

LERC Honors South African Mr. Ken Hanna with “Acknowledgment Award”

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The Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) honored on May 21, 2014, Mr. Ken Hanna (born Khalil Hanna Chehadeh Kayrouz) from Becharri, a third generation South African of Lebanese descent. He was selected for the award, because he documented, wrote, and published the 40-year history of the Lebanese community in South Africa.

Mr. Hanna held the position of Honorary Editor of the *Cedar Leaf*, a news publication, serving the Lebanese community of South Africa for four decades. He was the first Chairperson of the Maronite Action Committee. He has represented the Lebanese community of South Africa at two World Congresses of the World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) and was elected President of the WLCU Johannesburg Chapter in 2003.



Mr. Hanna, Dr. Hourani and Dr. Geodeon at LERC, (May 21, 2014)

The publishing of a book titled, *People of the Cedars*, culminated his work of forty years. The book focuses on the Lebanese who came to South Africa at the end of the 19th century, and

follows the journey of their children and grandchildren who built their lives and future in South Africa.



Dr. Guita Hourani, LERC Director, and Dr. Pierre Gedeon, Director of the International Relations Office at NDU, presented on behalf of the University the Acknowledgment Award to Mr. Hanna. In attendance at the award presentation were: Mr. Pierre Karam, former Lebanese Honorary Consul in South Africa; Mrs. Jeana Karam; Ms. Jasmin Diab, LERC staff; Ms. Talar Demerjian; and Ms. Fracisca Ankrah and Ms. Rajwane Kafrouni, LERC interns.

In her welcome speech, Dr. Hourani began stated that she and Mr. Hanna went back a long way, starting from the days when she was the Chairperson of the Maronite Research Institute (MARI) in the U.S.A. and continued right through her visit to South Africa to meet the Lebanese community in 1997 and in 1998 in the same capacity. She said that Mr. Hanna deserved this recognition because without his work, the history of the community would have been lost forever.

Mr. Hanna who was overcome by emotions said, “I did not at all expect this honor when Guita invited me to visit the Center on this short trip to Lebanon to reacquire my Lebanese citizenship. It is a tremendous honor and pleasure for me to receive this award. I think this acknowledgment is not for me, I dedicate it to the Lebanese community in South Africa who was the subject and the reason of my labor of love.”

Mr. Hanna mentioned that he was working on a second book titled, *People of the Cedars and the Tribes of Africa*.

For his part, Mr. Karam said, “I endorse every effort that Ken has made. During my service as Honorary Consul, Ken dedicated his time and effort to the Lebanese community. He wrote about everyone and everything, covering events and activities, and the veneration of individuals, be they old or young. He wrote about Lebanese tradition and culture to introduce them to the youth of the community.”

Mr. Karam added, “Every Lebanese family was recorded in the *Cedar Leaf* in one way or the other, and we are all very proud of Ken and what he has achieved.”

The award ceremony ended by toasting the occasion and by reminiscing about Ken’s valuable contribution. As she bid Mr. Hanna farewell, Dr. Hourani said, “Today’s acknowledgement is but a token of our appreciation and gratitude for all that you have done for the Lebanese community and the Lebanese tradition.”