



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT

The Higher Education Scholarships (HES) Program Graduation

June 2, 2026

Student Speaker Jamila Abu Latifi

Good afternoon everyone,

Distinguished guests, respected professors, the HES team, fellow graduates, family, and friends.

It is truly an honor to stand before you today and share a small part of my story.

“Some people say that time heals everything. I used to believe that too... until I learned that some people never truly leave us. They simply stop walking beside us and begin walking inside us.”

My name is Jamila Abo Latifa.

Jamila.

A name that means beautiful.

And for years now, I have carried this name not only as a name, **but** as a promise.

A **promise** I made myself.

A **promise** I made my mother.

A **promise** that no matter how **hard** life becomes, no matter how **much pain** tries to change me, I would **stay** Jamila — **beautiful** in strength, **beautiful** in faith, **beautiful** in hope.

Because my mother taught me that beauty was never about a face.

It is about a soul.

After the loss of my father, my mother became everything.

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She became **the arms** that held me, **the hands** that worked endlessly, and **the voice** that reminded me to keep believing even when life felt unfair.

She **carried** worries I never saw.

She **fought** battles she never spoke about.

And every day, she gave me pieces of herself so I could become who I am today.

She gave me dreams to peruse

Then one day, COVID came.

And **snatched her away from ME.**

And **suddenly**, I found myself standing in front of silence louder than anything I had ever heard.

People often ask how someone continues after losing the people they love most.

The truth is... I do not know if we truly continue.

I think we simply learn how to carry them with us.

I carried my mother.

I carried my father.

I carried **every memory**, **every sacrifice**, and **every prayer** they whispered for me.

And when life became too heavy, something unexpected happened.

August 23rd, 2022 — a date I will never forget.

I received a phone call from HES office congratulating me on being accepted into the HES Scholarship Program.

For many people, it may have sounded like an ordinary phone call.

But for me, it felt like life was giving me permission to dream again.

HES did not simply support my education.

It changed the direction of my life.

It gave me hope at a time when hope felt very far away.

It gave me opportunities, support, and the chance to continue my journey at the American University of Beirut.

And honestly, without HES, I might **NOT** have been able to continue this path and pursue the future my parents always dreamed for me.

Because every chapter needs a beautiful beginning.

And for my journey at AUB, that beginning was the University Preparatory Program.

UPP was **NOT** simply a preparatory program.

It became the bridge between fear and confidence.

It **strengthened** my English, **improved** my communication skills, and **helped** me discover a version of myself I did not know existed.

I used to struggle with public speaking.

And **today... look at me now**.

Standing on this stage, speaking in English and in front of all of you.

UPP gave me **more than** classes.

It gave me **people** who became like family.

Professors who believed in us.

Friends who stood beside us.

A **community** that reminded me that growth becomes easier when we grow together.

Today I stand here at the end of my HES Scholar journey, standing on a stage my parents always dreamed of seeing me on.

And **if** heaven has windows...

I hope **My mother & Father** are watching.

I hope they can see me now.

I hope they know that **every** late night, **every** tear, **every** exhausted morning, and every step I took... was for them.

I studied Medical Laboratory Sciences because I know what loss feels like.

I know what it feels like to miss someone so deeply and wish for just one more day with them.

And slowly, that pain became my purpose.

I chose to study the invisible enemies that take away the people we love — viruses, bacteria, and diseases — because somewhere inside me still lives a little girl who once wished that science could have saved her mother.

And today, I can finally say that I am proud of who I became.

Proud of the girl who kept fighting for herself despite every challenge life placed in her way.

But **most importantly**... I did this for my mother.

For the woman who taught me strength, resilience, and how to keep fighting no matter how difficult life becomes.

Everything I am today carries a part of her inside me.

I promised my parents that I would give my best.

And today I want to say:

Mom...

Dad...

I am here.

I made it.

I carried your dreams in my heart until they became my own.

To my sister — thank you for becoming **strength** when I had none left.

To my family and friends — thank you for **staying beside** me when darkness felt endless.

To AUB, thank you for becoming **a home** where dreams could breathe.

And to HES, UPP, and FHS — thank you for helping me **rebuild hope, continue my education, and become the person standing before you today.**

Last but not least, to the **American People**, thank you for funding this indispensable program for deserving scholars.

Today, this graduation is more than a degree.

It is **PROOF** that love survives loss.

Between a daughter and two parents who are no longer here... but never truly left.

Thank you.