



**AMERICAN
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Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at AUB holds conference on political violence and the impact of archives on memory and justice

On the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), in collaboration with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Lebanon and Lepsius Haus Potsdam, held a hybrid conference titled “Memory and Justice: Remembrance in the Aftermath of Political Violence.” The conference took place on December 9, 2022, with panel discussions covering the importance of archives in the analysis and interpretation of history, as well as regional experiences in the modification of history and memory and its repercussions on justice.

“This is the sixth edition of this conference series that IFI holds regularly with AGBU,” Dr. Joseph Bahout, IFI director, noted in his opening remarks. “This is the sixth conference that we hold around the same thematic of genocide, justice, memory, remembrance, reparation, and other very painful issues. It is my personal view, and one I believe AGBU’s leaders also share, that we have started to build an intellectual and conceptual coherence around a very important theme, not only politically but intellectually and conceptually on how to think about past wounds and traumas, and how to treat them politically and historically.” Bahout concluded that “without this, there can’t be a peaceful present nor a peaceful future.”

Executive Director of AGBU Lebanon Arine Ghazarian, said that “on this occasion, we honor and remember the victims of the crime of genocide while AGBU continues its 116-year history of driving thoughtful conversations and impactful programming, as the

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largest Armenian philanthropic organization in the world to support the global Armenian nation through cultural, educational, humanitarian, and socio-economic development initiatives.” Ghazarian added that “the Genocide Convention was adopted in December 1948 and it was the first human rights treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly. Since 2016, AGBU has been proudly standing with the United Nations to highlight the issue of genocide awareness, human rights, and refugee’s assistance.”

Director of Lepsius Haus Potsdam and keynote speaker Dr. Roy Knocke highlighted the importance of archives in the analysis and interpretation of history. Describing archives as the “crooked timber of memory,” Knocke stressed on the subjectivity of these documents and how memory could be modified and changed according to various factors. As such, Knocke claimed that there are “different perspectives of the same historical event found in an archive. History is a vast canvas of grey zones, which we should approach with objectivity.”

The conference’s panel discussions covered the process of archives collection, uses and misuses of archives and their storage, as well as how archives stand as independent and historical witness and their relation to transitional justice. The case studies of the Yazidis, Cambodia, and Lebanon were also presented. The conference ended with a fireside chat on accountability mechanisms, highlighting the new methods of archiving and documentation, including the role of social media as archiving institutions.

A recording of the entire conference can be watched online on IFI’s Facebook page.

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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 800 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 8000 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 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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