

For Immediate Release



AUB honors Bishop Gregoire Haddad for a lifetime of civic activism

Beirut, Lebanon- 28/04/2011 - The American University of Beirut awarded veteran civic activist Bishop Gregoire Haddad with a plaque honoring him for his lifetime achievements in civic activism, during the April 27 opening ceremony of the third annual AUB Civic and Volunteering Fair.

AUB President Peter Dorman presented the plaque to Haddad saying, "This volunteering fair ... is a wonderful example of how we can connect our students, faculty and staff along with established NGOs around the Beirut area."

Organized by The American University of Beirut's (AUB) Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS), in collaboration with the Office of Students Affairs and the Student Representative Committees, the opening ceremony of the two-day event took place in West Hall's Bathish Auditorium.

Dorman noted that AUB is working with its neighbors in Ras Beirut on topics of great concern such as traffic control, the availability of green areas, and the availability of "walk-able" roads between Bliss and Hamra Street.

"We are constantly looking for ways in which we can provide innovative and effective ways to engage the community beyond our campus walls," he added, noting that the CCECS's aim has been—since its establishment in 2008—to develop the culture of civic leadership within AUB.

A pioneer figure of anti-sectarianism in the country since the 1960s, Bishop Haddad urged the audience to adopt civic activism instead of violent means to effect change. "It is better to gradually change the Lebanese political system instead of toppling the regime because such calls have only caused violence as we have seen in many Arab countries in the region," he said.

Haddad overviewed his long experience working on secularism in Lebanon, noting that most Lebanese, and particularly religious and political figures, misunderstand what secularism is all about, and it is therefore the responsibility of members of civic organizations to clarify this concept.

Haddad urged the audience to enlist in the NGO he founded in order to join forces with AUB in the social movement calling for secularism in Lebanon. The aim is to create a real secular society at the grass roots level because change starts among the people first, said Haddad. "Dreams grow as we age," he said, adding that his dream is to set Lebanon as an example of a secular state and teach the world real secularism.

The AUB Volunteering Fair was open to the community, and aimed at connecting NGOs and AUB centers and groups involved in civic and outreach work with students, faculty, staff and the public at large. It included about 70 stands, which provided NGOs and university partners with platforms to convey their messages, state their achievements, display their civic and community projects and activities, and communicate their future aspirations.

On the fair's second day, actor and director Zeina Daccache spoke about how she used drama therapy with prisoners in Roumieh Prison to help them work through their psychological issues. Daccache directed the prisoners in a critically-acclaimed production called "12 Angry Lebanese" that garnered lots of media attention and was performed in Roumieh prison to officials and members of the press and civil society. Her work with the prisoners was captured in a documentary on the making of the play.

The fair ended with a musical performance by May Nasr, accompanied by Bassam Jalgha on the oud, and preceded by a prelude by Beirut Vocal Point, winners in the "AUB got talent" contest.

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of more than 7,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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