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Audit and Accountability in Focus at AUB Panel on the Chehab Era and the Path Forward

The American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted a timely and thought-provoking panel discussion titled Audit and Accountability – The Chehab Era and the Path Forward, organized by the Fouad Chehab Foundation (FCF), and the AUB Good Governance and Citizenship Observatory (GGCO) housed at the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship. Held on AUB’s campus, the event brought together leading legal and governance experts to examine the institutions established under former President Fouad Chehab—bodies tasked with supervising public administration and enforcing accountability—and to explore their relevance to Lebanon’s current challenges in governance and state reform.

The event was moderated by Attorney of Law Amine Bachir and featured three distinguished panelists: Judge Georges Attieh, president of the Central Inspection Board; Court of Accounts Judge Elie Maalouf, professor at La Sagesse University; and Judge Rana Akoum, head of the Enforcement Court in Metn.

Dr. Simon Kachar, founding and current director of GGCO, welcomed the panelists and attendees, and spoke about the timeliness of the panel and the growing momentum in Lebanon for governance and institutional reform. He noted that the collaboration with the Fouad Chehab Foundation reflects a shared commitment to linking the lessons of the past with the reform efforts of today.

In his recorded video message opening the event, AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri praised Chehab as “one of the most important presidents Lebanon has known,” highlighting his commitment to the development of robust state institutions. “We see today not only an opportunity to study the accomplishments, merits, and difficulties of the Chehab era,” Khuri stated, “but also to apply what we learn from these studies to Lebanon’s current reality.” He added that we must work toward building “a state of institutions at a time when the Lebanese state is expressing its will and determination to reassert its authority across the country.”

Khuri noted that the Chehab era was defined by the application of law and respect for institutions, a principle Lebanon has struggled to uphold since the onset of civil war, stating that enforcing the law and upholding institutional will are capabilities essential for restoring confidence in governance and rebuilding a viable state.

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President of the Fouad Chehab Foundation Adel Hamiyeh reflected on the enduring values behind the foundation's work. He noted that President Chehab built institutions that were not only administrative and financial, but also social, cultural, and developmental in nature. Hamiyeh said, "We decided to organize a series of panel discussions on the Chehabist experience, addressing topics such as governance, and involving universities, with the aim of introducing the Chehabist message to the younger generation—especially during this period marked by the optimism that accompanied the election of President Joseph Aoun, his delivery of the oath of office, and the subsequent formation of a distinguished government known for its competence and its promising ministerial statement. This has given us hope that this new era may resemble that of President Fouad Chehab in terms of restoring the authority and institutions of the state and returning to a natural foreign policy."

The discussion unfolded in three parts: lessons learned from the Chehab era, the current state of institutional paralysis, and potential paths forward. The panelists discussed the rationale behind President Chehab's establishment of key institutions such as the Central Inspection, the Audit Bureau, and the Disciplinary Council. These bodies were conceived as independent mechanisms to promote transparency, discipline, and ethical governance across public administration. The discussion highlighted how these institutions once played a pivotal role in instilling accountability, protecting public resources, and professionalizing the civil service. The discussion also revisited the structural foundations that allowed these institutions to function with autonomy during the Chehab era, and considered the leadership decisions that helped insulate them from political interference.

The conversation then moved to the contemporary state of these institutions, as the panel examined the range of factors that have contributed to their current dysfunction—including political encroachment, legal ambiguities, and insufficient staffing and funding. The panelists acknowledged that many of these bodies now face significant operational challenges, preventing them from fulfilling their original mandates. Despite this, there was recognition that these institutions still hold potential if revitalized with the appropriate structural and legal support.

Looking ahead, panelists reflected on potential reform pathways. They explored ideas such as enacting legal safeguards to enhance institutional independence, leveraging digital tools to modernize audit and inspection functions, and fostering closer collaboration between oversight bodies, the judiciary, and civil society actors. The discussion emphasized the importance of reestablishing credibility through transparent practices and rebuilding public confidence in Lebanon's governance systems.

Throughout the discussion, panelists revisited the core principles of the Chehab era—discipline, transparency, and institutional accountability—as potential foundations for Lebanon's future reform efforts. While acknowledging the serious structural and political challenges that remain, the conversation underscored the importance of rebuilding credible and independent institutions capable of advancing good governance and restoring public trust.

The session concluded with an engaging Q&A, during which attendees posed questions and shared reflections, enriching the conversation around the future of institutional reform in Lebanon.

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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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