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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

"The March," a Documentary by James Blue with Panel Discussion to Follow

Embassy of the United States of America - Ashoroq TV - Burj El-Fateh
In Partnership at Burj Al-Fateh (Lebdah Hall), Friday, March 5, 2010

Honored guests, we welcome you to this special event:

Democracy, like America itself, is a continual work in progress. It is the combined history of large and small events that challenge society to keep in step with the evolution of the times. It is the courage to take a profound look in the mirror and assess whether there is social, economic and political equality for all.

The documentary we will view tonight, called simply "The March," captures the moment, on August 28, 1963, when 250,000 Americans gathered to remind America that a truly great nation recognizes the voices of *all* of its citizens. Tonight we honor not only a legendary figure, Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., but this massive peaceful demonstration on a symbolic stretch of land in Washington that gave impetus to the civil rights movement in the United States. With a quarter of a million people before him, Reverend Martin Luther King delivered a speech that would inspire generations to come, not only in the United States but elsewhere in the world, where human dignity was at stake. "I Have a Dream," Martin Luther King told the crowd, "that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." To be true to its founding principles, America would have to institutionalize some profound changes.

The Embassy of the United States of America is proud of the partnership that has made tonight's documentary screening and panel discussion possible. **The March** on Washington of 1963 was the first civil rights demonstration in the United States to have extensive coverage by television networks. The significance of collaborating with Ashoroq TV, a network prioritizing in its programming themes of diversity, co-existence and civil rights, is intentional. In this same vein, Burj Al-Fateh shares its space with us to create an open forum for public discussion. Issues of equality and citizenship, freedom and inclusion are not circumscribed by time. What happened in the year 1963 in the United States could happen anywhere, anytime. I thank all the media joining us tonight for their work in documenting truth, in making available to the public, history in its first draft.* In a letter written from his jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama, four months before the march on Washington, Martin Luther King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Today, forty-seven years later, this still holds true.

Thank you.

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* "Journalism is the first draft of history," Philip Graham, former co-owner of the Washington Post.

*As of April 2010, the main switchboard for the U.S. Embassy at its new location in Soba will change to +249-1-870-2-2000.