



PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Embassy Damascus

Supporting Arab Culture and Arts

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In February 2009, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, a non-governmental center for the performing arts, in Washington, D.C. will host the Arabesque Festival to showcase the artistic talents and heritage of 22 Arab countries. The festival will run from February 22 until March 13. The Kennedy Center hopes the festival will educate Americans about the culture and heritage of the Arab world, and strengthen cultural institutions in the Arab world.

The Kennedy Center has chosen several performing arts groups from Syria to participate in this prestigious event. They are the Al-Farah Children's Choir, the Ensemble Al-Kindi with Sheikh Habboush and the Whirling Dervishes of Aleppo, and Kinan Azmeh and Ensemble.

The U.S. Embassy in Damascus and the Department of State support this people-to-people exchange. On December 14, the U.S. Embassy issued approximately 143 tourist visas for the participants, most of whom are children from the al-Farah Choir, to attend the upcoming performances in Washington, D.C.

Consistent with our support for people-to-people exchanges, the U.S. Embassy notes that, during the 2007-2008 academic year, 517 Syrian students began or continued their studies at American colleges and universities. This number is an 11.9 percent increase over the number of Syrian students studying in the U.S. during academic year 2006-2007.

More information on the Arabesque Festival is available at: <http://www.kennedy-center.org/>.

