

For Immediate Release



Outgoing PM Mikati speaks candidly with students on leadership in times of crisis

Beirut, Lebanon- 24/04/2012 - Outgoing Prime Minister Najib Mikati visited the American University of Beirut campus on April 24 for a candid discussion with students on leadership and policy-making in times of crisis, at the invitation of the AUB Leadership (student) Club and the Department of Political Studies and Public Administration.

Held at West Hall's Bathish Auditorium, the meeting, which was exclusive to the AUB community, attracted a large audience of students, faculty, and staff, a number of whom did not mind sitting on the floor when the hall filled up to capacity. PM Mikati was greeted by AUB President Peter Dorman and Provost Ahmad Dallal, who later introduced Mikati to students as one whose "leadership abilities are manifold, but who is best known for leading and stabilizing the country in times of crisis and hardship."

Leadership Club President Ahmad Al Muhaisen explained that since the goal of the club is to invite leaders from different fields so that students could learn from their experiences, and since PM Najib Mikati is a political and business leader, it was only natural to extend an invitation to him, "which he so generously accepted."

"There is an inner leader within each one of us," added Al Muhaisen, "and we hope, through our club, to help connect students to leadership opportunities. Since, we, as AUB students, are looking forward to starting our careers and playing important leadership roles in Lebanon and the region, we thought that PM Mikati, who is also an AUB board of Trustees, would be an ideal person to invite."

Al-Muhaisen also noted, "PM Mikati is known for his ability to manage crisis. He did it in 2005, and tried to do it for the last two years. We are very grateful that he accepted to share with us his experience in office and reveal to us how the sectarian structure of Lebanon impacts policy-making. We also are glad to hear from him what his government has done to promote youth policies and get his advice on what we can do to promote a better future and reconciliation in Lebanon."

"Given the PSPA department's commitment to providing students with real-world insights into the public policy process, we are delighted that PM Mikati agreed to join us today," said PSPA Chair Thomas W. Haase. "By providing us with his personal perspectives on leadership, the prime minister has helped members of the audience deepen their understanding of the variety of challenges that are faced by Lebanese policy-makers."

PM Mikati shared with students what a leader is, defining him/her as someone with a clear vision; who keeps his/her priorities straight, not allowing anything to side-track him/her; who

surrounds himself/herself with a skilled team; and who is willing to listen and evolve and make decisions under pressure.

Mikati also considered that one of his main accomplishments as prime minister was to adopt the policy of “positive neutrality,” and hold a middle ground, thus preventing polarizing forces from dominating.

Moreover, Mikati emphasized that a leader should always prioritize the public interest over the private interest, something which, he said, is his mantra.

During a Q-and-A, Mikati responded to questions on the electoral law, sectarianism, women’s political participation, and educational policies, among others.

In response to a question on the Arab Spring, Mikati said that one of the failures of post-Arab Spring rulers is that they are not familiar with the culture of democracy and think that, once installed, they will be rulers forever, and hence, end up alienating or punishing a segment of society, which is wrong. In contrast, Mikati considered that Lebanese rulers are well-acquainted with the culture of democracy and realize that even though they may be in power at one point, they might find themselves in the opposition a short time later.

Thanking AUB for “all that it has given me,” including friendships and his lifelong partner, May, PM Mikati urged the audience to stay loyal to their alma mater no matter what they do. Mikati also expressed his openness to meet with students for future discussions. “You are the future and our hope for change,” he told students.

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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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