

For Immediate Release



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## **The AUB Global Health Institute and healthcare professionals** **discuss the path to a new health system in Lebanon**

Lebanon's financial and economic collapse along with the worsening burden of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the disintegration of the Lebanese healthcare system, by which health sectors, namely the hospital sector, healthcare providers, and the pharmaceutical and medical supplies sector are now facing significant challenges.

In an attempt to address the healthcare crisis, the Global Health Institute (GHI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) organized a panel discussion titled "On the Path to a New Health System in Lebanon: Discussing Strategies in the Transitional Phase." This panel discussion took place on campus, on December 2, 2021, where it gathered health experts and academics that discussed the transitional phase of the Lebanese healthcare system, the arising challenges, and possible reforms and solutions.

Prime ministers from the parliamentary healthcare committee, representatives from embassies, syndicates, pharma and insurance companies, in addition to academics and healthcare professionals attended this event and engaged in a productive discussion, where they listed together constructive solutions needed to lift Lebanon out of this crisis, in the presence of Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president.

In his opening note, President Khuri talked about the crises the country is going through and their effect on the healthcare system, by which he highlighted the fundamental need for reforms in order to achieve a sustainable health system. President Khuri also took the floor to launch GHI's Platform for Health Systems in Crisis (PHSC), a new GHI initiative that aims to contribute to efforts targeted at minimizing and managing the adverse impact of crisis on health systems. President Khuri stated that "at AUB and GHI we are committed to work hand in hand with healthcare professionals to find effective solutions for every problem, in order to minimize

health crisis and their impacts,” adding that “working together we can start to push on the fundamental reform questions that must be addressed.”

In his speech, Dr. Omar Dabbous, a physician, health economist, and a public health expert from the United States, stated that the next normal is not going to be easy but we have to take serious steps towards activating leaders to help the healthcare system. He also emphasized the importance of taking tough measures in tough times for the good health of the population.

Lt. Col. Habib Abdo, pharmacist at the Lebanese Armed Forces and head of central military laboratories, said that “the change won’t be easy and it will be somehow bumpy; but the fields of reform are many. We should prioritize low cost with high impact solutions.” He continued, “we should look at the unification of health funds, the standardization of contributions, and the equalization of the benefits packages.”

Dr. Nikos Maniadakis, professor of health management and policy in Greece, emphasized that “healthcare contributes to better health and wealth; investment in healthcare is an investment in economy.” He pointed out that every crisis must be seen as an opportunity for improvement, while policies should target to protect the vulnerable social groups.

Furthermore, Dr. Shadi Saleh, GHI’s founding director, indicated that “the international community owes Lebanon, that has supported refugee communities, sometimes half of its population in number, in all aspects including healthcare.”

He explained that “Lebanon’s health system will completely crumble without an active global support program at multiple levels. It has to be clear that this should be a comprehensive program and not a piecemeal approach to just fill gaps.”

Dr. Saleh stressed that “the next 2-3 years may be extremely critical for the health of Lebanese people given the crisis. Strategies and approaches should be in place to support that transitional phase to a new, hopefully better than the earlier model, health system.”

In summary, all those present agreed that concerned authorities need to act, starting today, in order to gain time to improve the current situation and to avoid even worse consequences for people living in Lebanon.

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact:**

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