international market, in global commerce, in global investment and global trade," he said.

Unlike in many other countries, election campaigns in the United States are a never-ending process. With the end of the midterm elections, a process begins in both main political parties to prepare for the 2012 presidential and congressional elections.

"They started not so much in going after voters yet, but in going after fundraisers and putting together their teams of consultants and professionals," Cornfield said.

### **Underscoring Citizens' Role in Fighting Corruption**

By Andrzej Zwaniecki  
Staff Writer

Bangkok — Civil society — including nonprofit organizations and citizen-activists — must demand accountability from governments for the fight against corruption to be effective, according to the hosts of an international conference meeting in Bangkok.

The success of formal and informal nongovernmental groups was carefully analyzed at the International Anti-Corruption Conference, which opened November 10 in Bangkok. Co-organized by Transparency International (TI), a global anti-corruption organization, and the

government of Thailand, the event brings together more than 1,000 activists, experts, academics, journalists and government officials from across the world.

In the past decade, governments have negotiated regional and international conventions against corruption — including the U.N. Convention Against Corruption and the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials — under the aegis of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. "But a top-down approach only gets us so far," said Huguette Labelle, TI chairwoman.

Without active involvement of civil society, rigorous enforcement of these pacts in many countries is unlikely, she said. Nongovernmental groups can press for transparency, monitor enforcement of anti-bribery laws, and educate the public about why good governance matters.

### **TOP-DOWN APPROACH NEEDS BOTTOM-UP SUPPORT**

Many governments have set up official anti-corruption bodies. But more often than not, they have failed to face up to the challenge, according to experts participating in a discussion on the topic. They said the success of such government agencies depends on their powers, the determination and integrity of their staffs, resources and their independence.

The most successful anti-corruption agencies gain support from citizens and nongovernmental organizations to overcome resistance they encounter from powerful groups that feel threatened by anti-corruption activity.

For instance, Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission, created in 2002 and provided with broad investigating and prosecuting powers, achieved a high conviction rate in cases of bribery and graft related to government procurement and budgeting. But going after high-level officials and major businesspeople, it created powerful enemies who tried to tarnish its image in 2009. Pressure from corrupt officials and businesses eased only when demonstrations in several cities supported the commission and a public campaign on Facebook came to the commission's defense. "Thanks to civil society we can continue our mission," said Mochammad Jasin, the commission's vice chairman.

Standing up to corruption requires courage, Labelle said, because in some countries it can be extremely dangerous. Some prominent anti-corruption activists have been assassinated, harassed or prosecuted under false charges. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her video message to conference participants, said she has met "citizens who fear for their lives ... from their own

governments and militaries." But she said anti-corruption activists' work makes a difference in their compatriots' lives. "And the United States is your partner in this fight," she said.

### International Enrollment in U.S. Colleges Reaches All-Time High

By Louise Fenner  
Staff Writer

Washington — The number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities reached an all-time high of nearly 691,000 during the past school year, driven by a 30 percent increase in the number of Chinese students. But while Asian countries continued to send the highest numbers of students to the United States, the sharpest growth in enrollment came from the Middle East.

This is the fourth year in a row that has seen an increase in international student enrollment. The United States "continues to host more international students than any other country," said Allan Goodman, president of the Institute of International Education (IIE), during a November 15 briefing on the group's annual report on student exchanges, titled *Open Doors 2010*.

Student enrollments from Asian countries grew by 5 percent during the 2009–2010 academic year — with China, India and South Korea continuing to top the list. China sent 128,000 students, India, 105,000, and South Korea, 72,000. Combined, they accounted for 44 percent of all international students in the United States.

Rounding out the top 10 places of origin were Canada, Taiwan, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Vietnam and Turkey.

Enrollment from the Middle East shot up by 16 percent, according to the report.

Saudi Arabia is now the seventh top country of origin, up from 10th the previous year. This change reflects "the Saudi government's substantial investment in study abroad scholarships," says IIE. Double-digit increases in student enrollments came from Qatar (up 43 percent), the United Arab Emirates (36 percent), Iran (34 percent), Saudi Arabia (25 percent), Kuwait (20 percent) and Iraq (18 percent).

Enrollment from Africa held steady over the previous academic year, while there were small decreases in numbers of students from Europe and Latin America (each down 3 percent).

While the overall growth in international student enrollments was a modest 3 percent for the 2009–2010 academic year, IIE reported that in a recent online poll of

about 700 U.S. campuses, half have reported an increase in international students this year.

The *Open Doors* report was released at the beginning of International Education Week, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Education.

### THE VALUE OF STUDENT EXCHANGES

"After their studies here, [international] students return home to become leaders who understand our society and values," said Ann Stock, assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs, which funds the annual *Open Doors* study. "In turn, as Americans study abroad in a growing number of countries, they are better prepared to compete in a global economy."

The *Open Doors* report was based on data provided by nearly 3,000 accredited U.S. educational institutions. Stock invited more U.S. colleges, universities and community colleges to join in efforts to promote international education exchanges.

International students contribute nearly \$20 billion to the U.S. economy, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

### A CLOSER LOOK

Other notable findings in *Open Doors*:

- International students make up nearly 4 percent of the students in U.S. colleges and universities.
- The most popular fields of study for international students were business and management (21 percent), engineering (18 percent), physical and life sciences (9 percent), math and computer science (9 percent) and social sciences (9 percent).
- Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of international students funded their studies with personal and family resources, while U.S. colleges and universities financed the studies of nearly a quarter (24 percent) of the international students.
- The number of graduate-level international students grew 4 percent.
- California remained the leading host state for international students, followed by New York and Texas. For the ninth year in a row the University of Southern California was the top host institution.

### AMERICAN STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD

IIE said that study abroad by U.S. college students is on the rise again after a slight decline and that nontraditional destinations are increasing in popularity.

The *Open Doors* analysis for the 2008–2009 academic year found a 4 percent gain in the number of U.S. students going to China, compared with small decreases for Europe and a 26 percent decrease for Mexico. There was a 1 percent overall decrease in U.S. study-abroad students, in part because of the economic downturn.

More American students are interested in studying outside of Europe or where English is not the primary language. The number of U.S. students going to Africa increased by 16 percent, those to Asia by 2 percent, those to the Middle East by 9 percent, and those to South America by 13 percent.

U.S. student participation in study abroad has more than doubled over the past decade, IIE said.

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