

AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri
Reunion 2022
50th and 25th Honoring Ceremony
June 23, 2022

It is a great privilege to welcome you – the members of the Classes of 1972 and 1997, some members of 1971, and your families – to AUB and to Class Reunion 2022.

A few hours before this event, we lost Professor Abdulrahim Abu-Husayn, one of the greatest historians to ever teach at AUB. He was the student of Professor Kamal Salibi, getting his PhD here in 1982, and just three years ago, he and Makram Rabah and others organized a landmark celebration of the 1000 years of Druze history from this stage, so if I could ask for a moment of silence for Dr. Abu-Husayn, I would be very grateful.

Thank you very much for your patience.

Now, we think of history, the history you are part of, and we take it for granted, but actually there was no history before Herodotus. Herodotus took the events of the Greco-Persian Wars, and he put them together in what he called *inquiries*, which is what we now call history. History is an event like today, it includes an event like today, an occasion when we can celebrate. History is not all dark, and history really can be about milestones, that are both positive and negative, in the lives of some of our alumni, and certainly the 50th and 25th anniversaries of graduation from AUB I would argue is a happy history, is a positive history. When we honor you, we also honor our university and the power of the connection that we share that transcends not only years, but great geographic distances. I hear from many of our alumni (and from faculty and staff as well – many of whom are first and foremost alumni) that their connection with AUB has had a profound impact on their lives, and I think you are going to hear that so to speak from the horse's mouth—we have three very distinguished alumni from this great group who are going to speak to you—impact on the career paths they chose and, even more importantly, on the values that guide their lives.

We recently celebrated Commencement on the Green Field with some truly exceptional speeches from our honorary degree recipients and student speakers, and it reminded us of the ties that bind all of us. I am proud to say that we have offered the opportunity to graduate every class, the Classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022 in person, admittedly with social cautions, and perhaps this year because they did not take as much caution, we have a slight outbreak of COVID-19 among our graduates. However, we also have to be cognizant of history, and know that our students are graduating into a world of enormous challenges, very different from the challenges you faced in 1972 and the challenges you faced in 1997. We know them all too well:

terrible inequality, massive displacement and growth of populations, failing states and health systems, environmental unsustainability, and threats to personal freedom. In Lebanon, we face all those challenges and much more! At AUB, we prepare students not just to face challenges, but to leverage them to create new opportunities for them and their communities.

We are also making changes to support our community during these unimaginable times. Since the onset of the economic crisis, AUB has responded with substantially increased financial assistance to students, raising the total from \$55 million to \$89 million between 2015 and 2021. We currently support over 60 percent of all students, the largest number ever, with scholarships and other forms of financial aid, and close to one in four AUB students have their AUB education fully covered. That is our highest number on record in over 50 years. For us, this means that we are trying to adhere to the values that made this university what it is—the idea of opportunities to those less fortunate, and of bringing people together, of overcoming the fear of the other, that seems to be so present in this part of the world. We do not do that alone. Fundraising efforts over the past three years have led to expanded philanthropic support as well as partnerships with multiple foundations and US government sources, with student aid persistently the top priority. These extraordinary efforts will continue, and all students, both incoming and continuing, will have the opportunity to apply for financial aid and appeal for additional assistance.

Your alma mater is making major changes to ensure that it can continue to play a leading role in efforts to meet those challenges. We will, for example, be opening a new campus in Pafos, Cyprus to reach a larger number of bright people who desire and deserve an AUB education. I firmly believe that the establishment of this campus—and the one we hope to establish in the Arab World—will strengthen our eternal home campus in Beirut.

I think it is especially important during these times that we hold fast to what has made AUB great: our liberal arts ethos in education, our excellence in research, our compassionate commitment to medical care for all, our abiding commitment to Lebanon and the Arab world, our unmatched but evolving student experience, and—at the top of the list, our accomplished alumni.

There is no doubt about it. Our alumni's contributions, their commitment, and their abiding loyalty, make AUB such a very special institution. You are our greatest ambassadors, provide the wisest counsel, are sometimes our fiercest critics, but are always our most steadfast friends. Students, faculty, staff and alumni have excelled, winning numerous awards and accolades, including this academic year three of the most prestigious prizes: the Nobel Prize in

Medicine to Ardem Patapoutian, the Kavli Prize in Neuroscience to Huda Zoghbi, and Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale to Ali Cherri. AUB is proud to be your alma mater.

But we need to work on making all of you more interconnected, so that when we send a star graduate to the Arab world, to Africa, to North America, to Asia, to South America, and to Europe, they know that they are part of a band of sisters and brothers that cannot be broken. So this is what we need the most—of course, we need your resources, and believe me Dr. Baalbaki and AVP Oueida will be knocking on your doors—everyone from the front row to the last row—for more financial support, and so will I, but we need you to help our best and brightest to get in position so they can make a difference, so they can have better job opportunities, and they can create better job opportunities.

AUB is an institution that fosters creativity and job creation, and I firmly believe—and I believe most of us, if not all of us, in this room believe—that this is the right time for AUB to recommit itself for Lebanon, the Arab world, and beyond—and that’s what we are doing. We are prepared to lead. We are counting on your engaged partnership. It is critical to the success of this institution. It always has been. It is thanks to you and to thousands of others in Lebanon and around the world that we were able to exceed the \$650 million fundraising target for the BOLDLY AUB campaign – and to do it ahead of schedule. Our plan had been to celebrate the end of the campaign this year, but we are instead extending it for at least an additional two years. The needs are too great for us to do anything else.

I started by talking to you about history and the second half of the 20th century, and one of the most powerful empires in human history was best described in Great Britain as a contest between two great peers, Gladstone’s liberals and Disraeli’s conservatives, and I think most people know which side of that particular debate I’m going to land on, but I’m going to end by quoting the opposite pole, Benjamin Disraeli, the great conservative Prime Minister when he said: “the secret of success is constancy.” The secret of AUB’s success is constancy to our purpose, its constancy to our values, its constancy to our people. Each and every one of us at AUB has been humbled by the generosity of our alumni and friends who stepped up time and again in support of our abiding mission: to serve the peoples of Lebanon, the Middle East and beyond. We are counting on each and everyone of you.

Thank you.