

shaping political solutions and played the role of a catalyst in conciliating conflicting views. As a philanthropist, he assisted many educational and social institutions in Lebanon and abroad namely in the United States of America, at Tufts University in Boston where he established the Issam Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies. H.E. Mr. Fares couldn't be with us tonight and on his behalf, I have the honor to present his award for Excellence to a very distinguished Palestinian Leader, legislator, activist scholar for her outstanding contributions to her country and to the region.

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, a brilliant Palestinian figure who I consider the continuous spokesperson for the Palestinian cause. She is always there touring the world, speaking eloquently on every TV channel and on many podiums defending firmly not only the official policy of the Palestinian Authority but over and above the rights of her people. Dr. Ashrawi's CV is rich and long but just to mention a few:

- She served as the official spokesperson for the Palestinian delegation at the Madrid peace conference in 1991.
- She was appointed the Palestinian Authority's Minister of Higher Education and was elected member of the Executive Committee of the PLO.
- She made history as the first woman to hold a seat in the highest executive body in Palestine.
- She is the head of the Board of Directors of the Palestinian initiative for the promotion of global dialogue and democracy.
- Dr. Ashrawi is the Commissioner of the Independent Commission for human rights.

Dr. Ashrawi will you please join me on the stage.