

# Congress Honors Sephardic Jewry



*Rabbi Shimon Alouf, Yehuda Azoulay, Maurice Shohet, Senator Chuck Schumer, Rabbi Joshua Maroof, Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, Raymond Saka, Jacob Abecassis, Daniel Harari and Ezra Friedlander*

Congress recently celebrated over 360 years of Sephardic Jewry in America by paying tribute to their contributions to the United States and Jewish culture.

This historic event brought together Sephardic leaders and was coordinated by The Friedlander Group. Yehuda Azoulay, founder of the Sephardic Legacy Series, an institute for preserving Sephardic Heritage, was the initiator of this momentous occasion bringing together people from 25 cities, and over 30 Sephardic organizations. Sephardic Jews of all backgrounds were united for the first time in the US Capitol.

As Azoulay concluded in his speech, “the idea is to unite a Sephardic voice for the benefit and future of Sephardic Jewry.” Yehuda Azoulay’s Sephardic Institute aspires to build a network of accomplished Sephardic scholars and educators to produce projects covering a spectrum of topics relevant to Sephardic Jewry.

Members of Congress showed bi-partisan support for Sephardic Jewry and all of their contributions. Senator Mike Lee of Utah applauded the Sephardic Jewish community, saying that they contributed to the nation from the very onset of the republic.

Honoree Jacob Abecassis stated that the Sephardic heritage is both singularly unique and worthy of preservation, a legacy that does not only belong to the history books or museums, but one that is very much alive and thriving.



*Honoree Raymond Saka and family*

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida quoted Emma Lazarus, whose famous poem “The New Colossus” can be seen on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”

Honoree Rabbi Elie Abadie also referred to Emma Lazarus, a Sephardic Jewess, whose life and contributions were highlighted at the luncheon. Honoree Daniel Harari praised America where we have rights to assemble, rights to own property and rights to fight for the country.

*Continued on page 152*

# Sephardic Jewry...

Continued from page 150

Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, whose family faced oppression in Cuba and achieved freedom in America, compared his family's experience to that of the Sephardic community. Michele Bachmann, Congresswoman of Minnesota, spoke passionately about standing up for Israel. Senator Cruz, Senator Deb Fischer of Nebraska and many others spoke about the need to strengthen the sanctions on Iraq.

Congresswoman Grace Meng of New York stated that the early Sephardic Jewish immigrants paved the way for the tolerant, open and pluralistic society we all

cherish. Congressman Louie Gohmert of Texas focused on the unique friendship of the US and Israel. New York Senator Chuck Schumer spoke emotionally about his personal connection to the Sephardic community and his family's experience arriving on Ellis Island.

Representative Frank Pallone of New Jersey, whose district includes Deal, praised the Sephardic community for its role in the development of the Deal economy. Congressman Bill Cassidy of Louisiana also participated. Rabbi Joshua Maroof praised Sephardic Jewry.

Maurice Shohet, President of the World Organization of the Jews from Iraq, stressed the importance of saving the Iraqi Jewish Archives. Rabbi Shimon Alouf, renowned student of Hacham Ovadia Yosef zt"l, Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel who recently passed away, highlighted the legacy of Hacham Ovadia Yosef.



*Yehuda Azoulay, Rabbi Joshua Maroof, Rabbi Shimon Alouf, Maurice Shohet, Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, Raymond Saka, Jacob Abecassi and, Daniel Harari and Ezra Friedlander*



Honoree Raymond Saka, co-founder of *The Saka Edition Yalkut Yosef*, spoke about the plans to publish 34 books in the next 15 years to spread the teachings of Hacham Yosef.

Yehuda Azoulay concluded the event with the message, "unite as one to preserve our Sephardic heritage." □



*Yehuda Azoulay, Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, Maurice Shohet, Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, Raymond Saka, Jacob Abecassis, Daniel Harari, and Ezra Friedlander*