

**Remarks
Ambassador Zumwalt
Annual Ambassador's Iftar
Dakar
Wednesday, June 24, 2015**

(As prepared)

Assalamou Aleikoum

Ann and I are thrilled to welcome you in our home tonight.

The “Ambassador’s Iftar” – or as you say in Senegal *Ndogou* (in-DOE-goo) has become a cherished tradition at our Embassy to Dakar.

It is also a tradition at many of our embassies around the world, at the State Department, and at the White House. Both the Secretary of State and the President invite our Muslim brothers and sisters to celebrate the holiest month in the Islamic calendar together.

Ramadan is a time for prayer and spiritual reflection. It is also a time for compassion and acts of charity. These are values we all share. To all of you tonight and to all Muslims around the world, *Ramadan Kareem!*

For Americans, *Ramadan* is also an opportunity to celebrate our society’s diversity and freedom of religion.

The open and free practice of one’s faith is a core American value, enshrined in our Constitution. All the religions of the world are represented in the United States.

We belong to one country composed of many faiths. We stand united in our diversity and pluralism.

I am enchanted to share this *Iftar* with such a wonderful group of people. I know that *Ramadan* is a very busy period; a time that you spend with your family and community. Thank you for having taken the time to join us here tonight.

Tonight, we have two very special guests visiting from the United States. Bisa Williams is the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of African Affairs. She is responsible for U.S. relations with Senegal. She previously served in neighboring Guinea, and in Niger as Ambassador. Bisa, welcome back! We are honored to have you here tonight. I would also like to welcome a Deputy Assistant Secretary from the Department of the Treasury, Eric Meyer. Welcome, DAS Meyer.

We also have the pleasure of welcoming an American-Muslim scholar as our speaker. Dr. Alex Zito is visiting from the Washington, DC area. He will talk to you about Islam and pluralism in the United States. Dr. Zito is very close to Senegal and brings an interesting perspective on the subject of religious diversity. His doctoral thesis written at Boston University examined Wolof-language literature connected to the founding and growth of the *Muridiyya Sufi* (moor-i-DEE-ya soo-fee) order of Senegal. He has championed the cause of pluralism and inclusion among Muslim-American college students and allies on behalf of the American Islamic Congress.

Once again, thanks for sharing this *Ndogou* with us. I hope you will enjoy Dr. Zito’s presentation and each other’s company. *Diere dief!*