

For Immediate Release



## **AUB to confer honorary doctorates to three luminaries who have left their mark on the world**

Beirut, Lebanon- 07/05/2014 - The American University of Beirut (AUB) has announced the names of three international luminaries who will receive the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters at the University's 145<sup>th</sup> commencement exercises on May 30, 2014.

This year's honorands will be the Lebanese sculptor and painter, Saloua Raouda Choucair, a pioneer of abstract art in the Arab world; entrepreneur Samih Darwazah, who founded Hikma Pharmaceuticals and grew it into a billion-dollar global enterprise; and Yusuf Hannun, an award-winning molecular biologist and Director of Stony Brook University Cancer Center.

These three notable individuals were selected by AUB in recognition of the enduring impact of their work, their contributions to the advancement of knowledge through research, and their efforts to enrich quality of life in the region and around the world.

**Saloua Raouda Choucair** is a pioneer of abstract art in the Arab world, who followed her artistic vision with passion and self-determination. Born in Ain El Mreisseh, Beirut, in 1916, Choucair has spent a lifetime creating artworks of astounding breadth and depth. She is best known for her complex sculptures of interlocking pieces that can be taken apart and re-ordered, as the verses of an Arabic poem. Her body of work reveals an aesthetic vision that is truly original, flourishing at the crossroads of Western influences and Arabic heritage, with the inspiration of mathematics, science, Islamic geometry, and poetry.

A prolific artist who has produced sculptures embracing all kinds of media, Choucair is also an accomplished painter, tapestry maker, and jeweler. She has studied with some of the great Lebanese painters, including Omar Onsi, and spent three years immersed in the Paris art world of the late 1940s. For over half a century, Choucair has been producing and exhibiting her work, yet remained largely unknown outside of a small circle of art lovers.

Over time, her artwork has received increasing critical notice. She was awarded the National Council of Tourism Prize in 1963 for the execution of a stone sculpture in Beirut. She also received an appreciation prize from the General Union of Arab Painters in 1985 and a medal by the Lebanese government in 1988, among others.

But true appreciation of her significance has only come in the last few years, with a 2011 retrospective exhibition at the Beirut Exhibition Center and then a 2013 exhibition at the Tate Modern in London. This last was the first solo show by an Arab artist at the Tate. It showcased more than 160 of her works and earned Choucair enormous public and critical approbation. Although it has been a long time in coming, Saloua Raouda Choucair is finally being acknowledged as one of the most important artists in the modern Arab world.

**Samih Darwazah** is the consummate entrepreneur. As the creator of Hikma Pharmaceuticals, Darwazah has contributed to the advancement of his adoptive home country, Jordan, and the greater MENA region by providing jobs and economic vigor. He is also a devoted public servant, having served as Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources to King Hussein, as a senator, and as a member of the Advisory Economic Council.

Born in Nablus in 1930 to a family of modest means but great industry, Darwazah moved with his family to Jordan in 1948 during the Nakba. In 1954 he obtained a BSc degree in pharmacy from AUB, and also holds a master's degree in Industrial Pharmacy from The Saint Louis College of Pharmacy, which he attended as a Fulbright Scholar.

In 1978, Darwazah founded Hikma Pharmaceuticals, later expanding to operations throughout the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Europe and the US. Hikma is now the leading pharmaceutical company in Jordan, with sales over \$1.3 billion per year, and is listed on the London Stock Exchange. Throughout the rise of Hikma, Darwazah has shown a firm commitment to socially responsible business practices. Also an ardent philanthropist, Darwazah supports education and is an advocate for women's rights. In 2009, he established a school for girls in the village of Al Shobak, which is now a thriving educational center.

In recognition of Darwazah's remarkable achievements as a businessman, Ernst and Young named him Middle East Entrepreneur of the Year in 2007, and he has been awarded two honorary doctorates as well as the AUB Distinguished Alumnus Award. In 2011, his four children honored him with a gift to AUB, establishing The Samih Darwazah Center for Innovation Management and Entrepreneurship at the Olayan School of Business. Darwazah's memoir, *Building a Global Success*, has been applauded by the deans of the business schools at both Harvard and Columbia.

**Dr. Yusuf Hannun**, an award-winning molecular biologist, clinician, and professor of medicine, has been leading the charge against cancer and other formidable diseases. Pioneering discoveries in the field of lipids and their role in cell regulation and growth have brought him international renown. He is currently Director of Stony Brook University Cancer Center, Vice Dean for Cancer Medicine, Joel Kenny Professor of Medicine, and Professor of Biochemistry and Cell Biology.

Born in Saudi Arabia of Palestinian parents, Hannun received his early education in Beirut at the International College. At AUB, he earned his BS in 1977, his MD with distinction in 1981, and served his internship and residency in internal medicine. AUB is also where he met his wife, fellow physician-scientist and biomedical researcher, Dr. Lina Obeid (MD '83).

Hannun left Lebanon in 1983 to take up specialty training at Duke University, where he made discoveries that opened pathways for the development of patented drugs and chemicals for a variety of treatments for cancer and for use in other fields. In 1998, Hannun moved to the Medical University of South Carolina where he held the Ralph F. Hirschmann Chair of Biomedical Research and served as Deputy Director of the Hollings Cancer Center.

His contribution to more than 500 scholarly publications has attracted tremendous grant support and recognition. His funding record has been uninterrupted for over 25 years, averaging millions of dollars per year. He is lead scientist on four NCI R01 grants, which are considered the gold standard of biomedical funding. Hannun has published seven books, secured six patents, and written scores of reviews.

Hannun is the recipient of a Merit Award from the National Institute of Health and the prestigious Avanti Award for Lipid Research from the American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. In 2013, Hannun received the Kuwait Prize in Basic Sciences to honor his groundbreaking research on bioactive sphingolipids and for advancing basic science research in molecular biology.

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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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