

**Message to
Participants in the
Second Arab-European Conference for Higher Education
From
Yarmouk Private University
Damascus, Syria**

Greetings,

As of a few days ago, we at Yarmouk Private University had in place plans to participate in the second Arab-European Conference on Higher Education as an active member in its deliberations and recommendations. Unfortunately, for logistics reasons and travel restrictions beyond our control, we have had to cancel our plan.

This has been a great disappointment; the present crisis in Syria and the actions and restrictions placed on the Syrian people are resulting in a great deal of suffering. These steps have had negative effects and setbacks on all levels of education, especially in prospects for post-graduate studies for our university graduates and chances of faculty and program exchange and cooperation between Syrian and other universities.

It is this higher education concern that has prompted me, as Vice President of Yarmouk Private University in charge of foreign relations and cooperation, to send this appeal to the conferees.

During the past three years, Yarmouk Private University administration and faculty have successfully made serious efforts to carry on our academic program as we had done before. The present crisis, however, has had negative effects on our graduates' aspirations to continue their post-graduate studies abroad as well as on our academic cooperation and exchange programs with foreign universities.

Our students have very admirably persisted throughout the past three years to pursue their education by attending classes and performing their research and projects, not allowing the crisis to diminish the level of their education and their enthusiasm. The restrictions imposed on Syria have resulted in punishing them rather than rewarding their heroic efforts.

The 'Objectives' of the conference, as clearly stated in the 'Overview' document, states that "this event is addressed to University leaders and its focus will be promoting, within the joint AARU and EUA framework, a sustainable process of dialogue, mutual understanding, exchange of knowledge and increased cooperation between Arab and European universities."

It also provides for a "permanent framework of dialogue and for establishing a work programme which will allow us to broaden and deepen the cooperation between our institutions and, therefore, between our peoples."

Yarmouk Private University shares your noble educational ideals and goals, as, I am sure, you share our concern for the future education of generations of Syrian students and graduates. We all believe in the basic human right to quality education on all levels and in all fields of knowledge. We all have the sacred duty to provide young people with the chances they deserve to pursue their education and fulfill their hopes for a better future. We can do this by enhancing university exchange and cooperation in all academic fields, by facilitating the process of admission to post-graduate fields to deserving students, and by easing requirements for tuitions and scholarships for outstanding graduates, regardless of political restrictions. These are some of the basic principles and goals of your conference.

Yarmouk Private University in Syria stands ready to extend the hand of cooperation to all, hoping that this appeal will be the catalyst for efforts to avoid depriving a good number of university graduates of chances to pursue their dreams of a better future. We stand ready to reciprocate in agreements of cooperation with other universities in shared academic programs.

I wish you all a successful conference.

Fuad Shaban

Vice President
Yarmouk Private University
Damascus, Syria.
'A mind is a terrible thing to waste'