

For Immediate Release



## **From AUB, Egyptian Presidential candidate embraces freedom for building nations**

Beirut, Lebanon- 18/01/2012 - Egyptian presidential candidate Abdel Monem Abou el-Fattouh endorsed freedoms during a talk he gave at the American University of Beirut earlier this week.

Entitled "Religion and the State: Equality and Citizenship Rights," the talk was organized by AUB's Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs and the Office of the Provost in collaboration with ESCWA. It was followed by a panel discussion on "Reform and Transitions to Democracy: Global Legacies," which included the participation of Bulgaria's Foreign Minister Nikolay Mladenov and Chile's former president and current executive director of UN Women Michele Bachelet, whose father died due to torture under the Pinochet regime.

Provost Ahmad Dallal, introduced the panel and talk, describing them as "initiatives and research projects we have launched at AUB to engage and to better understand the nature and consequences of the historic changes taking place all around the Arab world."

Abou el-Fattouh, who was introduced by former minister Tarek Mitri currently an IFI fellow, highlighted the importance of freedom to ward off ignorance and poverty.

"A person loses his humanity when he loses his freedom, for he is worthless without it," he said. "Big nations and grand scheme renaissance projects are only built by the free, for slaves cannot build nations or bring a revival. For this reason, whenever despots took hold of regimes whether in the East or the West, what emerged was political, social and economical decline. Poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance, all, were spread because of these despotic regimes and because of the silence of the people and the elites within these regimes."

That's why the Arab uprising was launched off the "shoulders of the independent youth, and we should be proud of that," he added.

At the panel discussion, Chile's former president warned that it's not enough to get rid of despots but to ensure they do not come back. Citizens should learn from past mistakes and should all participate to build a better and peaceful future, she added.

"The greater the participation of the entire community, the stronger the institution they will build, and the better life will be for each and every human being," Bachelet said.

Bulgaria's Foreign Defense Minister Nikolay Mladenov underscored the need to focus on justice and truth and reconciliation and insisted that security should not come at the expense of human rights. He also highlighted the importance of elections for a successful transition that reflects the desires of the people, quashing claims that the Arab world cannot support

democracies in the presence of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The foreign defense minister argued that this is only used as a pretext by dictators to justify the need for their regimes.

For former President Bachelet, the “only way to deal with the legacy of the past is to know the truth.”

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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 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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