

**Commencement Exercises 2010**  
**AUB President Peter Dorman's Speech**

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, and H.E. Gean Hogassapian, Minister of State, representing the President of the Republic, Michel Suleiman; Prime Minister Saad Hariri; and Speaker of the House, Nabih Berri. I would also like to welcome Prime Minister Hariri in his capacity as Trustee of the American University of Beirut.

Good evening.

I have the great pleasure and honor of welcoming you to a celebration that everyone in this audience has been anticipating for years: the graduation ceremony of the Class of 2010. This evening is an occasion that will long remain in our memories.

Today we mark the 141<sup>st</sup> celebration of commencement exercises at AUB, and tonight the university will be awarding **1,395** new degrees. For you who are about to receive your diplomas, I offer my warmest congratulations. You are setting forth today on a quest for professional and personal fulfillment that will be enriched—not only by the degrees conferred upon you this day, but by the experiences you have had in these university years with your professors, your colleagues, and your friends. For parents and families who have longed for this day and lent their constant support to their children and husbands and wives, we join in your celebration of this milestone.

In the year 2010, AUB has reached an historic crux, a turning point in its long journey. Our University is on the verge of taking great strides to enhance our academic programs, research excellence, and campus and medical facilities. At the same time we have experienced a notable springtime of controversy on campus, and in this context I wish to emphasize one important message. Our University is a conglomeration of extraordinary individuals and communities, all of whom are passionately devoted to the vigor and the long-lasting success of one of the great experiments in education ever undertaken in the Middle East. As individuals at AUB, we instinctively identify ourselves as students, as faculty, as alumni, as university staff, as proud parents of graduates, as trustees and friends. As such, each of us holds a different stake in this

institution, and it is right that we should do so. Yet we are not many communities; we are fundamentally one. The aspirations and values that bind us together are common to all. We believe in the pursuit of excellence; we believe in the free expression of ideas; we believe in the dignity of every human being; we believe in the value of a diverse and engaged body of citizens; we believe that each of us can make a difference. Most crucially, for students who will be coming in future years, we also believe that an education at AUB must remain affordable to every qualified applicant.

Graduates of the Class of 2010: we also believe in you. Each of you is on the point of joining a mighty river of talented and committed alumni whose contributions to societies across the globe have enhanced the communities where they live, and who have added luster to the renown of our alma mater. I have no doubt that you will follow this tradition, and we welcome your continued engagement with AUB in the years ahead. This campus will always be your home.

Before we move to the speakers of the day, I wish to recognize the talents and devotion of two remarkable individuals who will be leaving their administrative posts this summer: Dean Ibrahim Hajj, of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, and our Dean of Student Affairs, Maroun Kisirwani—will you please stand? In ten years of steadfast service, Dean Hajj has succeeded in burnishing the reputation of our great engineering faculty, setting high standards of excellence in basic teaching and advanced research, and in garnering international recognition; I'm glad to say that Dean Hajj will remain on our faculty, returning to the FEA after a year's sabbatical. Dean Kisirwani has proved to be a past master at advocating issues that are vital to students, and providing both the administration and the student body with sage advice that you ignore at your peril; as Dean Kisirwani is departing for Australia to join his family in retirement, we will feel his loss keenly. For both men, their counsel has been invaluable to me on a host of issues during my first two years as president. Please join me in thanking Dean Hajj and Dean Kisirwani for their selfless service.

And now it is my pleasure to introduce the chosen speaker for the Class of 2010, Elias Ghanem, a candidate for the degree of Bachelor of Business Administration in the Suliman S. Olayan

School of Business, who has also served as Vice President of the University Student-Faculty Committee during the past academic year.

It is an honor for me to introduce the keynote speaker for this commencement exercise. He is a professor emeritus at Harvard University whose scholarship has both chronicled and informed the Arab-Israeli conflict and whose voice has advocated passionately for the national identity and cultural heritage of the Palestinian people. For twenty-five years he taught at AUB in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, and thus knows this university intimately. He is a recipient of many awards and honors, bestowed during his long career, and this morning returned home to this institution to be awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming this year's commencement speaker, Dr. Walid Khalidi.