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President Bush speaks during the Iftaar Dinner in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2008. (AP Photo/Lawrence Jackson)



Bush hosts dinner for American Muslims

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush told a dinner honoring American Muslims that his administration has partnered with those practicing Islam around the world to promote tolerance and spread freedom to millions.

"We reject bigotry in all its forms," the president said before sitting down for dinner Wednesday with about 110 guests in the White House State Dining Room.

During the past eight years, the Bush administration has held an Iftaar dinner, a meal served at the end of the day during the holy month of Ramadan when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

Bush sat next to Kuwait's prime minister, Sheik Nasser Al Mohammed Al Sabah, who will return to the White House on Friday for a meeting in the Oval Office.

This year's event highlighted American Muslims who have made technological, artistic or innovative contributions to society. Bush singled out Maysam Ghovanloo, an immigrant from Iran who is a biomedical engineer at the Georgia Institute of Technology. He is working on an invention to help people with disabilities operate a wheelchair or surf the Internet by moving their tongues.

"Stories like the professor's remind us that one of the great strengths of our nation is its religious diversity," Bush said. "Americans practice many different faiths. But we all share a belief in the right to worship freely."

The guests, including members of Congress, military personnel and members of the U.S. diplomatic corps, sat at nearly a dozen tables, each adorned with four burning tapers and a bowl of flowers. The guests dined on eggplant soup and halibut with a pistachio crust.

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