

**Inauguration of the new building for the
Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs**

Thursday, May 29, 2014 at 6:30pm

IFI Building/Green Oval

Chairman Khoury remarks / tribute to Issam Fares:

Excellencies, Fellow trustees, members of the Fares family, Dame Zaha Hadid, AUB colleagues, distinguished friends.

Thank you, President Dorman.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of AUB, I would like to say what an absolute pleasure it is to be with you on this extraordinary occasion – the inauguration of the Issam Fares Institute’s permanent home. For a university that dates back 148 years, the opening of a major new landmark – and what a landmark it is - is a time to celebrate, especially when we are graced by the presence of its acclaimed architect, Dame Zaha Hadid.

We are so pleased that Michael and Lara Fares and their children are with us. As the President mentioned, Michael is a trustee of AUB, but today is here representing his father, a dear friend of AUB and a great figure of Lebanon, His Excellency Issam Fares. This exciting and important project would not have been possible without his vision and partnership.

I wish that Issam Fares could have been with us today; both because his charismatic presence is so inspiring and because I know that he has waited long and patiently for this day.

But I am confident that he would agree - it was well worth the wait! The researchers and staff of the Issam Fares Institute have been hugely productive and the reputation of the IFI is well-established and respected in both academia and the policy-making world.

It is this core ambition—the desire to make a positive impact on society founded on research and education,—that makes it so appropriate for the Issam Fares Institute at AUB to bear the name of Issam Fares.

A self-made man, Issam Fares has built an international business empire that continues to grow and prosper. This phenomenal success in the business world only touches the surface of what has been a most extraordinary life.

As a philanthropist, politician, and business leader, Issam Fares has contributed enormously to the causes of peace, prosperity, and stability in Lebanon and throughout the Arab region.

With his international presence and reputation, Issam Fares has played an integral role around the world in promoting Lebanon's rich cultural heritage, as well as in raising the level of discourse concerning the complex political and societal challenges of this region.

Born in Bayno, Akkar, Issam Fares is a devoted native son and has always remained connected to Lebanon. He spent many years in the Arab Gulf and built a hugely successful investment vehicle, the Wedge Group, with interests across the USA, Europe and the Middle East.

Fares returned to Lebanon when it needed him most: as this beleaguered country was struggling to rise from the ashes of civil war.

For almost a decade, Issam Fares served his country with distinction, first as a member of parliament and then as Deputy Prime Minister; a post he transformed into a locus of political activity and progressive governance.

Through his work as a statesman, as well as his continuing role as a trusted advisor and acclaimed public speaker, Issam Fares has helped Lebanon redefine its role in the region and carve a bold new path towards security, economic strength, and national unity.

In 2007, at a time of upheaval in this country but also of great hope, Issam Fares said of Lebanon: "Our country is too strong to defeat and too great to vanish. It will always remain a place where freedom blossoms, dignity blooms, and peace flourishes."

Yet the dedication that Fares has exhibited for Lebanon extends far beyond the political sphere. Cognizant of the importance of strong municipal and civic institutions, he has given generously towards development and rehabilitation projects as well as social programs.

There is hardly a corner of Lebanon that has not benefited from his philanthropic largesse. The depth and breadth of Issam Fares' devotion to the advancement of this country and its people is widely evident: from primary schools to municipal buildings to dispensaries, libraries, cultural centers and roads.

The Fares Foundation is very active in human and social development within Lebanon and internationally, with a strong focus on promoting health, education, and culture.

Internationally, the Fares family has a strong relationship with Tufts University in Boston, where Issam Fares has helped fund research centers, endowed chairs, and a lecture series. In the medical realm, he has given generously to support cancer research and heart research, both at the Mayo Clinic and at Tufts, as well as in the area of veterinary medicine focused on equine research.

Within Lebanon, Issam Fares' philanthropy extends far and wide, with endowed chairs, conference halls, and libraries at many schools and universities, including Balamand, La Sagesse, and Notre Dame. He has also established numerous academic prizes to promote innovative research, media excellence, and high academic achievers.

Further, Issam Fares believes strongly that technology is the cornerstone of modern life and so he has founded an Institute of Technology in Akkar (affiliated with Balamand) and a Center for Technology at Antonin University.

Last, but most certainly not least, the robust connection between Issam Fares and AUB has spanned four decades. His support extends across student scholarships, towards our largest auditorium - the Issam Fares Hall at the AUBMC, and, of course, the reason we are here today: the work of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, and now this stunning new building.

More important than any of these gifts, is the strong and continuing bond between AUB and the Fares family. We are so grateful for their ongoing and unwavering support, and the dedication and service of Michael on the Board of Trustees.

At AUB, we are so fortunate to share with Issam Fares shares our vision of this university as a bastion of liberal education and the values inherent in it: those of creative and critical thinking, rational deliberation, dedicated civic engagement, and concern for the rights and wellbeing of others. How appropriate that these principles also be at the heart of the work of the Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy and International Affairs.

I close by expressing our deep appreciation to Issam Fares, to the Fares family and by congratulating everyone associated with the fine work of the Issam Fares Institute at AUB, and all of those who made this day possible.