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Celebrating the America-Israel Friendship  
Knickerbocker

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A crowd filled the New York Hilton for the America-Israel Friendship League's Partners for Democracy Award Dinner on Tuesday night. Numerous diplomats, consul generals, and politicians were in attendance. To give a sense of the range: There was a state senator from Georgia, Don Balfour; Connecticut's attorney general, Richard Blumenthal; New York City Comptroller William Thompson Jr., and Rep. Gregory Meeks.

Comverse Technology Incorporated CEO Kobi Alexander, Active International CEO Alan Elkin, and Israel Aircraft Industries CEO Moshe Keret were each awarded the Partners for Democracy Award. AIFL executive vice president Ilana Artman received the first Herbert Tenzer Lifetime Achievement Award, named for the late congressman and philanthropist who was the first AIFL president. She said she considered her work for AIFL a labor of love.

Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations, Dan Gillerman, said he realized his speech was the last thing separating the audience from dessert and heading home. So he began by quoting the wit of Adlai Stevenson: "My job is to speak, yours is to listen. If you finish your job before I finish mine, you're free to leave."

Ambassador Gillerman spoke of several recent hopeful signs at the United Nations, an organization that once adopted a resolution equating Zionism with racism. He said the assembly unanimously passed an Israel-sponsored resolution promoting Holocaust education and remembrance - and included a budget for teaching and outreach. He spoke of the unprecedented playing of the Israeli national anthem at the United Nations in conjunction with a special session of the General Assembly in January that marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps.

Upcoming AIFL events include a delegation of U.S. state attorneys general traveling to Israel next month. Robert Abrams, a former Attorney General of New York and Lynne Ross, executive director of the National Association of Attorneys General, will accompany the group.