



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Beirut, November 5, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUB Hosts “Inherited Pain and the Voice of the Body: Fragility and Strength of Women in the Writings of Haneen Al-Sayegh”

The American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted a literary event titled “Inherited Pain and the Voice of the Body: Fragility and Strength of Women in the Writings of Haneen Al-Sayegh,” organized by the Sheikh Zayed Chair for Arabic and Islamic Studies at the university. The event featured Lebanese writer and poet Haneen Al-Sayegh in conversation with Riwa Bou Hamdan, where Al-Sayegh reflected on her creative trajectory, which embodies feminine fragility as an inherited, living strength.

Al-Sayegh is part of a new generation of writers who write from the margins to challenge the center, using language as a site for both confession and resistance. She is widely recognized as a leading female voice in contemporary Lebanese and Arab literature. Her work is marked by lyrical prose and deep engagement with themes such as the female body, motherhood, love, absence, and power—where fragility is rendered as a force rather than a flaw.

Her debut novel *Mithaq al-Nisa* (Covenant of Women, Dar Al Adab, 2023) received critical acclaim and was shortlisted for the 2024 International Prize for Arabic Fiction for its daring exploration of gender, tradition, and social silence. Her second novel, *Thamarat al-Nar* (Fruit of Fire, 2025), builds on these themes, revisiting earlier characters in new settings that reveal how pain is inherited across generations.

Speaking during the session, Al-Sayegh described writing as “an act of personal and collective salvation” that transmits women’s stories across time, transforming pain into a force for change. She emphasized that her seemingly fragile characters embody “a form of quiet resistance” against inherited norms.

In a moment of poetic reflection, she declared, “Femininity is the ability to encompass,” framing feminine identity as the capacity to hold, nurture, and resist simultaneously. She also remarked that “Sadness makes us real but also modest,” underlining the emotional depth that grants literature its sincerity and power.

The evening saw lively engagement from attendees, who raised thoughtful questions about Al-Sayegh’s characters, narrative techniques, and blending of autobiographical insight with fiction. Students and literature enthusiasts alike praised her courageous voice and the layered complexity of her storytelling.

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This event was part of the ongoing cultural series hosted by the Sheikh Zayed Chair at AUB, affirming the university's commitment to fostering literary dialogue and supporting the intellectual and creative voices shaping the region today.

ENDS

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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 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.

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