

Words from the MEPI-Tomorrow's Leaders Executive and Academic Directors

Dina Abdul Rahman

Executive Director, MEPI-Tomorrow's Leaders Programs at the Lebanese American University (LAU)

Since 2015, I've had the honor of contributing to MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders-funded programs. Among these, the Tomorrow's Leaders Gender Scholars (TLS) program stands out as a beacon of empowerment and change.

Indeed, since 2020, LAU has enrolled over 550 TLS scholars, all of whom have successfully completed the one-year program requirements. Our TLS alumni not only completed two gender courses as part of their bachelor's degree requirements, but they also attended a series of seminars and workshops on gender issues and produced policy papers for publication consideration. Additionally, they served as active ambassadors, raising awareness on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion within their scholarly disciplines and communities.

In the face of global backlash to gender rights, we at LAU are proud to announce that we are producing a new generation of change-makers: interdisciplinary leaders who are empowered and well-equipped to make the necessary changes for a better tomorrow. They represent the new generation of Inclusive Leaders!

This publication represents the best work of the 2023–2024 cohort of TLS students. It wouldn't have been possible without the continuous support and trust of our partners at the United States Department of State and the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). We are tremendously grateful for their continued belief in the transformative power of the youth in the region.

We are deeply grateful for the unwavering support of various LAU departments, staff, and organizations that have been instrumental in the success of the TLS program. This

includes LAU's School of Arts and Sciences, its esteemed faculty, the Writing Center, the Arab Institute for Women, the Al-Raida creative team, as well as LAU's SDEM unit led by Vice President Elise Salem. We also owe a significant debt of gratitude to the TLS team led by Dr. Lina Kreidie, and Dr. Jennifer Skulte-Ouais. Thank you for your exceptional commitment to our TLS students.

We are very proud to see the hard work of our precious scholars come to life through this issue of Al-Raida. Congratulations to all!

Lina Kreidie

Academic Director, MEPI-Tomorrow's Leaders Gender Scholars Program (TLS) at the Lebanese American University (LAU)

You are published!!
You are today's and tomorrow's change makers.

What a year! We have witnessed doubts about human rights conventions, distrust in international law, and humanity in crisis. You faced these challenges with full determination to be on the right side of history. You acquired knowledge, debated issues, advocated for what is right, and never yielded to the shocks and awe of what the world is witnessing—from racism to various forms of instability, and to the failures of governments and international institutions in providing much-needed responses to crises. We are so proud of you and your dedication to promoting human rights, including gender justice.

You are the leaders who will pave the path for a just, peaceful, and democratic world. Your accomplishments and progress required open-minded and courageous people and institutions. You, our Tomorrow's Leaders students, embody these qualities. Thanks to the Middle East Partnership Initiative at the United States Department of State for providing our students and our institution with the financial and ideological support needed to pursue the Lebanese American University's (LAU) commitment to human rights and other liberal values.

Thank you to the MEPI-TLS team, both in Lebanon and abroad, for your remarkable support and implementation of this program. Without your dedication, our students would not have the tools they need to pursue a bright and gender-equitable future for us all.

Finally, to our students: Remember, prosperity happens only once social justice has been achieved. Fly high, stay connected, and keep us posted as you move forward beyond the borders of our LAU campus.

We salute your work.