

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**London / Beirut - 19 November 2012**



**Major New Institute  
on Civil Society and Citizenship in the Arab Region  
to be established at the American University of Beirut**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) and the UK-based Asfari Foundation are creating a major new institute at AUB that will focus on civil society and citizenship in the Arab world. It will be the first of its kind in the region.

Funded by a \$10 million grant from the Asfari Foundation, the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship will advance research and other initiatives to support the development of an informed citizenry engaged at all levels of Arab associational life and promote openness, transparency, and accountability in the region. Both the Foundation and AUB recognize that the Arab world is undergoing significant change, and they intend that the work of the Asfari Institute will make a unique and valuable contribution to progress in the region during this era of historic transition and beyond.

The president of AUB, Peter Dorman, said, 'This is a most significant and timely initiative. Many areas of the Arab world are going through unprecedented transitions with unpredictable outcomes. The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship will be at the forefront of discussions related to changes taking place in the Arab world,

bringing together leading experts from every sector to engage in dialogue, conduct research and propose innovative ways forward on the most pressing issues. We are very grateful to the Asfari Foundation for its visionary leadership and partnership.'

Ayman Asfari, chairman of the Asfari Foundation, said, 'Across the Arab world, we are witnessing citizens who want to participate in creating open and just societies. New models and innovative thinking are required to address the unique needs of civil society in the region. As the most highly-respected university of the Arab region, AUB is the ideal institution to host the Asfari Institute.'

The Asfari Institute will generate evidence-based research, disseminate findings and make policy and practice recommendations. It will provide education and training to promote active citizenship and effective civil society, promote civil society and civic engagement in the region, and stimulate dialogue on related subjects.

Located at AUB in Beirut, the Asfari Institute will draw upon the wealth of expertise and resources of the University, and act as a hub in the region, drawing expertise from academics, practitioners, policymakers, and members of the general public. An international search will begin immediately to recruit the founding director.

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact:**

Maha Al-Azar  
Associate Director for Media Relations, AUB  
Email: [ma110@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ma110@aub.edu.lb)  
Tel: +961. (0)1-353 228

Marieke Bosman  
CEO, the Asfari Foundation  
Email: [marieke.bosman@asfarifoundation.org.uk](mailto:marieke.bosman@asfarifoundation.org.uk)  
Tel: +44 (0)755 777 2838

**Note to Editors**

**About the Asfari Foundation**

The Asfari Foundation is a registered British charity established in 2006 by Petrofac CEO Ayman Asfari and his family. The Asfari Foundation's mission is to give talented and motivated young people the opportunity to achieve the skills and knowledge to be engaged and active citizens in their societies; to bring civil society practitioners and experts together to share knowledge and find practical tools to develop strong, vibrant and open civil societies; and to alleviate the trauma and loss inflicted by man-made and natural emergencies in its target countries. The Foundation works in the UK, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

Website: [www.asfarifoundation.org.uk](http://www.asfarifoundation.org.uk)

**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.

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

Website: [www.aub.edu.lb](http://www.aub.edu.lb)  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>  
Twitter: [http://twitter.com/AUB\\_Lebanon](http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon)