



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Beirut, July 8, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUB Press Hosts Novelist Dr. Jokha Alharithi at the 66th Beirut Arab International Book Fair

As part of its participation in the 66th Beirut Arab International Book Fair, AUB Press hosted an enriching panel discussion with Dr. Jokha Alharithi, renowned Omani novelist, moderated by student Rana Roukoz. The event was supported by the Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Chair and organized in collaboration with the Center for Arts and Humanities at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

The conversation highlighted Jokha Alharithi's literary and academic experience, as she was the first Arab writer to win the Man Booker International Prize for her novel *Celestial Bodies*. It also touched on her other works, such as *The Silk of the Gazelle* and *The Bitter Orange*. Roukoz's questions focused on the relationship between Alharithi's academic background and the formation of her narrative worlds, as well as the influence of Omani culture on her fictional characters.

The discussion was distinguished by its exploration of the narrative peculiarities of Alharithi's worlds, in terms of non-linear construction, multiple voices, and the use of individual and collective memory. The philosophical and existential approach also emerged as a key element in her works, alongside a contemplative poetic language that expresses the depth of her experience.

Regarding the relationship between her academic background and her fictional world, Alharithi spoke at length about the family influence in shaping her literary taste: "I don't know if this has anything to do with my academic background or my upbringing, because I grew up in a family that was passionate about literature. My grandfather, Ahmed bin Abdullah Alharithi, was one of the last classical poets in Oman, and it took me ten years to compile and edit his collection of poems. But when I visited him as a child, I thought he didn't speak like us, but only in poetry, in *fusha*."

From this deep affiliation with poetry, she set out to build her novelistic worlds, without separating the two literary genres. She concluded by saying that she initially hesitated to incorporate poetry into her novel, but then she read *As If She Were Sleeping* by Elias Khoury and found that he never hesitated to incorporate poetry extensively. This encouraged her, and she said, "It's not wrong to incorporate poetry into the novel."

American University of Beirut

PO Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon
T +961 1 35 00 00 – Ext 2650 | communications@aub.edu.lb

aub.edu.lb

The dialogue included bilateral readings between Alharithi and Roukoz of selected excerpts from the author's works, blending poetry and prose. At the end of the meeting, the audience posed a series of questions to the guest, addressing issues of identity, narrative, and place in the modern Arabic novel.

Visit [“AUB Press” on YouTube](#) to watch the full discussion.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar, PhD

Executive Director of Communications
Lecturer – Political Studies and Public Administration Department
Founding Director – Good Governance and Citizenship Observatory
Fellow – Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
Member of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Research, Innovation, and Creativity Hub

T +961 1 37 43 74 Ext: 2676 | M +961 3 42 70 24
sk158@aub.edu.lb

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 790 full-time faculty members and a student body of over 9000 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 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 365-bed hospital.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events.

[aub.edu.lb](#) | [Facebook](#) | [X](#)

American University of Beirut

PO Box 11-0236, Riad El Solh, Beirut 1107 2020, Lebanon
T +961 1 35 00 00 – Ext 2650 | communications@aub.edu.lb

[aub.edu.lb](#)