

For Immediate Release



IFI's new permanent home at AUB symbolizes vibrant and dynamic future

Beirut, Lebanon- 29/05/2014 – The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at AUB inaugurated on May 29 its new permanent home, a landmark building designed by former AUB student and celebrated architect, Zaha Hadid.

Developed with the support of a generous donation by former Deputy Prime Minister Issam Fares, the striking 3000-square-meter building represents AUB's ambitions into the 21st century.

The inauguration ceremony was held on the Green Oval at AUB and was attended by more than 450 local, regional, and international luminaries, including ministers, MPs, ambassadors, diplomats, and AUB Board of Trustee members.

“This building asserts confidently that we are not a university that stays rooted in time and place; rather we challenge conventional thinking and actively promote change and new ideas,” said AUB President Peter Dorman, during the official inauguration ceremony for the building.

“However scintillating the space and however ambitious the Institute's plans, none of this would have been possible without the forward-looking vision and unbounded generosity of the Institute's namesake, His Excellency Mr. Issam Michael Fares,” noted Dorman.

Founded in 2006, within AUB, the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs has established itself as the leading academic think tank, producing original research related to regional issues and international affairs.

The independent institute develops, and initiates policy-related research. It is committed to increasing and deepening knowledge-production in and about the Arab region, and to creating a forum for the inter-disciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society actors, and policy-makers. It currently works on several programs addressing the region's issues including, the refugee crisis, climate change, food security, and water scarcity, youth, social justice and development, urbanism, and the UN in the Arab world.

Paying tribute to the visionary, Lebanon-loving, education-promoting and peace-building Issam Fares, AUB Chairman of the Board of Trustees Philip Khoury said, "It is this core ambition—the desire to make a positive impact on society founded on research and education,—that makes it so appropriate for the Issam Fares Institute at AUB to bear the name of Issam Fares."

Attended by world-famous, Pritzker-Prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid, the inauguration ceremony also included videotaped remarks by Issam Fares, who was represented at the ceremony by his son, Michael, a member of the AUB Board of Trustees for over two decades, a successful investment manager, an active philanthropist, and co-founder and president of the Fares Foundation.

Joining Michael Fares were his wife, Lara, and their children.

In her speech, Hadid explained the purpose of the building design, which "interweaves the pathways, links, and views of the campus to create a forum for the exchange of ideas - a center of interaction and dialogue - at the heart of the university."

Hadid added: "The design establishes the institute as a crossroads; a three-dimensional intersection and space for the University's students, faculty, researchers and visitors to meet, connect and engage with each other and the wider community.... The Institute's work looks to the future and challenges us all, enriching our understanding of the Arab world by expanding research and broadening debate."

IFI Director Rami Khouri underscored the institute's accomplishments to date, noting, "What we have achieved to date is just a beginning. Our commitment to Issam Fares, to AUB and to the Arab world is ambitious, simple and clear. We want the Issam Fares Institute in the years ahead to join the ranks of the great global names — Rockefeller, Thompson, Carnegie, Fulbright, MacArthur, Hewlett — that link individual philanthropy with the capabilities of an institution to improve the wellbeing of all humankind.

Khouri also highlighted the “pioneering role of former President John Waterbury and former Provost Peter Heath, whose initial consultations with the Fares family had shaped the vision for this institute over a decade ago.”

He added: “Our building is appropriately bold, because for 148 years AUB has introduced to Arab society bold new ways of working that were innovative, even jarring and controversial in their day. These innovations were embraced and protected by Arab society, and often emulated — not because they were so different or alien to the surrounding Arab environment, but because they put into practice values and aspirations that have always been so deeply etched in our hearts and values, like opportunity, education, pluralism, creativity and tolerance.”

Khouri concluded, “Just as our new home redefines the boundaries of design in a legacy campus, we also seek in our activities to expand the boundaries of how universities serve their wider societies.”

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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 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 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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