

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 2-10-2019

## **“Children in Armed Conflict: Rights, Health, and Wellbeing”**

### **200 health professionals meet at the ISSOP annual meeting at AUB**

With the aim of addressing the challenges facing children in armed conflict, the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) and the Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at the American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted the International Society for Social Pediatrics and Child Health (ISSOP) annual meeting.

Organized in cooperation with the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), the International Pediatric Association, and the Lebanese Pediatric Society, this annual conference brought together around 200 health professionals and practitioners from all over the world.

The event featured speeches and presentations by more than 70 experts, researchers, and representatives of international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations coming from various fields including public health, pediatrics, education, research, mental health, and humanitarian aid. Over three days, speakers shared their experiences and insights about topics evolving around five main themes: Understanding the effects of armed conflict on children; Child rights-based approach to ending violence against children; Conducting research in conflict zones: challenges, methods, and ethics; Systems, education, and advocacy; Engaging pediatricians in the global response to the impact of violence and armed conflict on children

In his opening remarks, ISSOP president Dr. Jeffrey Goldhagen stressed the importance of this conference that is particularly marked by the diverse backgrounds of the participants attending it. “It is critically important that child health professionals, in collaboration with other child advocates, learn how to advance the global rights, health and well-being of these children and families,” stated Dr. Goldhagen. “At no time in recent history have children been exposed to armed conflict and violence to the extent that is happening around the world today. If we, as health professionals, do not respond to these challenges then who will? And if not now, then when?”

asked the ISSOP president, stressing the need to come out of this conference with realistic and tangible outputs that will have an impact on childrens' lives and wellbeing.

In his turn, Dean Iman Nuwayhid of FHS at AUB elaborated on the significance of hosting this conference in Lebanon, a country currently hosting more than 1.5 million Syrian, Palestinian, and Iraqi refugees, half of whom are children. "One in four people worldwide are living in a conflict-affected zone," said Dean Nuwayhid, emphasizing the need for a global multidimensional response, involving academicians, practitioners, researchers, international organizations, and governmental institutions.

"We at FHS are committed to a mission of leading the academic voice and a driver for peace, equity, justice, and better health in the Arab region and beyond," he added. During his speech, Dean Nuwayhid highlighted the academic initiatives launched by FHS with the aim of materializing this mission and further engaging in conflict response. The Lancet-AUB Commission for Syria, the Humanitarian Engineering course, and the "Public Health in Conflict and Protracted Crisis" certificate, are examples of these initiatives led by FHS.

Chair of Pediatrics in the AUB Medical Center, Dr. Miguel Abboud, stressed the "need for collaboration between the academic institutions, public sector, and NGOs." Dr. Abboud described several philanthropic initiatives led by the Department of Pediatrics and benefiting Lebanese and refugee children, with the active support from AUB administration and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Mohamad Sayegh. Several of these initiatives were featured in detail throughout the conference's plenary sessions.

Throughout their presentations and the panel discussions, experts and professionals shared their own experiences, while they explored areas of cooperation with the aim to advocate for child health and wellbeing, and develop global responses tailored to meet the needs of children impacted by armed conflict.

At the end of this three-day conference, and following extensive sessions, participants came out with a set of recommendations and action plans. Through these recommendations, participants identified measures, successful practices, and coordination mechanisms to enable health stakeholders, mainly organizations, governments, and professionals, to meet their responsibilities and lead effective initiatives in order to overcome the challenges they face in exercising their roles, ensure the protection of children during armed conflict, as well as post-conflict follow-up and recovery.

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact:**

Simon Kachar  
Director of News and Media Relations  
Mobile: (+961) 3-427-024  
Office: (+961) 1-374-374 ext: 2676  
Email: [sk158@aub.edu.lb](mailto: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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 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 420-bed hospital.

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