

For Immediate Release



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Tomorrow's Leaders from AUB and LAU **graduate at a joint graduation ceremony at AUB**

In a joint graduation ceremony held this summer, the Tomorrow's Leaders (TL) Undergraduate and Graduate Programs at both the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU), celebrated the graduation of their students from Lebanon, Libya, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia, West Bank, and Gaza at AUB's Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB) Maamari Auditorium. The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is an initiative of the U.S. Department of State that supports capable and highly motivated young scholars from underserved backgrounds in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region by providing a fully funded undergraduate and graduate level academic matriculation, civic education, and leadership development. The full-coverage scholarship aims to invest in Arab youth's capacity, to strengthen their leadership skills to become drivers of change, and to catalyze social progress in their home community. Moreover, the MEPI-TL program aims to advance and deepen the students' awareness of gender equality's challenges and solutions.

AUB President Fadlo Khuri; LAU President Michel Mawad; Deputy Chief of Mission Richard Michaels; David Lewis, US Embassy official representative and MEPI coordinator; AUB MEPI-TL Executive Director Hani Hassan; AUB MEPI-TLU Assistant Director Melissa Ajamian; AUB MEPI-TLG Director Rabih Talhouk; and LAU MEPI-TL Executive Director Dina Abdulrahman attended the graduation ceremony and addressed the graduates, congratulating them on their achievements and spirit.

In his speech celebrating the graduating students, President Khuri said, "Today is to celebrate this program, the set of accomplishments, the graduation of another cohort of leaders, who have demonstrated extraordinary skills in dedication towards the improvement of our world in quite challenging circumstances and have shown the ability to adapt to situations and excel in those situations. Since its founding, the American University of Beirut has committed to not only

provide excellence in research and education on our university campus, but to graduate leaders who serve in every way they can for community engagement and civic leadership. Likewise, recipients of the MEPI scholarship are enrolled in AUB's undergraduate and graduate programs precisely for the potential that is determined for them to be tomorrow's leaders in the MENA region." He added, "There is a very deliberate set of skills and screening that takes place. We are very proud to have nurtured this partnership for over 14 years with MEPI... to run for a couple of years now, four Tomorrow's Leaders programs at AUB: the graduate, undergraduate, gender scholars, and the College-to-Work Pipeline programs."

President Mawad said, "Being here, now, with you is a major source of happiness for me and a rewarding moment in many more ways than one. We assemble here on this beautiful campus in celebration of achievement, recognition of hard work, and acknowledgement on the will to prevail adversities of all kinds. We assemble for an auspicious occasion, a new cohort of young men and women from different countries are ready to start their roles as qualified professionals and agents of much needed change. Outstanding academic programs are the core of any major university, and programs stand out and develop their own brand aura based on content, based on relevance, and based on delivery. If all three components are in place, the brand receives further enhancements through the faculty and students they attract, and then further down the line, the impact they make through their graduates. And we think we make a huge impact through each one of you. By any measure, the MEPI-TL Program surely deserves the designation 'Outstanding' and should be recognized as one of the most impactful programs at LAU and AUB."

Deputy Chief of Mission Richard Michaels congratulated students on behalf of the U.S. Department of State's Middle Eastern Partnership Initiative and the U.S. Embassy. "I am delighted to have this opportunity to celebrate this milestone with you, our outstanding scholars, on your special day. Your journey in this program could not have been possible without the people who supported you from faculty, staff, counselors, and mentors, and, of course, your parents. I would like to thank them all for their true dedication. Thank you for continuing to guide this program with such commitment, to our shared values; namely to those related to education and youth engagement."

MEPI-TLU Assistant Director Melissa Ajamian started her speech addressing the graduating students with, "You are a sweeping model of resistance, strength, commitment, and power. You belong in this space and every other space you choose." Ajamian added, "Some people always tell you that you need a plan, but there is absolutely nothing wrong with not having one. Life has a funny way of sometimes choosing your path for you. However, if you do have a plan, note that you will need both commitment and consistency. Commitment to kickstart it and see it off the ground, and consistency to see it through to the finish line. Whatever your plan is, know that you cannot begin to imagine how big your lives are once you stop being afraid of failing. Fail

numerous times because failing provides you with the life lessons you need the most. One day, you will return to the scene of that failure, apply all the new things you learned, and succeed even more spectacularly than you would have had you not failed the first time around.”

The ceremony included two student videos from both AUB and LAU TL students. The joint graduation ceremony also included three speeches presented by AUB MEPI-TLG and TLU valedictorians, Rita Hajinazarian and Hadeel AlYazori, and LAU MEPI-TLU valedictorian, Ahmed Chaib.

The ceremony ended with the distribution of TL certificates, awards, and a closing speech by Dr. Hani Hassan. Dr. Hassan began his speech with, “What a joyous and uplifting afternoon this has been.” Dr. Hassan added, “Many years ago, you decided to apply for the MEPI-TL program from a pool of hundreds.” Addressing the graduating students, he then said, “You were shortlisted from the pool of hundreds and then shortlisted to an even smaller pool. You might want to thank the fates for that, but the fates had nothing to do with it. That was again you, you earned your place on that shortlist. Very soon after that, there was a final list, and your name was on that list. And here we are, years after those events, applauding you and celebrating you with diplomas and rewards with your names on them. Of course, throughout each step of that journey, you earned it! Remember, you were selected by virtue of your qualifications, and you are here today, celebrated by virtue of your perseverance, hard work, and your dedications. You earned it! Keep earning, go out, make a world in your image, meet the world in your own terms.”

ENDS

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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 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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