

Masaa Al-Kheir, Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, members of the board, BES staff, students, friends, and a special greeting to the BES graduates of 2019 – well done!

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Lujane Benamer and I am a graduate of the BES. I graduated from the school ten years ago when I obtained my A-levels. Thereafter, I returned to my maternal home, Ireland, where I went on to complete my undergraduate studies in law and French, and a Master's degree in international and comparative law.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to be in my beloved hometown of Benghazi this evening to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the BES, an institution that holds a special place in my heart and in the heart of so many other past pupils and staff. Many of us would not have realized our full potential or achieved success without the backing of such an institution.

When it comes to BES success stories there are so many. Over the years we have witnessed BES graduates complete their third level education in prestigious universities across the world, obtaining qualifications in engineering, medicine, law, international relations, IT, the arts, communications and the list goes on. The achievements of these students bears testament to the high caliber of teaching, standard of excellence, honesty and transparency that the BES has delivered on a consistent basis since its inception. As a BES graduate, I can confirm that the quality of education I received put me at a distinct advantage when I started university, particularly with respect to my English and French skills. Other past pupils who left the BES to continue their secondary school studies in other schools elsewhere, have told me that one would be hard-pressed to find teachers who deliver such quality, focused tuition.

The unswerving, unparalleled dedication of BES staff is the reason we are where we are today and on behalf of the BES Alumni I would like to seize this opportunity to thank: Mrs. Josette Hudanah, Mr. Anthony McQuiggan who is sadly missed, Mrs. Liz McQuiggan, Mr. Walid Kombargi, Mrs. Gina Benamer, Mrs. Mairead Sammat, Mrs. Marie-Joe Naas, Mrs. Martine Al-Sherif, Dr Faraj El Rashdi, Mrs. Dorothee Al-Arnauti, Mrs Safaa El Sheriff, Mr. Mailud Al-Orfi, Mrs. Hawa Al-Orfi, Dr. X Khalaf, Dr. X Al-Kabir, Dr Alok, Mrs. Joyce Al-Araibi, Mr. Jamal Kombargi, Mr. Keith Rodgers, Mrs. Sue Rodgers, Mrs. Liz Schmid, Mrs. Heather Collins, Mr Kostas, Mr. Martin X, Mr Angelou, Mr. Chris Pedell, Mrs. Ibtissam Zobi, Mr Mrs. Mary Igradiboo, Mrs. Lamaan Tatanaki Forgive me if I have left anyone out.

A special thanks to Mr. Walid who told me off every time I told him I couldn't do maths. He'll be happy to know that last week I was tasked with doing a fraction and I managed to pull it off without using Google. Mr Walid joined the BES the same day I started secondary school and has been working persistently in developing and maintaining the high standards of the maths programme and of the schools entire curriculum and I would like to congratulate on him this accomplishment.

Now I would like to turn to Mr. George Sayannos or Mr. George as he is referred to by the students. Without his enthusiasm, dedication and never taking no for an answer, the existence and preservation of the school, and indeed today's celebration, would not be possible. Mr. George takes a personal interest in both former and current BES students and gets excited about their development and achievements as if they were his own children.

His energy and positive spirit simply knows no bounds, demonstrated by, among other things, the unique school trips he pulled off both in Libya and abroad. He has managed to arrange excursions to Jalo, Owjala, Ghadames, Sebha and Gabraown, Istanbul, Skiing in Erzurum and most recently Greece. Believe me when I tell you that the meticulous planning that these trips involve is laborious to say the least - "sadgooni wa3r wajd", particularly in light of the current circumstances in Libya. Mr. George is owed a great debt of gratitude by everyone who has benefitted from the BES over the years.

Collectively, Mr. George, members of the board and BES staff recognize the value of BES students, both past and present, and what they can contribute and pay forward to the BES; the community; to Libya; and the world. And that is what brings me here today: the establishment of the BES Alumni Association, a project envisaged not only by Mr. George, but other Board Members and students for a very long time now.

Primarily, the Alumni Association is a means by which we can ensure that former students and faculty remain connected. It will further allow us :

1. To utilize the rich experiences of former students of the school for the benefit and progress of the present students;
2. To provide guidance to Alumni in their endeavour for better employment and higher studies;
3. To encourage, foster and promote close relations among the Alumni themselves and among the community of a city that has experienced so much hardship: Benghazi;
4. To promote a sustained sense of belonging to the former students among the Alumni by being in regular contact with them;
5. To provide a forum for the Alumni to exchange ideas on academic, cultural, political and social issues of the day;
6. To organize and coordinate reunion activities of the Alumni;
7. To involve the Alumni members in the overall development of the school.

A committee, which includes, Sarah Al-Sherif, Nuran Ragrag, Soliman El-Rayes and I will steer this project until such time as we are ready to host elections.

The survival of this school is of the utmost importance because it provides a glimmer of hope during these difficult times in Libya.

I will end on a special note about Mrs. Liz McQuiggan, who is a much-loved teacher at the BES. When Mrs. Liz joined the BES 15 years ago, I was in year 9 and from day one we knew that we had someone special! She unveiled the literary world to us, exposing us to, and educating us on, some of the most important pieces of English literature.

Mrs. Liz was also instrumental in introducing the IGCSE and A-level programmes at the BES, which have formed the basis for so many positive results among our student body. I cannot mention Mrs. Liz without mentioning, Mr. Anthony McQuiggan, who sadly passed away. Together they formed the ultimate power couple, using their wealth of experience in education to develop the school. I would like to welcome Mrs. Liz to the podium to receive an award from the Board of Directors and the Alumni Association.

