

National Arab American Heritage Month

Democrats for Palestinian Rights - Bay Area Club

SCCDP Central Committee Meeting, April 2, 2026

In April we celebrate National Arab American Heritage Month, honoring the culture, heritage, and history of the Arab world and recognizing the contributions of Arab Americans.

An estimated 3.7 million ethnic Arabs live in the United States, with approximately 533,000 in California and about 60,000 in Santa Clara County. Arab Americans have been a part of America since before it was a nation, with the first significant wave of Arab immigration in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The second was a direct result of the Palestinian Catastrophe (The Nakba), which began in 1948. Subsequent Arab immigration has been a result of wars -- for example, after the US invasion of Iraq and Israel's continued brutal occupation of Palestine.

Arab Americans trace their ancestry to 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. They are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Druze, followers of other religions, as well as non-believers.

Upon arriving in the United States, Arab Americans have embraced and assimilated into American society while influencing its culture through their traditions, music and cuisine. They have made significant contributions to literature, science, medicine, business, arts, fashion, film and entertainment, education, government, sports, and politics.

Notable Arab Americans include consumer advocate Ralph Nader; Omar Yaghi, PhD, who won the 2025 Nobel Prize in Chemistry; Donna Shalala, U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services under Bill Clinton; actor and philanthropist Danny Thomas, founder of St. Jude's Children's Hospital; singer Paul Anka; radio personality Casey Kasem; actor Tony Shalhoub; comedian Ramy Youssef; and Apple founder Steve Jobs, to name a few.

Arab Americans have also served in the U.S. military, fighting in every American conflict. The first Arab to die fighting for our country was Private Nathan Badeen during the Revolutionary War.

As we honor the contributions of Arab Americans, we also recognize the struggles of so many in the community. Arab Americans frequently encounter discrimination through harassment, hate crimes, Islamophobia, racist rhetoric, and violent attacks. Many have

lost employment, and others have lost contracts simply for having an Arab-sounding name. Humanity has been lost on the backs of Arab America.

Palestinian Americans and their supporters have been especially targeted. There has been a McCarthyesque repression of support for Palestinians by our own government, school districts, and other organizations. Federal agents have detained immigrants who criticize the genocide in Gaza, while schools have harassed students, parents, and teachers for their associations with Palestine; failed to address Palestinian students' and families' legitimate safety concerns; and have suppressed any mention of Palestine in the classroom. Teachers and professors who openly oppose the genocide in Gaza, Palestine have lost their jobs, as have workers in the technology sector, Hollywood and the media. We encounter this anti-Palestinian racism even within the Democratic Party, as some Democratic elected politicians deny the existence of Palestine and Palestinians in history, as well as refuse to recognize a Palestinian state, which indirectly supports Israeli annexation of Palestine.

Today, we bear witness to the war against Iran, which impacts many of the Arab countries, as well as the devastation in Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, Syria, and in Palestine, where ethnic cleansing and genocide are live-streamed globally on social media. What we are witnessing affects our diverse Arab American community profoundly, not only because of the enormous loss of life, but all the more so because it is funded with our tax dollars, enabled by our weapons, and supported by our elected officials.

As Democrats, we all must pledge to embrace cultural and ethnic diversity while fighting injustice, racism, and hate in all forms, especially as our Arab American community continues to be dehumanized, targeted, and attacked without protection or support from elected officials and our administration.

During National Arab American Heritage Month, we honor the past, present and future of the Arab American community, and we dedicate ourselves to ensuring that Arab American voices are heard, their safety is ensured, and their contributions are celebrated.

Please enjoy chicken shawarma, falafel, and Palestinian dates, as a small window into Arab comfort food from the Levant region.