

For Immediate Release



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AUB Honored in Abey - Ain Drafyl Khuri: “The basis of our message is social equality and this is what we are doing to our students”

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the American University of Beirut (AUB), the municipality of Abey-Ain Drafyl organized a ceremony to unveil a plaque to commemorate the birth of the Syrian Protestant School which took place in 1846 in the Town of Abey School, considered the cradle of AUB.

The ceremony took place in the outer courtyard of the school in the town of Abey - Ain Drafyl. The celebration started with the Lebanese National Anthem, and was attended by representatives of MP Walid Jumblatt, MP Talal Arslan and Mr. Teymour Jumblatt. The Abey - Ain Drafyl municipality head Ghassan Hamzeh and members of the Municipal Council also attended, along with National Evangelical Church pastor Rev. Dr. Habib Bader. AUB was represented by its President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, Vice President for Development Dr. Imad Baalbaki, Chief Operating Officer Ramin Sedehi and Special Advisor to the President for Protocol Affairs and External Relations Ibrahim Khoury, along with administrators and friends of AUB.

First to speak was Mr. Mounir Hamza, World Bank Consultant, and he delivered the address of the Abey Heritage Association, recalling the SPC's history and contributions of the Abey townspeople to developing the SPC and in the dissemination of knowledge acquired in the School. Rev. Dr. Bader stressed the necessity for the restoration and repair of the school building in Abey, highlighting the history of Protestants and their relationship with the AUB and with education in general. Abey - Ain Drafyl municipality head Ghassan Hamzeh spoke about the history of the town and its relation with its surroundings via the school.

The last address in the ceremony was by AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, who said: The mission of AUB originated about 154 years ago, when Daniel Bliss was sent to get it implemented.

He continued: “The University’s mission is to ensure education for the capable students even if they are financially lacking, and the importance of that is not only in providing education, but also in providing guidance to the students in a global, liberal and secular manner”.

He added: “Daniel Bliss tried to provide knowledge to this community, as was the case of for American schools initiated by evangelists, like Harvard, Yale and Princeton, where church and school went hand in hand with university”.

He said: “In 1866, Daniel Bliss returned to Lebanon and the university was built in the Ras Beirut area. Lessons began with 16 students and up to the present day, we have more than 60,000 alumni all over the world. Many among them have established companies with 50 billion dollars’ worth of business; this is the importance of the American University in Beirut as an economic and social edifice”.

He continued: “The effect of the American University of Beirut began here, from the outset, in Aby, where the founding fathers wanted to provide education to those who did not have a chance... The effect also lies in that we seek to open all roads and find every opportunity to allow excellent pupils to become doctors, engineers, businessmen and businesswomen. The basis of it all is social equality and this is what we are doing to our students”.

President Khuri concluded: “We carry a message of hope in our university. We believe that the university and its faculty, staff, students and graduates are all striving to build a future for younger generations in Mount Lebanon, Lebanon and the rest of the region, to nurture among them future leaders in business and in various fields. What matters to us is to provide opportunities for future generations, so we ask you all to share with us in belief that there is a future for every young man and woman, and we thank you for this wonderful ceremony”.

The event was concluded with a musical performance by world-renowned violinist Ihab Jamal, who was accompanied on the piano by Lina Harutyunyan and Fouad Jamal. Then the memorial plaque for the ceremony was unveiled, followed by a reception.

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For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: 03427024 Office: 01374374 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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 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 420-bed hospital.

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