



**Ambassador Lewis Lukens**

**Remarks  
2013 Mission Iftaar**

**CMR, Dakar  
July 17, 2013**

*(As prepared)*

Minister of Higher Education and Research,  
Minister of Youth, Employment, and Promotion of Civic Values,  
Minister of Women, Children and Female Entrepreneurship,  
Minister of Health and Social Action,  
Minister of Health and Prevention,  
Minister of National Education,  
Imam Yayha Hendi,  
Distinguished Guests,

On behalf of the U.S. Mission in Senegal, I want to thank you for gathering together with us this evening. We are honored that you chose to join us for the Ndogou [in-DOE-goo] tonight, and presentation by Imam Yahya Hendi, the Muslim chaplain of Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

One of the most important jobs we do as diplomats is to promote understanding between cultures. Now, more than ever, an integral part of understanding other cultures is learning about and respecting other faiths. In our multicultural world, it is essential that people of different faiths come together to work toward common goals.

I know that Ramadan, with its emphasis on reflection, introspection, sacrifice, and charity, is extremely important to so many of you. Holding Ndogou [in-DOE-goo] -- or Iftaar -- dinners is also important to us here at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, just as it has been a tradition for many years now for U.S. Presidents to host an Iftaar at the White House.

This year, we want to particularly thank and recognize our partners from the Institut Islamique de Dakar for their hospitality this week in hosting Imam Hendi. He is a respected commentator in the United States for his efforts to foster understanding between religious communities, and tonight, he will share with us his views on Islam, peace, and reconciliation.

It was a great honor for me to host President Barack Obama on his visit to Senegal last month, because it emphasized the important values, goals, and interests that our two countries share. The success of Senegalese democracy is an inspiration to people everywhere who are struggling to build a more just and inclusive future. As he said, President Obama chose to begin his trip to

Africa in Senegal “because it is one of the strongest partners we have in the region.” In the coming years, your neighbors will look to you for leadership on building peace and stability in Africa.

During his visit to your country, Imam Hendi is eager to learn from you and to share his views on how the Islamic tradition may be applied to these future challenges. It is now my pleasure to introduce Imam Hendi, who is the Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University, the first American University to hire a full-time Muslim chaplain. Imam Hendi is also the Muslim Chaplain at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD and works in mediation and conflict resolution. He is involved in interfaith dialogue and writes extensively on women in Islam, women and gender relations in Islam, the second coming of the Messiah, Islam and biomedical ethics and religion and Islam in the United States. So, a warm welcome to Imam Hendi.

Ramadan Mubarak and Jëre Jëf!