



**AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT**

**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**AUB honors the rooted duty to serve in its 154<sup>th</sup> commencement for the  
awarding of graduate degrees and honorary doctorates**

The American University of Beirut held its 154<sup>th</sup> commencement for 770 graduate students and four honorary degree recipients on June 9, 2023. The traditional ceremony held at the AUB Green Field commenced with its historic procession led by the chief marshal.

“Tonight, is an occasion to reflect on the prodigious feats of our students, faculty, and staff, which give us confidence that you already have—and like our four magnificent honorands—one day will make a difference, not only for your loved ones but for others the world over,” said AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri in his commencement speech.

“Let no one doubt the American University of Beirut’s resolve, ability, and determination to make an extraordinary difference in the lives of the peoples it serves,” he added. “Every one of you, from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australia, Europe, know that you carry within you, like the seeds of the immortal Cedar, the confidence, ability, know-how, and desire to make a difference not only where you are planted, but in your ancestral lands, where your roots run deepest.”

This year’s graduate student speaker was Hasan Slika who realized his childhood dream with a degree of doctor of medicine from AUB’s Faculty of Medicine and will be joining the Johns Hopkins University Hospital for postdoctoral research and training in neurosurgery. He spoke about the extraordinary experience of holistic education at AUB, which he described as, “A place where you can grow, evolve, flourish, and become a better version of yourself every day.”

“[AUB is] a place where you can meet people with all different kinds of views and opinions, but also still be able to express your own views freely,” he said. “We are part of the AUB legacy. A legacy that 153 years of alumni have created before us, and which we will proudly carry wherever we go after this day.”

President Khuri then introduced this year’s recipients of AUB’s honorary doctorate degrees, four award-winning international Arab leaders who represent the values of the American University of Beirut: researcher Dina Katabi, whose work is at the forefront of advances in wireless networks and wireless sensing; novelist Elias Khoury, who pioneered a new style of Arabic fiction; clinician Suheil Muasher, whose research has solved infertility problems for thousands; and this year’s commencement speaker, molecular biologist June Bowman Nasrallah, who has contributed to solving major global challenges related to crop production.

Pioneer of plant reproductive biology, mentor, and philanthropist, June Bowman Nasrallah is Barbara McClintock Professor at the Plant Biology Section of the School of Integrative Plant Science at Cornell University. She has contributed to determining the molecular basis of self-incompatibility in plants and her work in genetics, cell biology, biochemistry, and molecular analysis has many implications in advancing crop improvement, while preserving biodiversity and sustaining the ecosystem.

Bowman Nasrallah started her speech fondly recalling her undergraduate years at AUB, which she credited for laying a strong foundation for her scientific career. “An AUB education, with its stellar reputation around the world, provides many opportunities and opens many doors,” she said, addressing the graduates. “No doubt, it has shown you the value of creative and independent thinking, of challenging conventional wisdom, taking calculated risks, and learning from failure. And it has demonstrated the importance of collaboration in teams that bring together diverse perspectives and complementary experiences. Together, these skills can lead to unique insights and produce the breakthrough solutions required for meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing world.”

Bowman Nasrallah spoke about global challenges such as conflict, inequality, and pandemics; in addition to unresolved threats such as climate change, emphasizing the necessity of two seemingly incompatible goals: to ensure global food security and to slow the rapid and irreversible loss of biodiversity. The way forward, she insists, is through innovating solutions such as precision agriculture and developing alternatives to crop monocultures to maximize crop yield while minimizing the use of water, fertilizers, and pesticides.

“The world needs your expertise, your creativity, and your passion. Be the ambassadors of knowledge and the champions of hope,” she told the graduates.

The proceedings of the commencement ceremony concluded after traditional degree bestowment to medical degree candidates as well as candidates for master’s and doctoral degrees from all faculties. Faculty of Medicine graduate Angie Henry Fares was granted the annual Penrose award in recognition of her outstanding scholarship, character, leadership, and contribution to university life.

Wrapping up the 154<sup>th</sup> academic year since the university’s foundation was a ceremony of appreciation, musical celebration, and oaths of honorable commitment, as students became alumni and walked out beside their supportive mentors and family members to pursue another chapter in their duty to serve.

**ENDS**

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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 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 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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