

NOMINATION FORM: Global Business & Interfaith Peace Awards

Note: Nominations are open to CEOs (present or past) of companies who have championed interfaith understanding and peace.

Nominee Contact Information

1. Nominee Full Name: [Zahi Wadih Khouri](#)
2. Corporate Title: [Chairman and CEO](#)
3. Company Name: [National Beverage Company](#)
4. Company Headquarters Location (Country): [Palestine](#)
5. Engagement with the UN Global Compact and/or the Religions Freedom & Business Foundation*
[X](#) Company is a signatory of the UN Global Compact [The Coca-Cola Company, which Mr. Khouri represents in Palestine, has signed on, as has PADICO Holding, of which Mr. Khouri is a board member.](#)
 Company has joined Business for Peace
 Company has signed the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation's pledge to protect freedom of religion
 Company intends to join one or more of the initiatives listed above in the next six months, please specify [Click here to enter text.](#)

* Nominees are invited to:

1. join the [UN Global Compact](#) and its [Business for Peace](#) platform and,
2. make the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation's [corporate pledge to protect freedom of religion or belief](#) (FoRB)

Nominator Contact Information

1. Nominator Full Name: [Dr. Bernard Sabella](#)
2. Corporate Title: [Executive Secretary](#)
3. Company Name: [Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees](#)
4. Email Address: dspr@netvision.net.il
5. Phone Number: [+972-2-6271715](#)
6. Relationship to the Nominee: [Both board members at Diyar, a leading academic institution based in Bethlehem.](#)

Please submit a Biography of the Nominee (max 200 words)

[Zahi W. Khouri, a Palestinian- American born in Jaffa, Palestine, is the Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The National Beverage Company \(the exclusive Coca-Cola licensee for Palestine\). Mr. Khouri is an active Middle East businessman and holds a number of executive positions and Board](#)

Memberships including the Chairman of Jerusalem Development and Investment Co (Jedico), and Intram Investments Inc. in Orlando, Florida. Mr. Khouri serves as Board Member of Palestine Development & Investment Co (Padico), the largest Palestinian holding Co. In the UAE, Mr. Khouri is a Board member of Rasmala Holding Co. Mr. Khouri was an Executive Board Member of the Olayan Group and CEO of the Olayan Saudi Holding Co. in Saudi-Arabia and USA for over 20 years. He also holds a number of civic positions among others, Chairman of the local chapter of Partners for New Beginning (PNB), Board member of the local International Chamber of Commerce, and the Jerusalem Arbitration Center. Mr. Khouri received an M.B.A. from the European Institute of Business Administration (INSEAD), Fontainebleau, France and an M.Sc. in Engineering from the Technische Hochschule in Stuttgart, Germany. He ended his high school studies at the IC/AUB in Beirut, Lebanon. Mr. Khouri is fluent in Arabic, English, French, German and Spanish.

Information about the policy, programme or initiative

1. Please describe a policy, programme or initiative that the Nominee has launched or spearheaded to advance the company's efforts to champion interfaith understanding and peace (max 300 words)

Mr. Khouri was instrumental in launching the Breaking the Impasse (BTI) initiative. This unprecedented move joined prominent Palestinian and Israeli business people and civil society leaders in calling to political leaders (Palestinian, Israeli and global) to achieve a peace resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an inherently religious conflict.

The group called on political leaders to attach the highest priority towards achieving a two-state solution and an end of the conflict between the two peoples. Its members took it upon themselves to back such an endeavor and to garner domestic and international support for it. Members did not join lightly, indeed most of the Palestinian members were attacked by the larger community for "normalizing" relations with their occupier.

Yet, the group grew to include some 300 independent, non-political, business leaders and major employers, representing a meaningful share of the GDP of both economies and its efforts were adopted by the World Economic Forum, which hosted several meetings.

This initiative was unprecedented in that it was the first time that the private sector from both sides took a stand on the conflict. They planned to use their wide economic power to pressure their politicians to action. The group attempted, through several meetings to draft a position statement that would include mutual positions on key issues like borders and settlements. The positions put forth by the Palestinian side were nothing new and were based on shared values as well as on international law, international resolutions concerning our conflict, and past agreements. Yet, even during this context, both sides blamed each other for the situation and the initiative failed to achieve even this basic step.

Mr. Khouri was courageous to defend his decision to help launch BTI and, after it failed, to truthfully speak about what happened.

2. Which category or categories does the policy, programme or initiative fall into:

- Core business
- Social investment & philanthropy
- Advocacy and public policy engagement
- Partnership and collective action

3. Does the policy, programme or initiative address any of the following related to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)¹:

- Promote sustainable and innovative business through protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)
- Non-discrimination and/or non-harassment on the basis of religion or belief
- Religious accommodation and inclusion
- Protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in the community
- Other (describe below, max. 25 words)
[Click here to enter text.](#)

4. Please describe the objective of the policy, programme or initiative and the need, goal or gap that it was designed to address. (max 200 words)

BTI marked the first effort by the Palestinian and Israeli private sectors to support a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Its members hoped that their economic power and publicly stating their support for the two-state solution would pressure political leaders into action. Developing a position paper would have meant agreement on the basic principles that have entrenched the conflict for so long—including settlements, the status of refugees, and the eventual borders of the states. This position paper would then be used to achieve wide public support and eventually presented to political leaders to be used for a final agreement.

