



**AMERICAN
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUB Press Takes Part in the 35th Abu Dhabi International Book Fair and the Congress of Arabic and Creative Industries

The Sheikh Zayed Chair for Arabic and Islamic Studies and AUB Press lead an ongoing collaboration between AUB and the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre

AUB Press, the publishing house of the American University of Beirut (AUB), took part this month in the 35th Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, held at ADNEC Centre Abu Dhabi, and the fifth Congress of Arabic and Creative Industries, held at Manarat Al Saadiyat. Organized by the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre, both events were held under the auspices of Abu Dhabi's Department of Culture and Tourism. AUB's participation was sponsored by the Sheikh Zayed Chair for Arabic and Islamic Studies at AUB together with the university's partners in Abu Dhabi, as part of an ongoing collaboration between the university and the centre led by the chair.

AUB Press at the Book Fair

A team from AUB Press staffed its stand throughout the fair, presenting its catalog in Arabic and English and selling its titles directly to readers, librarians, and fellow publishers. Members of the team also took part in panels and workshops within the fair's program, joining discussions on scholarly publishing, translation, and the future of the Arabic book.

Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, president of the United Arab Emirates, this year's fair brought together 1,200 exhibitors from 95 countries and hosted some 1,500 events under the theme "Turn the Page, Read the World." Its focus personality was al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, the eighth-century scholar who laid the foundations of Arabic lexicography and prosody. The fair traces its origins to 1981, when it opened under the patronage of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, for whom the chair at AUB is also named.

AUB Press Publishing Manager Yasmine El Hajjar reflected on the experience. "We were thrilled to participate in this year's Abu Dhabi International Book Fair. It was an inspiring convergence of industry thought leaders—bringing together academics, policymakers, and publishing tech innovators to explore collaborations that champion Arabic publishing," she said.

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“Equally rewarding was engaging with our diverse community of readers across regional history, Islamic studies, and graphic novels, connecting with so many aspiring young creatives. We are proud to have been part of this year’s edition and look forward to future collaborations.”

The Congress of Arabic and Creative Industries

Two days after the fair closed, faculty and students from AUB, along with members from the AUB Press team, attended the fifth Congress of Arabic and Creative Industries, convened this year under the theme “Arabic as Infrastructure: Identity, Knowledge, and Economic Power in the Digital Age.” The congress asked what it means to treat Arabic not only as heritage to be protected but as infrastructure on which knowledge, creative industries, and economic value are built. Its sessions were organized around six areas: Arabic intelligence, creators as builders, intellectual property as infrastructure, platform sovereignty, capital architecture, and production systems. The program gathered policymakers, publishers, media and technology executives, investors, and scholars from the Arab world and beyond, and included workshops and masterclasses for young creators. For AUB’s students, the day offered a direct view of the industries in which their training in Arabic language, literature, and culture can be put to work.

A New World Record

After the congress, the AUB Press team and AUB students participated in and witnessed a historic milestone as the Kalima Reading Club at the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre earned Guinness World Records recognition for the largest number of nationalities participating in a book club session.

The achievement was officially recorded during a session hosted by the Zayed National Museum on September 21. The session brought together readers from 69 nationalities to discuss *Bedouin and ‘Abbasid Cultural Identities: The Arabic Majnun Layla Story*, published by the Kalima Translation Project. Speaking on the panel, AUB Professor Bilal Orfali explored the significance of Majnun Layla’s story, the book’s fresh perspective on the famous romance, and how the story can be reimagined in today’s digital world.

An Ongoing Collaboration

AUB’s presence at both events is part of a continuing partnership between the university and the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre, led by the Sheikh Zayed Chair for Arabic and Islamic Studies at AUB, which brings the two institutions together around publishing, translation, and the teaching and study of Arabic.

“For a long time we spoke about Arabic in the language of heritage and loss. The congress invites us to speak about it in the language of infrastructure, and I think that is right,” said Professor Bilal Orfali, holder of the Sheikh Zayed Chair and director of AUB Press.

He added, “Infrastructure is what everything else runs on. Roads, electricity, and data networks are measured, budgeted, and built, and Arabic deserves the same treatment. It is the working language of some four hundred million people and the medium of publishing, translation, media, education, software, and artificial intelligence in a region with one of the youngest populations in the world. Each of those is an industry, and each needs people who know the language deeply.”

Orfali continued, “When we link Arabic to the economy and to the job market, we are not diminishing it. We are giving our students a reason to see it as an opportunity, and giving

decision makers the numbers they need to invest in it. That is the conversation the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre has opened, and a university press in Beirut and a chair named for Sheikh Zayed are glad to be part of it.”

Further joint publications and events are planned in Beirut and Abu Dhabi through the coming academic year, with details to be announced.

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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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About AUB Press

AUB Press is the publishing arm of the American University of Beirut, founded in 1866. It publishes scholarship in Arabic and English across literature, history, and the arts and sciences, including the Sheikh Zayed Series for Arabic and Islamic Texts and Studies, the Sheikh Zayed Series on Art in the Arab and Islamic Worlds, as well as the Comics and Graphic Narrative from the Arab World Series. It publishes the journal *al-Abhāth*, in its seventy-sixth year, and the Beirut Art Review. The Press welcomes proposals from scholars, translators, and editors.

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