



**AMERICAN
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AUB President Fadlo Khuri Honored as a Physician, Leader, and Humanist

A Festschrift honoring Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, president of the American University of Beirut (AUB), brought together an extraordinary gathering of international academics and practitioners, colleagues past and present, mentees, family, and members of the AUB community. The celebration recognized Dr. Khuri's lifetime achievements as a physician leader, and humanist while highlighting his influence across medicine, education, and public life. Through panel discussions, scientific talks, video tributes, and shared stories, participants reflected on both the breadth of his professional impact and the depth of his personal influence.

Opening the program, Dr. Arafat Tfayli, professor of clinical medicine and director of collaboration at the N.K. Basile Cancer Institute at AUB Medical Center (AUBMC), reminded the audience that while Festschrifts are a cherished academic tradition of paying homage to a highly distinguished colleague, they are also a living tribute. For Dr. Khuri, while his primary area of expertise is oncology, his influence has never been in medicine alone, but a broad landscape of scholarship, mentorship, and leadership with equal regard for the sciences and humanities.

The full-day event interwove scientific discussions with candid reflections: lectures and presentations on advances in cancer research and treatment stood alongside humorous and heartfelt tributes, video testimonials, and stories from colleagues and friends.

Among those paying tribute were Dr. Suresh Ramalingham, a longtime friend and executive director of the Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University, who helped organize the Festschrift alongside Dr. Tfayli from AUB, Dr. Ruth O'Regan from the University of Rochester, and Dr. Taofeek Owonikoko from the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Joining them at the event were numerous high-level clinicians and researchers, many of whom worked with or were mentored by Dr. Khuri while he was at MD Anderson and Emory University. Their presence, along with numerous AUB trustees, faculty, staff, and students, was a reminder of how far-reaching Khuri's influence has been across medicine, academia, and public service.

Several ministers were at the event, including Dr. Mohammad Haidar, minister of labor, representing Dr. Nawaf Salam, prime minister; Dr. Rakan Nasreddine, minister of public health; Dr. Fadi Makki, minister of state for administrative reform; and a representative of Dr. Rima

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Karami, minister of education and higher education. Also in attendance were R.F. Dr. Salim Daccache, rector of Saint Joseph University; and Dr. Elias Warrak, president of the University of Balamand.

Dr. Raymond Sawaya, recruited by Khuri to serve as the Raja N. Khuri Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and vice president for medical affairs at AUB, asked the audience to imagine alternative paths, perhaps one in which Dr. Khuri had remained at MD Anderson, leading its vast oncology program. What if he had never returned to Lebanon? He then offered the thought that mattered most: “What would have happened if Fadlo did not come as president to AUB in 2015, when those crises started to happen one after the other, where he stood as a giant holding the fort, making us all believe in a future that is here—and that will be here—if we stand together and if we work hard and believe in the values that Fadlo believes in.”

The first of four sessions centered on AUB itself, under the theme “Making an Impact, Locally and Globally.” A panel including upper administration, faculty members, and trustees traced how the university endured and grew under Khuri’s leadership during what Vice President Mary Jaber Nachar called “no ordinary years” and a time of learning how to “fly without a safety net,” referencing the theme of Khuri’s first speech as AUB president. Dr. Philip Khoury, board chair emeritus, credited him with restoring tenure, building a culture of transparency and trust among the board and across campus, and embedding a new model of shared governance, as well as expanding the university’s reach through AUB Online and a twin campus in Pafos. These achievements, he noted, were rooted in stubborn optimism and a clear global orientation.

AUB trustee and vice chair for academic affairs, Dr. Huda Zoghbi, spoke for many when she praised Khuri’s aspirations for research and education and his ability to inspire during the hardest times: “Fadlo, I cannot tell you how many times we joined a board meeting and we’re all scared because it’s yet another disaster, and somehow by the end of that board meeting, we’re all inspired and we’re all feeling stronger, thanks to you. You not only effect change and always come up with solutions, you also infuse strength and inspiration in all around you,” she said. “I cannot tell you how much we all appreciate you.”

After the sessions on leadership came the scientific heart of the Festschrift: three academic sessions devoted to oncology. Colleagues, mentees, and friends paid tribute to Dr. Khuri with short talks and presentations on cancer drug development, innovative therapies, health equity in cancer, and advances in cancer biology and therapeutics. Participants also viewed posters displaying medical abstracts, a nod to Khuri’s scientific home ground, where he built his career and continues to influence a global community of inquiry.

AUB Provost Zaher Dawy described President Khuri’s style as bold in decision-making yet deeply attentive to people, equally a visionary and detail-oriented leader. The Festschrift reflected this balance: a celebration of a physician who shaped oncology worldwide, a president who strengthened a university in crisis, and a humanist who continues to uphold the belief that an institution’s greatest asset is its people.

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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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