

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 4-4-2018

The AUB President's Club celebrates **the life of Mona Chemali Khalaf**

The American University of Beirut (AUB)'s Bathish Auditorium in West Hall was filled on the evening of April 3, 2018 with scores of people who came to pay tribute to Mona Chemali Khalaf (1939–2018), the prominent economist, women's rights activist, and AUB graduate (BA '61, MA '64) who passed away in January. Following the ceremony was an exhibition by the AUB President's Club, a project begun by Khalaf herself, on noteworthy women of AUB and their enduring impact on society.

In attendance at the memorial, organized by the AUB President's Club, were ministers and former ministers, former first ladies, members of AUB's Board of Trustees, AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri and other senior leadership, as well as numerous friends, colleagues, and family members who came to honor the life and legacy of Mona Chemali Khalaf.

President Khuri, who knew Khalaf for more than 50 years, spoke about her professional accomplishments, the many ways she helped AUB students through the President's Club, and the personal qualities that made her exceptional.

“This was an individual who exemplified servant leadership, who sublimated her ego for the greater good: for her family, for her community, for her country, and beyond,” said Khuri. “This came about with a style of elegance, of thoughtfulness, and of selflessness that was very difficult to notice. The people who are trying not to impress you—most of us will recognize—are often the most impressive individuals of all.”

Another common theme among the speakers was Khalaf's lifelong advocacy for gender equality and women's empowerment. This included former first lady of Lebanon, Mouna Haraoui, who first met Khalaf when they worked together in preparation for the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

"Mona was a woman of excellence," said Haraoui. "She was a remarkable economist, highly committed on gender and development issues through her professional career and her personal engagement. She was a hardworking woman and philanthropist who established herself through her influence and humanism. She was a kindhearted woman, spouse, and exemplary mother endowed with high moral virtues."

Also speaking at the event were her friends and colleagues: Salwa Siniora Baasiri, former secretary general of the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO; and Antoine Haddad, secretary of the executive committee of the Democratic Renewal Movement. Both spoke in glowing terms of Khalaf's dedication to social causes, her commitment to hard work, and her deep-seated integrity.

Speaking on behalf of the family, her son Dr. Amin Khalaf spoke about her many roles: as mother, wife, daughter, friend, philanthropist, activist, and academician.

"Mona did not have an easy life, but she lived an abundant one. She dealt with all the challenges life threw at her with a tremendous amount of grace. I know that I am not the only one in this room who will miss her dearly," said Amin. "As an AUB graduate and someone who also loves and cares deeply about this institution, I urge all of us to continue down the path that Mona has blazed and to do so with passion, respect, and purpose."

Commenting on Khalaf's long service with the AUB President's Club, which she chaired from 2011 until her passing in January 2018, Eugenie Hosri spoke on behalf of the club as the current chair of the board. She described Khalaf as one who embraced the mission of the President's Club and dedicated her time to improving the student experience and quality of life on campus through myriad projects.

After the tribute, the audience was invited to view the exhibition "For All Conditions of Men: Stories of Women at AUB." Compiled with the help of the Archives and Special Collections department of the AUB University Libraries, the exhibition with accompanying booklet present a history of women students at AUB and showcase profiles of almost 100 prominent women affiliated with AUB throughout its history.

"Activists, artists, teachers, scientists, medical doctors, engineers, writers, poets, or business entrepreneurs; they are all 'Women at AUB.' All, audacious and strong, have competed and succeeded in a once chauvinist world," as Hosri explains, in introduction to the exhibition and booklet.

During her speech, Hosri also noted that Khalaf's modesty led her to flatly refuse allowing her own biography to be part of this booklet and exhibition, but the President's Club members

insisted to add her posthumously as a fitting tribute to the exceptional life of Mona Chemali Khalaf and her enduring impact.

The exhibition can be viewed until April 16, 2018 at the AUB Byblos Bank Art Gallery in Ada Dodge Hall.

Text by Jennifer Muller

Senior Writer – Office of Communications

AUB

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

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.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>
Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon