

For Immediate Release



AUB professor, Arabic and Islamic scholar Sami Makarem dies

Beirut, Lebanon- 22/08/2012 - Arabic and Islamic scholar, calligraphy expert and AUB Professor Sami Makarem died on August 21 of a sudden illness.

Born on April 14, 1931, Makarem was considered by academics as a reference on mysticism and by his friends as a practitioner of mysticism and someone of a generous and warm spirit.

Despite being an octogenarian, Makarem was still teaching part-time at AUB courses on mysticism and ancient Arabic prose, right up to his death.

“Professor Makarem introduced me to the spiritual path and mysticism through the courses he taught me and the role model he played for me,” said Bilal Orfali, one of Makarem’s former students and currently acting chair of the Arabic Department. “He had inner peace and it was contagious.”

Born in Aitat in Aley, Makarem was the son of Sheikh Nassib Makarem, the author of artistic masterworks covering various types of Arab calligraphy, either in large tableaus or in miniature pieces of silver and marble ranging from the size of an egg to that of a grain of rice or wheat. His relationship with his father was very close, and his passing had induced Makarem to discover the artist in himself.

Professor Makarem completed his primary and intermediate education at the Lycée Français de Beyrouth - Mission Laïque Française, and his secondary studies at the Lebanon College of Souk El Gharb. He then studied at the American University of Beirut where he obtained his bachelor's degree in literature and philosophy in 1954 and his master's degree in Arabic literature in 1957. Meanwhile, he taught Arabic Literature at the Lebanon College of Souk El Gharb and at Al Sirat College in Aley. Then, he left for the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he obtained in 1963 his PhD in Middle Eastern studies, specializing in Islamic Batini Studies. In addition, he taught Arabic at the same university.

In July 1963, Professor Makarem went back to Lebanon to teach Islamic Thought at the Lebanese University. In 1964, he was appointed assistant professor at AUB, teaching Arabic Literature and Islamic thought. In 1970, he was promoted to the rank of associate professor at AUB, and then to the rank of full professor in 1985. In addition, he held twice the position of chairperson of the Department of Arabic Literature and Near Eastern Languages: from 1975 until 1978 and from 1993 until 1996. He acted as a part time professor at the Lebanese University from 1977 until 1981. He was also director of the Center of Middle Eastern Studies at the AUB, from 1975 until 1978.

In addition to his academic contributions to the fields of Islamic studies, Sufism, Islamic history, and his artistic contribution, Sami Makarem was also a poet. Three works of poetry have been published by him: *Mir'at 'ala Jabal Qaf* (A mirror on Mount Qaf) (1996), *Daw' fi Madinat ad-Dabab* (A Light over the City of Mist) (1999), and *Qasa'ed Hubb 'ala shati' Mir'at* (Love Poems on the Shores of a Mirror) (2004). He has published more than 20 books, in addition to a great number of articles in different specialized periodicals, and hundreds of art works.

“Professor Makarem was not only an academic reference on mysticism, but he also practiced it with his colleagues and disciples,” said Professor Ramzi Baalbaki, a former long-time chair of the Arabic Department and colleague of Makarem’s. “He would always treat his colleagues and mentees with a rare kind of warmth and was always ready to help and offer advice.”

Professor Makarem is also a member of the Board of Regents of the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Peace, secretary general of the Druze Council for Research and Development, and head of the Department of Scientific Studies

and Researches at the Druze Heritage Foundation. He has received many awards and honors during his career. He is an honorary citizen of Houston in the United States of America and holder of the Key of the City, the holder of the Medal of the Arabic Historian, the holder of the Shield of Lions Club – Lebanon, the holder of the Shield of the Association of Social Movement, - Union of Arab Historians, the holder of the Shield of the Ministry of Culture – Lebanon, the Holder of the Shield of Antelias Cultural Movement.

Sami Makarem is survived by his wife, Leila Adel Makarem, his two daughters, Sahar and Rand, and two sons, Nassib and Samir.

A funeral service will be held at 1 pm on Thursday August 23 in Aitat.

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Note to Editors

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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 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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 420-bed hospital.

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