

For Immediate Release



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AUB's Mu'taz and Rada Sawwaf Arabic Comics Initiative **announces results of its competition's sixth edition**

The Mu'taz and Rada Sawwaf Arabic Comics Initiative at the American University of Beirut (AUB) held a press conference at the press syndicate quarters in Beirut to announce the winners of the Mahmoud Kahil Competition's sixth edition.

Speaking at the conference were Lebanese Press Syndicate Chairman Aouni Kaaki, president of the Sawwaf comics initiative Rada Sawwaf, Associate Dean of AUB's Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture Dr. Salah Sadek, and the director of the initiative at AUB Professor Lina Ghaibeh. An annual book featuring the most important works of the competitors was distributed at the conference, produced and distributed by the initiative as usual every year. The press conference also included a virtual exhibition of the most prominent art works of the competitors. Members of the audience were able to virtually tour the exhibition and explore its various parts. The exhibition, which will remain open for one year, can be accessed on this link: www.mahmoudkahilaward.com

Media expert Roni Alpha asserted at the start of the conference that Lebanon is gradually returning to its status as the region's center of culture and civilization interaction.

Press Syndicate Chairman stressed that the initiative establishes further cultural and artistic rebirth and also contributes to the restoration of Lebanon as a bridge between Arabs on the one hand and the world on the other, through the venue of dialogue of arts and creativity.

For her part, Rada Sawwaf pointed out that the virtual exhibition was organized in accordance with the highest optical standards that mimic reality from afar, and that COVID-19 which imposed a different lifestyle than we used to know, has a silver lining as it is stimulating creativity and adaptation to reality. She added, "The initiative has creative and artistic ramifications, but it has never been just art for art's sake, because art that is committed to the

values of freedom, justice and citizenship, is art that carries real value.” She added that this year, the initiative brought together more competitors from 14 Arab countries, stressing that the picture can compete with the word and that civilization will only advance with the fruitful cooperation of word and picture. Sawwaf encouraged women to get more involved in the category of political caricature, lauding the increasing numbers of women creators of comics. She ended by recalling that the initiative was able to raise donations, albeit humble, by publishing comic books for students via AUB to help those affected by the Beirut port explosion.

Ghaibeh said, "This year we have seen the submission of the largest number of graphic novels for the award, the largest number of women participating in the competition as well as the wide participation of creators from Palestine and Yemen, compared to the previous six years.”

She continued, “The past year has made us aware of many facts, namely that face-to-face meeting is not a condition for achievement, and that technology, despite its automated nature, shrinks distances and brings us closer together; the virtual exhibition is evidence of the use of technology in the service of art and its accessibility to all. We must continue to celebrate arts and culture because this lifts us from the tragedies of the reality we live in.” She added, “Ultimately we progressed together, and we struggled for excellence, and the awards are just proof of our strength, perseverance, and hope for a better tomorrow.”

The awards were announced as follows: Mwafaq Katt from Syria won in the editorial cartoon category, Egyptian Mai Koraiem won in the graphic novel category, Egyptian Mohamed Migo won in the category of comics, Michael Jbareen from Palestine won in the graphic illustration category, and Diala Brisly from Syria won in the category of children's book illustration. The honorary Hall of Fame Lifetime Achievement Award went to Moroccan artist Ibrahim L’Mhadi, and The Comics Guardian Award was won by the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) and the award was handed to Michèle Standjofski, founder director of the program.

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For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar, PhD
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: (+961) 3-427-024
Office: (+961) 1-374-374 ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 programs leading to 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 365-bed hospital.

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