

Good evening... I'd like to welcome you here tonight on behalf of the Lebanese Club at MIT.

We have a marvelous night ahead of us that promises its due share of talent, of beauty, and of what our artists have interestingly coined as sonic dialogue.

However, I will not have the honor of introducing our dear guests tonight, and that's for two very good reasons, I believe. The first is that I'm notoriously ungifted musically; it's not even funny, and most of my closer friends here tonight would strongly agree. So I'm certain I wouldn't be the best person to do this and will opt to spare you. And the second, more important reason is that I would love to make the most of this opportunity and invite a special colleague of mine who I've been very excited about introducing to you.

Before that, I would like to reflect back on what was truly a marathon-long weekend of excellence this week in Boston. It began with the Arab Student Organization's widely celebrated Science & Technology Achievement Awards Banquet, which has become a legacy event at the Institute, already in its 4th installment, and invaluable to promoting achievements of the Arab community in the US. There, I was impressed to meet and listen first-hand to the woman leaders of MIT, President Susan Hockfield, of the ASO, President Mariam Kandil, and to the recipients of this year's Lifetime Achievement Award and Young Professional Award, Dr. Huda Zoghby and Dr. Hayat Sindi.

Sharing in this pattern, I am very proud to introduce you today to the next President of the Lebanese Club at MIT, Miss Zeina Saab. Zeina is a Masters Candidate in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. And she is among the most energetic, passionate, and kindhearted individuals I've been privileged to meet in recent years. I have no doubt that she and the new board have all it takes to advance the LCM to the next level as it crosses to the forefront of student programming. Alongside Zeina will be a fresh board of dedicated officers, Rami Rahal, Joe Khoury, Dana Najjar, and Georges Aoude, all of whom deserve a loud round of applause from all of us.

Although you must be accustomed by now to the tons of pleas, requests, pitches, demands, petitions, calls for action, etc. which we used to exhaust you with during the *Justice for Lebanon* rallies in the summer and previous *Boston to Lebanon* fundraisers, I have only one, very simple plea tonight. My only plea to you this evening is to welcome Zeina and the new board with the same spirit of generosity, support, and appreciation you have so kindly and so consistently displayed to this and to past boards of the LCM.

For, if we have achieved anything in the past, it was for and because of you.

If Rami and Kinan are with us tonight, it is for and because of you.

And if we aspire to accomplish more, much more hopefully, in the future... we will know with all confidence that we can get there... because of you.

So thank you. Really, this evening would not be complete without extending our sincerest gratitude to you all for being here now, in the past, and hopefully in a future for the LCM in which wonderful gatherings like this are sustained and transcended.

Before I leave the floor to Zeina, I would also like to thank Mrs. Naila Jirmanus for her heartfelt contributions to this event and to the community at large, and I want to wish you all a spectacular evening of beauty and dialogue between Rami and Kinan.

Now please join me in giving Zeina a very warm welcoming...

Loai Naamani