

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 12-11-2018

Middle East Institute honors the role and impact of AUB

The Middle East Institute honored the American University of Beirut (AUB) with the Issam M. Fares Award for Excellence “in recognition of AUB’s unparalleled role in the Middle East over the past century and a half, and of the tremendous work done in leading and growing such an esteemed institution during challenging times.” Now in its 72nd year, the Washington-based institute selected AUB as one of two awardees—the other being Huda Alkhamis Kanoo, philanthropist and founder of the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation—in recognition of their major contributions to the Middle East.

Endowed by Nijad Fares in 2011, the Issam M. Fares Award for Excellence annually honors inspirational innovative Arab individuals or entities who are making a difference in their communities through philanthropy, education, entrepreneurship, and the arts. It recognizes the region’s top visionaries, change-makers, cultural leaders, and philanthropists for their positive contributions to the political, economic, social, and cultural landscape of the Middle East.

A statement issued by the institute stated that “The Middle East Institute greatly admires AUB’s generations of commitment to providing excellence in education, to fostering tolerance and respect for diversity, and to serving the peoples of the Middle East.”

AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri received the award on behalf of AUB. Dr. Khuri addressed an impressive and accomplished group of attendees, including US Secretary for Health and Human Services, Dr. Alex Azar, ambassadors from multiple countries, nearly 500 leading international policymakers, diplomats, Fortune 100 executives, thought leaders, NGOs, and media who focus on the Middle East. Also at the event were AUB trustee Philip Winder and the Middle East Institute’s new president, Dr. Paul Salem, an author and policy expert whom President Khuri called the perfect choice to lead the institute during these challenging times. Dr. Salem studied at AUB before he went on to graduate from Harvard University. His academic career at AUB spanned over the period 1987-1999 as an associate professor of political studies and assistant dean of AUB’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

“The university inhabits, leads, and embodies a patch of Fertile Dissonance in the Middle East,” said President Khuri who thanked the Middle East Institute for the honor and stated that “AUB took advantage of Lebanon’s liberal and diverse setting to become a world leader in inclusive education.” He noted the role of AUB, focusing on its mission, both past and present, to groom generations of scholars, public servants, leaders, and pioneers who can transform the region and the world.

Quoting the late Robert Kennedy in his vision for a better world as the result of “numberless diverse acts of courage and belief,” where “tiny ripple[s] of hope... build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance,” Khuri spoke about the role of AUB, adapting to the circumstances while adhering to core principles, and the urgent need to step up to the task of helping to build a better world together.

“AUB exists to create those ripples of hope that will cross with others and propel us all towards a better world,” he added. “What greater purpose can a woman or man find than ensuring that inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to his fellow man? That, my friends, is the very purpose of AUB, a purpose I thank the Middle East Institute for recognizing and honoring at a time when these, our shared values, have rarely been more desperately needed.”

Established in 1946, the Middle East Institute exists as a converging and collaboration space for leaders “to increase knowledge of the Middle East among citizens of the United States and to promote a better understanding between the peoples of these two areas,” in the words of the institute’s corporate charter. Washington’s oldest institute dedicated solely to the study of the Middle East, the non-partisan policy and educational think tank is devoted to building ties between Americans and the people of the region, providing expert policy analysis, educational and professional development services, and a hub for engaging with the region’s arts and culture.

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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 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.

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