

## ***WLCU Signs an MoU and Acknowledges NDU and LERC***

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Reported by Elie Nabhan

The World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) and the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) have been cooperating together over the last two years to document the history of the WLCU since its inception.

This effort has led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Notre Dame University and the WLCU, on the highest level of both institutions, as represented by the President of NDU, Fr. Walid Moussa, and World President of the WLCU, Mr. Eid Chedrawi.

The WLCU requested institutionalization of this relationship, as well as acknowledging NDU's vision which led to the establishment of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center.

The WLCU also wanted to present LERC and its nucleus museum with a replica of the Lebanese Migrant Statue and to present the NDU President and LERC the 50th Anniversary Commemorative Medal in appreciation for their endeavors related to Lebanese migration.

In the same spirit the WLCU wanted to congratulate LERC Director Ms. Guita Hourani for her vision, intellectual drive and relentless energy.

Following the national anthem at the signing ceremony, LERC's Director, Ms. Guita Hourani, welcomed the attendees and spoke about the history of the WLCU's relation with the Center. She expressed appreciation to WLCU former Secretary General Georges Abi Raad and current World Secretary General Dr. Nick Kahwaji for initiating this relationship. She also gave a brief overview of what LERC has accomplished in the last seven years of its existence.

The Memorandum of Understanding was then signed by Mr. Chedrawi and Fr. Walid Moussa. Mr. Chedrawi then expressed his joy in being at NDU, a feeling he said that was shared by all present. He recognized NDU as the first university to have established an academic center to study the Lebanese migration. He believed that the MoU signed by the two institutions would help achieve their common objectives to benefit the diaspora.



Pen to paper: Fr. W. Moussa (left) signing the MoU with Mr. E. Chedrawi (Aug 2010).

The presentation of the commemorating medals limited edition celebrating the WLCU's 50th anniversary from the WLCU to NDU and LERC recognized the efforts of the University and the Center on the theme of Lebanese migration.

World President Mr. Chedrawi first presented a medal to Fr. Moussa in recognition of his efforts and then presented one for LERC in recognition for its achievements.



WLCU Medals presented to Fr. W. Moussa and to LERC (Aug 2010).

Dr. Kahwaji then presented Director Hourani with a commemorative medal in appreciation of all her efforts.

Dr. Kahwaji, in his address pointed out that although people may come and go institutions last; however great institutions require dedicated people carrying a vision. Guita Hourani is one of these dedicated people; her vision is what has carried LERC so far from the initial idea to what it is about today, a well-known center with archives, library, and museum.

Mr. Antoine Ghanem, the WLCU President of the Committee for Culture and Heritage also wanted to acknowledge Ms. Hourani for her dedication and achievements by presenting her with a commemorative bust of Gibran Khalil Gibran.



At the exchange of awards: (from left-right) Dr. N. Kahwaji, Mr. A. Ghanem and Ms. G. Hourani (Aug 2010).

In turn, NDU President, Fr. W. Moussa thanked the WLCU stating that he believed that universities needed to interact with their environments and societies, and that they could not survive without this interaction. He also said that universities are in the service of the community and that NDU endeavored to fulfill this duty. He also stressed the value of LERC and said that LERC alone could not achieve all its objectives without the necessary support. Servicing Lebanese in the world and their communities, culture and heritage were projects that should bring the two institutions together. Ms. Hourani, he said, had many ideas and projects that require support. She had been undeterred by the enormity of the task, and for this the President hoped that with NDU/LERC working in Lebanon and the WLCU working in the world, much could be achieved together.



Unveiling the Lebanese migrant statue at the Lebanon and Migration Museum at NDU (Aug 2010).

Then the attendees moved to unveil a miniature replica of the Lebanese migrant statue which commemorates and symbolizes the Lebanese migration. The original life-size statue was unveiled at the entrance of the Port of Beirut in November 2003; at Vera Cruz, Mexico, December 2007; in Chihuahua, Mexico, November 2009, in Brisbane, Australia, February 2010, and in Montreal, Canada, June 2010.

Following the formalities, the group visited the Lebanon and Migration Museum.



With the commemorative statue: (from left-right) Mr. A. Nehme, Mr. R. Khatlab, Dr. N. Kahwaji, Ms. B. Abdel Khalek, Mr. E. Nabhan, Ms. G. Hourani, Mr. E. Sfeir, Mrs. L. Haddad, Mr. J. Keyel, Dr. S. Karam (Aug 2010).

Those present at the event had attended the World Council meeting in Lebanon of the WLCU delegates coming from Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, South Africa, the United States, and Latin America.

A cocktail celebrating the event brought proceedings to a close.



Members of the WLCU, distinguished guests and members of LERC pose for a souvenir photo (Aug 2010).