

For Immediate Release



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AUB honorary doctorates and graduate commencement 2022:

“A tale of hope and continuity”

After a two-year halt, the American University of Beirut (AUB) campus was vibrant with colors and music, cheering students and proud parents for the university’s biggest event: AUB Commencement. On Thursday, June 9, AUB’s 153rd commencement ceremony took off on its first day out of three to recognize world-renowned personalities for their exceptional lifetime achievements and award 28 doctoral, 671 master’s, and 108 medical degrees to the graduate class of 2022.

At the opening of the ceremony, AUB President Fadlo Khuri spoke to the audience about opportunities and achievements despite the challenges that the university and Lebanon faced during the past three years when this class of graduates were enrolled at AUB.

“You are our good news for the world, our hope for the better days to come,” President Khuri told the graduates. “The ties that bind you to AUB and to your home countries are far more tensile than you might imagine. I am confident you will remain attached to this, your campus, and will return with an enhanced ability to transform lives... As you leave this place where you have struggled, fought, loved, lost and won, know that you are part of something greater than yourselves, something vital that you can help make even greater.”

Before proceeding to the granting of degree certificates, the ceremony’s student speaker, Amani Bayrakdar, presented her speech. “AUB taught me that a PhD is not a just a university degree. It is not just about increasing your knowledge or putting ‘Dr.’ in your title. It’s about combining knowledge and wisdom to make an impact,” said Bayrakdar, who was that evening among the first cohort to graduate from AUB’s Hariri School of Nursing with a PhD in nursing.

AUB’s honorary doctorate degree was granted this year to five trailblazers:

- Physician Mona Hanna-Attisha who changed policy and saved lives with her activism that exposed lead leakage in Flint, Michigan's drinking water. Attisha gave the first commencement address of the ceremony. "My story is about another fight for justice that happened not too long ago in Flint, Michigan. In some ways, Flint is like so many places in the Middle East," said Attisha. "My story...[is] your story. It's about who we are and who we want to be. I urge you to use the tools you learned here, and the tools you will continue to acquire to each be a piece of the answer, I urge you to keep your eyes open - to stay vigilant, curious, and compassionate. To keep doing the hard things for the right reasons. And most importantly, to be bright beacons of HOPE throughout the world."

- Nobel Peace Laureate Ouided Bouchamaoui who steered Tunisia into pluralistic democracy in the wake of the 2011 revolution. "We are all striving to redefine our own role in the world, and, make a difference," said Bouchamaoui in her acceptance speech. "As part of The Tunisian Quartet Nobel Peace Prize, I feel deeply grateful to receive this honor from such a prestigious long-established institution of higher education and research." Bouchamaoui will be commencement speaker on the third day of graduation celebrations.

- Philosopher Daniel Dennett who has revolutionized thought in neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and artificial intelligence. "Academic freedom requires political freedom, and political freedom requires constant informed attention if it is to survive at all," he said as he thanked AUB and its president for the honor. "We are counting on AUB to continue its traditions, spreading its wisdom and tolerance far and wide and educating the leaders of tomorrow's democracies as it has done for over 150 years," added Dennett who will be giving the commencement address on the second day of the graduation ceremony.

- First and long-time president of Birzeit University, Hanna Musa Nasir (BA 1955, MA 1961), who drove Birzeit College to become one of the region's best universities despite many challenges, including his exile out of Palestine. Nasir was the second commencement speaker for the evening and told his inspiring story of struggles and successes and his personal experience in the development of higher education in Palestine. "This is an experience inspired by many milestones that I went through during my years of studies at the American University of Beirut," said Nasir. "The Birzeit College's initiative to develop into a university has contributed to motivating other local educational institutions to do the same...Thus, Palestine came to possess several universities in different regions... and we succeeded together in supporting the Palestinian people in holding on to their land and soil."

- Physician P. Roy Vagelos who propelled Merck & Co. to global success and convinced them to give for free a drug that saved the sight of millions in the developing world. Vagelos will be receiving his honorary doctorate in person at the AUB Annual Alumni Reunion in October.

Graduate degrees were presented to all candidates from AUB's seven faculties following a musical interlude performed by the AUB Classical Music Club. After all degrees were distributed, a traditional surprise entertainment show concluded a successful honorary doctorate and graduate ceremony. With flowers, balloons, and many hugs, cheerful and emotional groups walked away from the Green Field, as a brightly lit College Hall Clock Tower looked on, confident and sturdy, telling of a continuing tradition and a strong American University of Beirut.

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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

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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