

For Immediate Release



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AUB researchers document a sea of profits as water tankers deliver contaminated water to Beirut residents

In three recently published studies, engineering professors Mutasem El-Fadel and Ibrahim Alameddine from the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA) at the American University of Beirut (AUB), working with May Massoud from Health Sciences, and their students G. Jawhari, G. Rachid, and K. Constantine, have considered the effects of unregulated pumping from coastal wells in making our fresh water reserves undrinkable, the profits being made by well owners, who set their own prices, and the bacterial contamination caused by water being delivered in dirty tanker trucks.

The studies, funded by the International Development Research Center (IDRC) of Canada, included multiple tests of water at the source and then again as it was pumped out of the trucks. The researchers found up to 80% of all the samples, in one round of testing, contained coliform (the bacteria present in feces). Less than half the truck tanks underwent any regular cleaning, and owners received up to 24 times more than the governmental fees for water received through the public network.

Prof. El-Fadel said the people living in Beirut are paying the highest prices for water in the world. Many people receive four bills for their water: one from the government, for water which they do not receive; another for water delivered in tanks on trucks, and in most cases the quality of the water is poor; then they purchase bottled water for drinking, often from unlicensed companies; and finally, they pay a fee to have the well water that is pumped into their building treated for desalination. He added: “in Lebanon we have plenty of water but it needs to be regulated.”

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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 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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