

LERC'S Director Designated Country of Origin Information Expert (COI) for the Fahamu Refugee Programme

January 10, 2014
LERC Staff

Dr. Guita Hourani, Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU), has accepted to be the designated Country of Origin Information Expert for Lebanon with The Fahamu Refugee Programme (FRP) in Oxford, England.

The COI expert “acts as an information source to provide ‘objective’ information on the conditions that lead a refugee to flee his/her country.”

As a Country of Origin expert for Lebanon, the FRP has listed Dr. Hourani’s qualifications and contact information on its website to allow asylum seekers and lawyers handling asylum cases to contact her to seek her assistance in verifying country information or constructing a country conditions declaration. When contacted, Dr. Hourani’s task will be to review the case and render any assistance she deems appropriate.

Country of Origin Information experts are people who “have achieved the years of academic and practical experience about a particular country that qualifies their COI information to provide supporting objective evidence on a claim for refugee status.” The COI experts of the FRP have agreed to work pro bono on a confidential basis for Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) which do not charge refugees for legal services.

The FRP was created to promote the legal protection of refugees, globally. The Programme provides access knowledge, nurture the growing refugee legal aid and advocacy movement in all countries, as well as encourage active sharing of information and expertise among legal practitioners throughout the world. The FRP provides COI experts for various countries for those in need of legal resources regarding asylum cases.

The Programme is currently directed by Dr. Barbara Harrell-Bond, who is internationally recognized for her expertise in the field of refugee rights protection. Dr. Bond is a legal anthropologist who in 1982 co-founded the Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at Oxford University and directed the Centre until 1996.

For years, Dr. Hourani provided expert opinion to various governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as individuals on issues related to citizenship, refugee, and migration issues. She is looking forward to serve as the FRP’s COI for Lebanon and to provide the expertise needed.