

For Immediate Release



## **Regional and international scholars at AUB brainstorm over changing landscape post-uprisings**

Beirut, Lebanon- 31/05/2012 - More than 20 scholars from the region and abroad converged on the American University of Beirut May 31-June 1, 2012 to brainstorm about the changing regional and political landscape following the recent Arab uprisings.

“This initiative was launched by AUB Provost Ahmad Dallal in April 2011 in response to the historic events and in AUB’s tradition of not just research but nation-building as well,” said Rami Khouri, director IFI-AUB. “This event is designed as a brainstorming session to allow for a better understanding of this historic period.”

“The recent events and popular mobilizations have taken the Arab world by storm displaying an undeniable courage to change,” said Dallal. “New actors have emerged who are ready to pay the price for change and nothing so far has succeeded in reinstalling fear into their hearts.”

The two-day brainstorming symposium is being held under the “Arab Uprisings Research Initiative,” which was launched and is supported by the Office of the Provost and managed by the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs. Entitled “Critically Assessing the Changing Landscape of Power and Players, the symposium addressed several topics including: the motivations behind the uprisings with an overview of the Arab citizens’ concerns; Islamists, coalitions and governance with their relationships and priorities; reconciliation, reform and representation in Palestine following the uprisings.

According to Dallal, current challenges cannot be dissociated from the regional and international geostrategic dimensions. These challenges include: the establishment of the rule of law as the principle of governance and defining the relationship between the citizen and state; overcoming tribalism and sectarianism; the threat posed by the armies and security apparatuses of the former regimes; the economic hardships to be faced; and recognizing the fact that the internal agendas of the various uprisings.

“As academicians we have both an opportunity and responsibility to produce knowledge about the region by the region,” stressed Dallal. “This includes accurately documenting the events, understanding the power changes at all levels, and generating research and analysis to reconfigure governance systems and address Arab national identities.”

“We have launched a long-term, multi-sectoral research initiative on the Arab uprisings, aiming to harness AUB’s many resources and assets to engage constructively with the historic changes taking place across the Arab world”, said Dallal. “Under IFI-AUB, the initiative aims to harness the expertise of AUB professors and graduates to identify and research the most significant elements of the current transformation in the region, to achieve the greatest

degree of factual knowledge, accurate analysis and intellectual integrity in narrating this epic and historic tale that is unfolding every day.”

The challenges of researching and understanding this pivotal moment in Arab history demand that judicious research in multiple fields be defined by perspectives from across the region, and continue for years ahead rather than merely comprising the occasional conference or publication. Already 20 AUB faculty members have been tasked to study and research the various changes in sectors ranging from politics to food and agriculture, noted organizers.

“This is not a defensive reaction but a timely approach which is part of the core mission of our university, which has played its role for the past 150 years even before the rise of Arab states and political power structures,” concluded Dallal.

AUB invited over 20 scholars from the Arab world and abroad to this symposium to discuss critical themes that have emerged to date and help shape its future research agenda.

In addition to Dallal and Khouri, participating scholars and experts also included, Karim Makdisi AUB associate professor of international politics, Ziad Abu-Rish doctoral candidate at UCLA department of history, Bassam Haddad George Mason University director of the Middle East Studies Program, Waleed Hazbun AUB associate professor, Toby Jones Rutgers University associate professor of history, Mehran Kamrava Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service in Qatar director of the Center for International and Regional Studies, Anis Kassim lawyer, Bahgat Korany American University of Cairo (AUC) Forum director, Rabab El-Mahdi AUC assistant professor of political science, Jean Makdisi author, Ahmad Moussalli AUB professor of Islamic and Western Political Thought, Nada Al-Nashif International Labor Organization regional director, Bashir Saade University of London, Mohsen Saleh associate professor of Modern and Contemporary Arab History, Hesham Sallam co-editor of *Jadaliyya* Ezine, Ala’a Shehabi economics lecturer in Bahrain, Joshua Stacher Kent State University assistant professor of political science and Rami Zurayk author of ‘Food, Farming and Freedom: Sowing the Arab Spring’.

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PHOTO CAPTION: [L-R] Professor Jean Makdisi and Provost Ahmad Dallal

**For more information please contact:**

Maha Al-Azar, Associate Director for Media Relations, [ma110@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ma110@aub.edu.lb), 01-353 228

**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 about 8,000 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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