5. How was the policy, programme or initiative implemented? What role did the Nominee play? (max 200 words)

Key private sector leaders from both sides (Palestinian and Israeli) first garnered wide support among their respective private sectors. The initiative was then announced at the May 2013 meeting of the World Economic Forum at the Dead Sea in Jordan.

6. What were/are the most persistent challenges in implementing the policy, programme or initiative? How were they/are they being overcome and what was the role of the Nominee? (max 200 words)

¹ Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

As with any initiative that tries to bridge the divide between Palestinians and Israelis, BTI faced many challenges from the start. First was actually convincing members to join. As mentioned earlier in this application, the Palestinians that joined were labeled as “normalizers,” or someone that is trying to create “normal” relations in a situation of occupation/abnormality. As the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction movement grows, it is becoming more difficult for Palestinian society to understand relationships between Palestinians and Israelis, whether they are commercial or personal. Further, during the time that BTI existed, Israel launched a devastating offensive in the Gaza Strip, killing hundreds over several weeks. This made it very difficult for the Palestinian members of BTI to continue talking to their Israeli interlocutors given that none spoke out against the war (besides the mounting moral pressure of halting relationships with those that supported this war). Finally, unfortunately BTI demonstrated once again the deep divide between the two sides, as even members of their private sectors and civil society—assumed to be more level-headed and practical—could not agree on basic principles for peace.

7. What are the key lessons learned from launching the policy, programme or initiative? (max 200 words)

The key takeaway for Mr. Khouri and many of the Palestinian members of BTI is that peace will likely not come from Palestinians and Israelis, the mistrust and misunderstanding are too great to bridge alone. Therefore, it is imperative that if peace is to come to the Holy Land that the international community plays a key role. This conflict has caused so much pain, money and resources, and its continuation is impossible without increased violence and suffering. The international community can and should be more involved. However, their involvement has to be fair. Whoever is chosen to be involved must be able to see the faults of both sides and have the right tools to pressure and encourage change.

Impact and Reporting on Progress

1. How do you monitor and evaluate progress on the policy, programme or initiative? If relevant, what indicators and metrics are used? (max 200 words)

The first test of BTI was whether it could garner enough members to be viable, in which it succeeded. Its second test was whether they could agree on a position paper, on which its members failed to agree. Without this position paper, BTI’s members had no platform to present to the political leadership or their respective publics.

2. What outcomes or impact have been reached to date? Please be as specific as possible and supply available data. (max 200 words)

While BTI was launched amidst much fanfare at the World Economic Forum, and it was very well received by the international community, even with this type of support it was impossible for its members to agree on basic principles and the initiative, like so many other peace initiatives, failed.

3. Is the Nominee’s company reporting on its practices, policies, programmes and/or initiatives to champion interfaith understanding and peace? If so, please provide relevant weblink(s) for posting on the Awards’ website. If integrated into the company’s corporate sustainability report, Global Compact COP or GRI Report, please indicate relevant pages and/or sections. (max 200 words)

Not applicable.

Additional Information:

1. Are there additional actions the Nominee has taken on an individual level to support interfaith understanding and peace within the organization? If so, please specify. (max 200 words)

Besides his very public involvement in the BTI, Mr. Khouri is very involved in different actions to help bring peace to the Holy Land. This includes being a founding member of the Palestinian Business Committee for Peace and Reform (PBCPR), a group started by leading Palestinian business leaders to communicate with international political leaders in regards to the situation in Palestine, with a particular focus on the American political leadership, including Congress and the Executive Office. As members of the private sector, it is much easier for the PBCPR group to obtain meetings with American government officials than official PLO or PA delegates. Further, given that they talk about issues besides international law and human rights conventions, the PBCPR can provide a message that is easier to understand to these officials. For example, when Mr. Khouri presents the issues that he faces as the Coca-Cola bottler in Palestine, such as importing key ingredients for his products, or delivering Coca-Cola products in a territory that is dotted by checkpoints and settlements, he is able to deliver the message of the occupation in a way that American Members of Congress can relate to and understand. Mr. Khouri is also frequently called upon to speak as a Palestinian-Christian business leader, as unfortunately, people throughout the world continue to believe that Christians in Palestine are persecuted or discriminated against (and believe that to be the reason for the declining Palestinian Christian population, when in fact, Palestinian Christians are emigrating from Palestine due to the lack of opportunity and injustice they live due to the Israeli occupation). Most recently, for example, Mr. Khouri was called upon to speak at the XXX conference in Atlanta, where Mr. Khouri presented several ways in which the global Christian community can support peace in Palestine.

2. How has the Nominee taken action to support and promote the UN Global Compact's Ten Principles? If so, please specify. (max 200 words)

Besides his work towards Principle 1 in support of Palestinian human rights and against the Israeli occupation, through the National Beverage Company, Mr. Khouri has done a lot of work towards Principles 7, 8 and 9. The National Beverage Company was selected from 92 Coca-Cola bottlers for its environmental sustainability, including the conservation of water resources. In Gaza, for example, NBC provides clean water to hospitals (a key issue given the quality of water in Gaza).

Please provide any additional information to be considered. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Nominations team nominations@religiousfreedomandbusiness.org

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