



**AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT**

**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **1,396 Undergraduates Receive Their Degrees at AUB's 156th Commencement Ceremony**

Khuri: "May you face the world with courage and use your strength to lift others as you rise."

The American University of Beirut (AUB) celebrated the second day of its 156th commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 31, 2025, conferring undergraduate degrees to 1,396 students. The ceremony honored the perseverance, spirit, and achievements of the Class of 2025 and featured speeches by AUB President Fadlo Khuri; influential figure in the global climate movement and AUB honorary doctorate degree recipient Christiana Figueres; and student speaker Yasmine El Berjawi.

In a speech titled *Forever Young* that blended celebration with a powerful call to live with purpose and conviction, Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, AUB president, urged the graduates to carry forward the university's enduring values: to uplift, to empower, to enlighten, and to transform.

He described the AUB experience as "a high-speed Formula 1 race—intense, imperfect, yet completed with courage and skill," telling the graduates: "you worked alongside some of the brightest minds of your generation—like a perfectly synchronized pit crew." He continued, "Tonight, before you take your next step, pause. Take a moment to look around—at each other, at this historic campus, at those who helped you get here: your families, your professors, your friends. And reflect on what it means to graduate from AUB—not just with a degree, but with skills, tools, values, and purpose."

"May you carry forward with clarity and purpose. May you hold tightly to the truth and the light, even when darkness creeps in. May you face the world with courage and use your strength to lift others as you rise. May your lives be rich in meaning and in joy. And through all the changes you encounter, may you stay forever young," Khuri said in closing, referencing Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" and linking it to AUB's hopes for its graduates.

Student speaker Yasmine El Berjawi was introduced by President Khuri as "a remarkable example of leadership, determination, and service." A double major in political studies and public administration with a triple minor, El Berjawi maintained academic excellence while actively contributing to campus life and civil society. Her work has reflected a deep commitment to human rights, civic engagement, and public service—both within AUB and beyond.

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In a deeply moving address, El Berjawi recounted her journey to and through AUB, reflecting on resilience in the face of crisis and the courage to hold on to one's dreams.

Recalling the moment she and her father fled the scene of the August 4, 2020 Beirut port explosion, she said, "I vividly recall grabbing one thing as we fled our car: that heavy SAT prep book. At the time, I didn't know exactly why. Maybe I hoped it would shield me, or maybe it symbolized the dreams and future I refused to let go of."

El Berjawi then spoke about the sense of belonging she found on campus. "I found a community—a group of believers who acted when others hesitated. Believers who answered the call when my sister and I launched an emergency relief to help displaced families during the war."

She added, "AUB taught us to act—to transform ideas into realities. This past year has been uniquely challenging for each of us, yet it's up to us to reshape the narrative we've inherited from war and hardship. Throughout our journey, we've proven what it truly means to be pioneers of change, showing up every day to support our communities."

She concluded with a call to carry their courage forward: "As we step beyond these gates, let's carry forward the courage it took to begin this journey—the courage symbolized by holding tightly on to our dreams. Class of 2025, the world awaits—and it's ours to shape. What dreams will 'you' hold on to?"

Keynote speaker Christiana Figueres, author, diplomat, architect of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, and one of this year's honorary degree recipients, delivered an emotional and empowering message to the Class of 2025.

"You didn't just earn a degree here. You became part of something enduring: the heartbeat of the American University of Beirut," Figueres said. She acknowledged the trials the students had faced: "You've grown up not just during college, but during crisis—and you kept going. That is no small thing."

"In a world tempted to call young people aimless, you proved otherwise. You are not just survivors. You are creators. You turned uncertainty into learning, scarcity into ingenuity, frustration into fuel," she added.

Looking to the future, she urged: "From this hill, look courageously toward the horizon. And don't just follow the light—Be the light."

The ceremony was filled with music and celebration, featuring performances by the AUB Choir and the AUB Classical Music Club. Graduates gathered with loved ones, marking the moment with pride and purpose, ready to take their next steps as AUB alumni.

## 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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