

**LERC Director Dr. Hourani Lectures on the Maronites of Cyprus in Nicosia
December 1, 2013
LERC Staff**

At the suggestion of Honorable Mr. Antonis Haji Roussos, Maronite Representative of the Cypriot Parliament, Dr. Gabriel Kalakoutis, President of the Association of Maronite-Cypriot University Graduates, invited on November 28, 2013, Dr. Guita Hourani, Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) and a prominent Researcher on the Maronites of Cyprus, to give a lecture on the history of the community at the Kasteliotissa Room in Nicosia, Cyprus.

Dr. Kalakoutis delivered the welcome speech, followed by the screening of a short film in honor of the former President of Cyprus the late Glafkos Klerides. After the screening, a one-minute silence was observed in memory of Klerides, who was supportive of the Maronites of Cyprus. His Excellency the Maronite Bishop of Cyprus Youssef Soueif and the Honorable Mr. Roussos each then delivered a speech.



Dr. Hourani presenting her lecture on the Maronites of Cyprus in Nicosia,, Cyprus (November 2013).

The focus of Dr. Hourani's lecture was on the history of the Maronites in Cyprus in general and their account during the Ottoman rule in particular. Dr. Hourani emphasized that "although the survival of the Maronites of Cyprus and that of other ethnic or religious groups rested in all probability on the 'fluidity of identity' under radical changes in political circumstances, this

fluidity was not sufficient for the continuity of all the settlements of the Maronites on the island, as many of the villages became only a memory of what was once were.”

She concluded, “Despite the unbearable burdens, the persecution and the calamities that befell the people of the Island and particularly the Maronites, the latter persisted in their faith and maintained their culture and their fundamental believe in conviviality.”

Dr. Hourani’s lecture was followed by a presentation by Ms. Maria Scordi, a Cypriot-Maronite Art Historian from the village of Kormakitis, who spoke about the icons that belonged to the various Maronite villages in Cyprus and that are currently conserved at the Maronite Bishopric in Nicosia.

The event was attended by His Excellency Guido Cerboni, the Ambassador of Italy, and his wife; MP Mr. Antonis Haji Roussos and his wife; His Excellency Bishop of Cyprus Youssef Soueif; Monsignor Ioannis Orphanou the Vicar General of the Maronites of Cyprus; Father Judge Salim Sfeir of Lebanon; monks from the Lebanese Maronite Order; Nuns from the Maronite Antonine Order; Dr. Gabriel Kalakoutis; Dr. Nicholas Coureas of the Cyprus Research Centre at the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture; Dr. Stefanos Spaneas of the University of Nicosia; Ms. Marina Elia of the European University in Cyprus; Mrs. Filou Kirmizi, who represented the community in the Maronite Patriarchal Synod (2003-2006); prominent Maronite singer of Cyprus, Mr. Tony Solomou; many other local personalities; and more than one 100 members of the Maronite Cypriot community.



Attendees at the lecture of Dr. Hourani and Ms. Maria Scordi in Nicosia, Cyprus (November 2013)

The Honorable Mr. Roussos invited Dr. Hourani to visit his village Kormakitis, the largest Maronite village in Northern Cyprus which has been under Turkish occupation since 1974. In the village, Dr. Hourani visited the newly founded Kormakitis Folkloric Museum and the Ecclesiastic Museum of Saint Georges Church. She also benefited from being at the village to visit the old and new symmetries as part of her research work on the community. She also took the opportunity to converse with some of the Maronites who live in the village under Turkish rule.

Dr. Hourani was sought out by Dr. Coureas, Ms. Elia, Ms. Scordi and Ms. Antounetta Katsioloudi, Coordinator of the Kormakitis Trust and the driving force behind the Kormakitis Folkloric Museum, to discuss further cooperation. She was also asked by Honorable Haji Roussos to meet with some of the active youth of the community to talk about issues of identity with them. The meeting concluded with some suggestions for future research and activities.

As the guest of Honorable Haji Roussos, Dr. Hourani participated in the Sunday Mass and attended the Christmas Bazaar at Saint Charbel's Maronite Church in Limassol which has both a Cypriot and Lebanese Maronite parishioners.

Dr. Hourani's work on the Maronite community of Cyprus continues with her new research on the identity of the Maronite youth which will be in cooperation with Honorable Antonis Haji Roussos and the various researchers and associations of the community.