

For Immediate Release



## **Religious scholars endorse organ donation and transplant at AUB panel**

Beirut, Lebanon- 20/02/2012 - Organ donation and transplant are “noble causes,” said two leading Muslim and Christian scholars, during a special lecture held on February 20 at the American University of Beirut.

Organized by the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics & Professionalism Program at AUB’s Faculty of Medicine as part of the “Ethics Matters” initiative, the lecture brought together Sayyed Ali Faddlallah, president of the Mabarrat Society and Father Abdo Abou Kasem, director of the Catholic Center of Information in a lecture on the ethical and religious perspectives of organ donation. It was held at the AUB Medical Center and attracted a large crowd of doctors, health professionals, and medical and nursing students.

Program director Thalia Arawi, a clinical bioethicist, introduced the speakers, saying that recent developments in the fields of organ donation and organ transplant have introduced new hope for the treatment of serious diseases. “Yet, this promise has been accompanied by several ethical issues, and religious opinions on these matters have often been solicited,” she said.

That’s why Sayyed Fadlallah and Father Abou Kasem were invited to discuss the topic, said Arawi.

The two religious scholars said that organ donation and transplant are encouraged by the Church and Islamic Sharia as long as they do not bring harm to the individual and are conducted with his/her approval and in the absence of coercion. Moreover the donor should be completely aware of all the potential risks involved in the medical procedures.

Sayyed Fadlallah referred to the Hadith Sharif and Prophet Mohammed to note that Islam promotes giving and sacrifice in general.

As long as the donor is aware of what he/she is doing and it will not cause him harm or lead him to die, Islam supports organ donation, he said. Moreover, the recipient’s or donor’s religion or race should not affect the process. Father Abou Kasem agreed.

Fadallalh added that Islam also approves of doctors who perform organ donation or organ transplant operations.

On the other hand, the debate among Muslim scholars is still on, when it comes to the selling and buying of organs. In contrast, the Church categorically bans the sale and purchase of organs, noted Abou Kasem.

While the Church and Islam are in agreement on the principle of organ donation, the Church has reservations on the donation of certain organs, explained Abou Kasem. For instance, the Church forbids the donation and transplant of the brain and of reproductive organs, as it believes these help constitute the entity of a human being.

Abou Kasem hoped that preachers would raise awareness about organ donation in their sermons and also encouraged schools and universities to do the same. "Organ donation should be encouraged because it helps humans forgo their selfish nature," he said.

"In the end, the body disintegrates, and the earthly body stays in the ground, while we are given a new body in the afterlife," concluded Abou Kasem.

The panel discussion preceded the first national conference on "Organ donation, procurement and transplantation: Ethical challenges and future directions" which is being held on February 21, 2012 at 5.30 pm at Gefinor Rotana Hotel in Beirut.

The main objective of the conference is to review the international ethical frameworks for organ donation and transplantation; identify the main ethical issues surrounding organ donation, procurement and transplantation in Lebanon and surrounding regions; and discuss ethical solutions for the current problems encountered in organ donation and procurement.

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**Note to Editors**

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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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