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## **AUB professors to receive award from Iran for collaborative book on Al-Jahiz**

Beirut, Lebanon- 03/02/2011 - Two AUB professors were among a team of four editors who were awarded an international prize for publishing a volume containing scholarly papers on Al-Jahiz, the famous ninth century Arab scholar.

Tarif Khalidi and John Meloy, both affiliated with AUB's Center for Advanced Middle East Studies, and their colleagues edited a book titled *Al Jahiz: A Muslim Humanist for Our Time*, published by the German Orient Institute in Beirut in 2009.

The book, which took about five years to complete, consists of a selection of papers presented at an international conference on Jahiz held at AUB jointly by the German Orient Institute (OI) and the American University of Beirut Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES).

"The Secretariat of the World Prize for the Book of the Year of the Islamic Republic of Iran is pleased to announce that your book, *Al Jahiz: A Muslim Humanist for Our Time*, has been selected as one of the best new works in the field of Islamic studies," said a January 5 letter signed by Mohammad Reza Vasfi, secretary of Iran's World Book Prize.

Khalidi was selected to represent the editors at the awards ceremony which will take place on February 8, 2011 in Tehran. The editors, who also include professors Arnim Heinemann (OI) and Manfred Kropp (OI), in addition to Khalidi, the Shaykh Zayid bin Sultan Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at CAMES, and Meloy, history professor and director of CAMES, will receive a \$15,000 cash prize.

"This was a collective endeavor and I am simply one of four editors, but it is good to know that the volume has been recognized by the Islamic Republic of Iran," said Khalidi.

"It's certainly gratifying to have been involved in this project," added Meloy. "It's also gratifying to see that the achievements of Al-Jahiz, a great humanist, are still being recognized nowadays."

So why Al-Jahiz?

Khalidi considers Al-Jahiz (781-868 AD) a "central figure in the history of what we call *Adab*, or the pursuit of knowledge in what we today might call a humanistic spirit; he was a thinker who was infinitely curious about the social and natural world ."

Khalidi added: "If we wish to choose a motto for Al-Jahiz, the following quote from him would be typical: 'Were a person to spend his entire life studying the wing of a mosquito, one lifetime would not suffice him even if he summoned the aid of every wise man of the East or the West.'"

Khalidi, who holds a bachelor's degree from Oxford University and a PhD from the University of Chicago, is a medieval Islamic history expert. His long CV boasts dozens of publications, including 10 books, dozens of chapters and academic articles, in

addition to entries in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Khalidi has held several academic appointments in the US and England, including most recently, Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic and director of the Center of Middle Eastern Studies at Cambridge University (1996-2002).

Meanwhile, Meloy holds a master's degree and a PhD in history from the University of Chicago and has published on the history of the Mamluk era and the relationships between imperial power and maritime trade in medieval Cairo and Mecca. He has also contributed to *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* and several academic journals. He joined AUB in 1998 and has been the director of CAMES since 2009.

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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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