Dear AUB Community,

I am writing to clarify the situation related to the search for a new director of the Center for American Studies and Research (CASAR). It has been alleged in an anonymous online petition in support of Dr. Steven Salaita, visiting professor at AUB and recommended candidate for the position, that the search was called off because of Dr. Salaita’s “advocacy on behalf of Palestinian self-determination”. Such an allegation is wholly untrue and appears to be a malicious distortion of the facts involved in this case.

Leading up to March 16, 2016, the University leadership received several complaints from faculty members alleging conflicts of interest and misconduct in the selection of the CASAR director and took steps to address the situation. During consultations, a number of significant procedural violations were uncovered and it was decided to stop the search entirely. Violations included the presence of visiting faculty with selection and voting rights on the search committee, as well as the presence of lower-ranked faculty members voting for a higher ranked position. Additionally, there was a conflict implied by the current incumbent chairing a committee to find their own successor.

The University leadership communicated with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences on March 16, 2016 and requested the search be cancelled immediately. However, there were unauthorized attempts to continue the selection for another two weeks. Following a meeting between the University leadership and FAS Dean, the Dean informed the search committee on March 30, 2016, that the appointment process would be stopped and the position re-advertised during the next academic year. The University leadership also met with visiting professor Dr. Lisa Hajjar, who had been chairing the search committee, to indicate the serious nature of the allegations and she acknowledged understanding of the fatal flaws in the process.
There is no truth in the anonymous petition’s suggestion that the search was stopped in order to prevent Dr. Salaita from being selected as CASAR director. Interim Provost Mohamed Harajli and I also met with Dr. Salaita to explain the flaws in the search process and advised him to re-apply for a permanent position at AUB after the decision was taken to stop the selection. During the meeting we discussed his future plans and proposed to consider extending his current position as Edward Said Chair of American Studies for another year.

The University strongly supports the principles of academic freedom, freedom of speech, and the fair, transparent selection of academic positions based on merit alone and free of any hidden political agenda.

Fadlo R. Khuri, MD
President