

LERC Representatives Attend Nigeria's 52nd Independence Day Celebrations

Tuesday 2nd October 2012, Phoenicia Hotel, Beirut

Reported by Elie Nabhan

Representatives of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) attended Nigeria's 52nd Day Independence celebrations at a sumptuous cocktail reception in Beirut's prestigious Phoenicia Hotel. Representing the LERC at the event were Director of the LERC, Ms. Guita Hourani, LERC Research Affiliate, Ms. Marie Jose Tayah of Kent University in the United States of America, and former LERC rapporteur and editor, Mr. Elie Nabhan. Dr. Edward Alam, Director of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy at NDU, and Dr. Youssef Rahme, Director of the Cedars Institute in Lebanon, also attended the event.

Nigeria's ambassador to Lebanon, H. E. Amos Idowu, and his wife, Mrs. Florence Idowu, along with other senior staff members of the Nigerian Embassy in Beirut, welcomed the distinguished guests and personalities who arrived to join in the commemoration. These included: M. P. Mr. Ali Bazzi, representing the Lebanese Republic, Government, and Parliament; H. E. Zein el-Moussawi, the representative of Lebanon's Foreign Minister, and H. E. Monsignor Gabriella Da Caccia, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps. Also present at the event were prominent heads of diplomatic and consular missions, and international organizations accredited to Lebanon.



Cutting of the Independence cake: (from left) Mr. M. Saleh, Mr. G. Nabhan, Mr. I. Moukarem, Mr. W. Zard Abou Jaoudeh, Mrs. F. Idowu, Mr. A. Bazzi., H. E. A. Idowu, H.E. Z. el-Moussawi, a member of the Lebanese armed forces,, and Mr. M. Hamza.

Representing the Lebanese-Nigerian Friendship Association (LENIFRA), of which the LERC was the first academic partner, was its Chairman, Honorable Mr. William Zard Abou Jaoudeh, as well as two members of the LENIFRA's Board of Trustees:

Mr. George Nabhan, and Mr. Mounir Hamza.. Mr. Nabhan, former Chairman of the LENIFRA, and Mr. Hani Saffieddine, were honored to associate themselves with the Nigerian Embassy staff by adorning themselves with a green scarf as a symbol of solidarity.

As drinks circulated and friends sought out familiar faces, and as photos were being snapped and the buffet readied, Ambassador Idowu, rose to the platform and calmed the genuine conviviality, which only a true Nigerian-Lebanese occasion can create.

Flanked by M. P. Mr. Ali Bazzi and H. E. Zein el-Moussawi, Ambassador Idowu paid tribute to Nigeria's rise from an agricultural and somewhat agrarian society to a vibrant commercial and industrial powerhouse, which he emphasized was on the path "to join the league of countries with the most developed economies by the year 2020."



From right: Dr. E. Alam, Ms. M-J. Tayah, Mr. E. Nabhan, H. E. Ambassador Idowu, Dr. Y. Rahme, Mrs. F. Idowu, Director G. Hourani, and members of the embassy staff

Stressing the importance of "unity", "socio-economic development", and "abundant human and material resources", Ambassador Idowu reiterated what he said last year, that Nigeria is ready to welcome nations and their "potential investors to take advantage of opportunities inherent in our high yielding sectors."

His Excellency mentioned the "people-to-people" relations between the Lebanese and Nigeria, whose first contact, he said, came at the tail end of the nineteenth century. These historic commercial and cultural ties, he emphasized, had "blossomed". He acknowledged the "friendship, support and cooperation of many Lebanese agencies, organizations, companies, and individuals," which have helped in easing his "diplomatic mandate" while in Lebanon. The LENIFRA was amongst the names he mentioned.

In conclusion, Ambassador Idowu took the opportunity to highlight Nigeria's commitment to international security and its ongoing pursuit of peace.