

For Immediate Release



In a first, US leadership and democracy workshop held at AUB

Beirut, Lebanon- 07/06/2011 - Members of Arab civil society joined a 10-week workshop promoting leadership and democracy skills and jointly conducted by the American University of Beirut, the US State Department and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

Called the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship Program, the workshop is in its fifth year, but will be held for the first time in the Middle East. It is hosted by the AUB Office of Regional External Programs and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and it was created by the US State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative back in 2005. The U.S. component of the program is conducted annually at Syracuse U.

The intensive program consists of four weeks of academic training and six weeks of internship that will take place between June 6 and August 12, 2011.

Participants come from 12 different Arab countries and will be trained on democratic governance, conflict resolution, peace building, advocacy, civic engagement and political participation, media literacy, social media, corporate social responsibility and other relevant topics. "The Office of Regional External Programs in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences has developed a program that encompasses theoretical material, delivered by leading academicians at AUB, and practical expertise by drawing on the experience of top practitioners from the Lebanese public, private, and non-governmental sectors," said George Farag, PhD, assistant vice president for Regional External Programs. "We are very proud of this program and look forward to challenging our participants."

"I think it is fitting that this program, which is the first of its kind offered in the Middle East, is hosted at our campus," said AUB President Peter Dorman. "Among other goals, AUB strives to participate in the advancement of knowledge, to serve as a bridge for dialogue among peoples, and to advance the capacity for critical thought. We believe deeply in freedom of thought and expression, and seek to foster respect for diversity of all kinds."

Dorman added that millions of ordinary citizens from many Arab countries have come recently together to "call on their respective governments for greater participation and accountability, the elimination of rampant favoritism and corrupt practices, more equal access to jobs and resources, and the recognition of fundamental human dignity."

Describing these aspirations as "not uniquely American [as] they belong to humankind the world over," Dorman added that the recent uprisings "remind us that the actions of ordinary youth can lead to extraordinary consequences."

US Ambassador to Lebanon Maura Connelly welcomed participants in Arabic, adding in English: "It is difficult to imagine a more important time to embark on such a fellowship program."

Connelly then referred to US President Barack Obama's speech in which he emphasized the American values that will govern US foreign policy.

“America cannot and will not dictate the course of the [Arab uprisings], but will support freedom of speech, ... the legitimate right of people to choose their representatives, and will oppose repression,” said Connelly. “The core principles of democratic reform will remain our priority.”

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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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