

AUB President Fadlo Khuri
Founders Day Ceremony
December 3, 2018

Excellences, Trustees, our distinguished speaker Maysa Jalbout, ladies, gentlemen, faculty, students, staff, alumni, and friends of our beloved university,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the 152nd Founders Day of the American University of Beirut, on this third day of December, 2018. According to our tradition it is a day when we honor the founders of our institution, from its small but visionary beginnings in 1866, and celebrate the generations of scholarship, transformative education, and service to communities that followed. We are also beginning a new tradition this year, of holding an annual Giving Day on the same day as Founders Day, in order to reenergize new generations in the spirit of philanthropy which enabled this university to come to being.

But first, I have the honor to present prizes to four prize-winning student essayists, who have written on the topic of how AUB can educate tomorrow's leaders today, in our Founders Day Student Essay competition. We will then hear the winning entry, after which I will have the special honor of introducing our wonderful and inspiring guest speaker. Before I do, I would like to commend and express our profound appreciation to the Founders Day essay selection committee, chaired by Dr. David Landes of the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Victor Araman from the Olayan School of Business, Dr. Maya Abou Zeid from the Department of Civil Engineering in the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering, and Dr. Greg Burris from the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Third prize is awarded to **Dima Mehdi**, majoring in Political Studies and Public Administration in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, where she has been placed on the Dean's Honor list for the three semesters she has been at AUB. Please come to the stage Ms. Mehdi.

Second prize is awarded jointly to **Ubah Ali** from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and to **Claudette Igiraneza** from the Faculty of Health Sciences, both the recipients of scholarship support from the MasterCard Foundation. Please both come to the stage.

First prize is awarded to **Zine Labidine Ghebouli**, majoring in Political Studies and Public Administration in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the recipient of scholarship support from the Middle East Partnership Initiative-Tomorrow's Leaders program, for his essay "AUB, an Institution of Today's Leaders". (After prize-giving and photo) Mr. Labidine Ghebouli, the podium is yours. (Zine reads his essay.)

Thank you for those well-chosen words and your powerful argument, and thanks to all entrants in the essay contest. I now turn to our distinguished guest speaker.

Maysa Jalbout is a recognized leader in the field of education and philanthropy. She has spent more than 20 years building effective organizations, initiatives and partnerships in Canada, the Middle East and elsewhere in the Global South. She is the founding CEO of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education, which is a landmark philanthropic initiative with a budget of \$1 billion and an ambitious goal of educating 15,000 young people within 10 years. In 2016, AUB and the foundation formed a partnership to support students from around the Arab world on full scholarships in the STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The scale and scope of this initiative has already left an indelible mark on our university, for which we sincerely thank Ms. Jalbout and the entire Al Ghurair Foundation.

Maysa Jalbout was born in Beirut, the daughter of Palestinian refugees. She spent the first 16 years of her life here—studying at al-Rawda High School in the southern suburbs—before emigrating with her family to Ontario, Canada. She earned a bachelor’s in sociology at McMaster University in 1994, and a master’s in distance education from Athabasca University in 2004. Impelled by her own inheritance, Maysa has dedicated her career to helping disadvantaged children and youth around the world through education and employment programs. During this time she has attained innumerable awards, honors, and achievements. She ranked as #35 in the “Forbes’ 100 most influential women in the Middle East” for 2018 (and frankly we believe she should be ranked far higher!) and has come fresh from her alma mater where she was recipient of the McMaster Distinguished Alumni Award at the fall convocation.

In the words of US General George Catlett Marshall, the architect of post-war reconstruction effort for Europe, from his famous 1947 Marshall Plan speech at Harvard, “I need not tell you that the world situation is very serious.” We are about to hear a thorough, realistic, and attainable global vision of how the higher education community can tackle the challenges we face today, through partnership, and through the adoption of principles in the service of the whole of humanity. Ms. Jalbout, we thank you for honoring us with your presence and for sharing your vision on this auspicious day in the AUB calendar. The podium is yours.