

For Immediate Release



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AUB holds its 151st Commencement Ceremony **for graduates of FAS, MSFEA, FAFS, FHS, and OSB**

After having to put its 151st Commencement Exercises on hold for around a year due to the pandemic, the American University of Beirut (AUB) held an in-person ceremony to celebrate the class of 2020 who graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA), the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS), the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), and the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB).

Under the continuing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and applying all safety and precautionary regulations, the ceremony took place on the evening of October 8, 2021, on the Green Field and was livestreamed for family and friends on YouTube and Facebook. Another part of the 151st Commencement Exercises are planned to be held online on October 15, 2021, for the graduates of AUB Class of 2020 who could not attend the in-person ceremony. Class of 2020 graduates from the Faculty of Medicine and Hariri School of Nursing had their commencement ceremonies previously.

In his opening address, AUB President Dr. Fadlo Khuri spoke about the difficult two years that the graduates had to endure, and how despite all the disruption and difficulty, “the resilience of AUB students and those who serve them has shone through.”

He said, “Today, you finally graduate in a manner different than that which you and we had imagined. But even though it is a year later, and not under the circumstances we would all have wished for you, you are graduating together, ready to join the battle against disease, poverty, plague, and injustice. You are ready.”

He spoke about his views on the pandemic and the injustices that the world faced in the recent past and is facing today and gave Lebanon and the US as an example. “America, Lebanon, and

the world have failed to provide equal justice for all under the law. Police brutality, modern-day slavery in Kafala, the mistreatment of refugees and minorities, the strident, siren song of racism are all too prevalent. But there can and must be change for the better.”

Khuri added, “To be a force for change, we must continue to learn from our own mistakes and implicit biases, to become more inclusive, self-critical, merciful, and accountable. To become wiser, we must learn from our past. AUB, while not perfect, has always been a propagator of social justice, of freedom, that great societal equalizer. Unfortunately, we seem nowhere near realizing true self-determination for the peoples of the Global South, but we do see rays of hope.”

He continued, “Just as people across Lebanon have risen up and demanded change, so have people around the world. We can and must do better. We can and must fight for equal rights for all,” and added that “there can indeed be no peace without justice. But persistence, the persistence of citizens and societies, especially the persistence of nurses and physicians, can make a difference, can give hope to the hopeless.”

Khuri ended his speech by telling the graduates “You have done so much, learned so much, lost so much and gained a part of yourselves in your time at AUB. Most importantly, you have gained and given hope. Never surrender that hope, that feeling of being able to make a difference. If you can keep that hope alive, secure in your craft and sound in your conscience, you will be ready to change the world for the better.”

A total of 2,245 students graduated from AUB in 2020 (1,842 bachelor’s, 381 master’s, and 22 doctoral). Speaking on their behalf were students Josleen Al Barathie, who received her degree of Master’s in Public Health from the Faculty of Health Sciences, and Ali Zayour, who received his degree of Bachelor of Business Administration from the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business.

Josleen Al Barathie spoke about her story and path that lead her to AUB through a USAID scholarship. She also thanked all those who contributed to her academic success. “Our dear professors, thank you, not only for being our educators, but also for believing in us, inspiring us, nourishing our research skills, helping us shape our interests and aspiration for a future career, and helping us serve our community. One of the professors once told us, you don’t have to be famous to be a hero, we researchers are silent warriors who work behind the screen to help disprove lies, support truth, and build knowledge.” She also encouraged her fellow graduates to dream big and work towards achievements that are not only personal but ultimately serve the community and humanity.

Ali Zayour spoke about his experience being an AUB student, the changes that were brought on by the events of October 17th and August 4th, and the important role that the graduates can play in shaping the future. “Do remember by crossing this stage today, we become members of the next generation of leaders that our country and people need, we will be the significant part of this change.” He continued by encouraging his fellow graduates to not allow any circumstances, however harsh they are, to keep them “locked in time, space, and situations. Let’s keep going, chasing our ambitions and dreams.”

The Penrose Award, an honorary annual award given to outstanding AUB graduates from different faculties on the basis of scholarship, character, leadership, and contribution to university life, was offered to FAS graduate Mohamad Youssef Mdaihly and OSB graduate Ghida Ali Allam during the event on October 8. FAS graduate Rindala Edward Fayyad, MSFEA graduate Aya Aref Mouallem, FAFS graduate Nour Mohamad Hammad, and FHS graduate Karina Sana Liechti, will also be receiving the Penrose Award during the virtual ceremony on October 15.

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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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