



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Beirut, May 30, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The American University of Beirut Graduates Its 156th Cohort of Trailblazers

Lebanese Order of Merit Bestowed on Two AUB Honorands

Khuri: “We do not work for rankings. We work to change the world.”

The American University of Beirut (AUB) Honorary Doctorate and Graduate Commencement Ceremony was held on May 30, 2025, conferring master's, doctorate, and medical degrees to 678 students and recognizing this year's honorary doctorate degree recipients: Christiana Figueres; Dr. Raif Geha; and Dr. Philip Khoury.

The ceremony was attended by Dr. Nawaf Salam, president of the Council of Ministers, who represented His Excellency, General Joseph Aoun, the president of the Republic of Lebanon. In President Aoun's name, Salam decorated the two honorees of Lebanese descent—Dr. Philip Khoury and Dr. Raif Geha—by bestowing upon them the Lebanese Order of Merit, Silver Grade.

“AUB graduates carry the potential not just to lead, but to build bridges, and to be peacemakers where peace is most needed... At AUB, we do not work for rankings. We work to change the world. We do not just train highly paid consultants, physicians, nurses, engineers, and scientists. We train change-makers,” said Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB president, to the graduates. “We are here to uplift, to empower, to enlighten, to transform. We are not here simply to help you gain knowledge, or jobs, or opportunities, or degrees or wealth, but rather to help you in being uplifted, to uplift your families, communities, and nations. That has never been more critical than it is today.” Khuri spoke about the joy of living with purpose and every individual's right to the pursuit of health, happiness, and a more abundant life.

This year's graduate student speaker was medical student Nader Zalaquett, a high-distinction achiever who has held several leadership roles, co-authored numerous scientific publications, and received multiple research awards and grants. With extensive clinical experience focusing on otolaryngology head and neck surgery, Zalaquett will be joining Mayo Clinic's Department of Otolaryngology.

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

“What are the odds that a sixteen-year-old from Zahle, with near zero exposure to Beirut and its universities, would graduate as a medical doctor from the best medical school in the Middle East?” said Zalaquett. “Little did I know that AUB is a door to the entire world. From the halls of the #1 hospital to the #1 cancer center and the #1 tech firm in the world, an AUB graduate was always there, ready to guide, support, and uplift.” He added, “AUB has given us more than an education, it has given us a launchpad to every single corner of the world.”

President Khuri bestowed the university's honorary doctorate degrees upon this year's recipients, in recognition of their contributions and representation of the values and mission of AUB: diplomat, author, and architect of the Paris Climate Agreement, Christiana Figueres; allergist, immunologist, and James Gamble Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School, Dr. Raif Geha; and academic leader and historian of Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, and chairman emeritus of the AUB Board of Trustees, Dr. Philip Khoury.

The commencement keynote speaker, Dr. Raif Geha, graduated from AUB to become a world-renowned physician-scientist with an enduring impact on pediatrics and immunology. He spoke about his experience as a biology and then medical student at AUB, and the role that holistic education, mentors, and relationships established at AUB played in his education and career.

“Acquiring the skills needed to lead a meaningful, successful, and happy life requires the type of education AUB provides,” said Geha. “One pillar of my education at AUB has been my mentors and role models... I learned from my mentors at AUB about rigor, hard work, tough love, grace, humility, compassion and humor.”

Geha concluded with words of wisdom as the class of 2025 looked toward a new chapter in their journey of trailblazing leadership and impactful service, “To the graduating students, I say work hard, nose to the ground.” He added that, “the two things worth spending money on are education and memories. AUB has given you plenty of each. Use both to live life more abundantly.”

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.

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

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