

For Immediate Release



Human rights expert Fateh Azzam appointed as first director to lead the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship

Azzam to present research findings on status of human rights in Arab world on April 16

Beirut, Lebanon- 11/04/2014 - The American University of Beirut is pleased to announce the appointment of Fateh Azzam as the first director of the new Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship. The Asfari Institute aims to become a hub of knowledge and support for the development of an informed and engaged citizenry in the Arab world. Through its programs including education, research, networking, and public events, the Institute will promote openness, transparency, and accountability at all levels of Arab associational life. The Asfari Institute was established through a generous donation to AUB from the Asfari Foundation.

Fateh Azzam comes to AUB with more than 25 years of experience in human rights, philanthropy and support for civil society activism. Most recently, he worked as Regional Representative for the Middle East of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2006-2012). Previously he was Director of the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program at the American University in Cairo (2003-2006); Program Officer for Human Rights at the Ford Foundation in Lagos and Cairo (1996-2003); and Director of Al-Haq, the Palestinian human rights organization (1987-1995). Azzam led the process of establishing the Arab Human Rights Fund and has served on the boards of several regional and international human rights organizations. He is also a member of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights.

Azzam will be giving a [presentation at AUB on April 16](#) on Arab engagement with UN human rights mechanisms from 2005-2012. The presentation will summarize issues raised by states and NGOs, and assesses the recommendations of the human rights treaty bodies, and the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, resulting Arab states' acceptance and rejection of those recommendations. The research report was published in July 2013. [Download paper](#)

Azzam received his BA in Community Planning from UMASS-Boston and his LLM in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex. He has authored numerous articles and studies on civil society and human rights activism, constitutional protection of rights, participation in development and other topics and has published two plays, *Ansar* and *Baggage*.

Regarding his appointment, Azzam said, "I am honored to join AUB, which has a distinguished reputation for encouraging vigorous debate, original research and for nurturing leaders and community activists. It is the ideal venue for the Asfari Institute."

AUB President Peter Dorman said: "We are delighted that Fateh Azzam has been appointed to lead the Asfari Institute. His vast experience with human rights and civil society organizations,

combined with his extensive knowledge of the region, make him ideally suited to lead the ambitious agenda of the Asfari Institute.”

Ayman Asfari, chairman of The Asfari Foundation, said “The Arab world needs innovative thinking to help develop effective and resilient civil societies rooted in a well-informed, connected and engaged citizenry. Fateh Azzam brings a strong record in the frontline of human rights, as well as broad experience working with academic, non-governmental and international organizations. There is important work to do and we are excited by Fateh’s appointment.”

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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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 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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