

LERC Director Dr. Hourani Presents a Paper in Japan on the Survival of the Kurds of Lebanon

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Dr. Hourani Presenting her Paper in Japan on the Survival of the Kurds of Lebanon at TUFS (Tokyo, 2017)

Director of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) and Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law and Political Science (FLPS), Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU), Dr. Guita Hourani participated, in the capacity of Joint Researcher, in the second meeting of the group of Japanese and Lebanese scholars working on the minorities in the Middle East under the leadership of Dr. Yohei Kondo of the Japan Center for Middle Eastern Studies (JaCMS) in

Beirut and Professor Hidemitsu Kuroki of the Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS).

The research project on religious and politico-social minority groups in Middle Eastern societies encompasses groups, such as the Christians, the Yazidis, the Kurds, and the Syrian refugees that have faced or are facing threats to their existence, especially as a consequence of the challenges plaguing the nation-states to which they belong. The project investigates the questions of diversity, co-existence, and survival strategies of these groups.

Dr. Hourani's presentation dealt with the pre- and post-naturalization survival strategies of the Kurds of Lebanon. She theorizes that the Kurds of Lebanon, like minorities everywhere, have their own 'contextual reasoning' for survival, and as such they draw and re-draw their boundaries and coping tactics pertaining to their cultural, economic, and political survival and development.

She contends that because the Kurdish group in Lebanon has been characterized by a high degree of factionalism and because they are bound by their co-religionist to assimilate into the Sunni majority, they will continue to have client-patron relationship with the main leaders of the latter.

She posits that due to the success of the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) in the Syrian war, the Kurds of Lebanon experienced an increase in their self-concept that, depending on what will perspire in regard to the Kurds in Syria, they might be able to gain some leverage among their co-religionists in Lebanon if a strong leadership emerges in Syria and if a Kurdish region is given autonomy.

Other participants in the meeting included Dr. Yohei Kondo who gave a summary of the project, Dr. Tatsuya Kikuchi who spoke on the surviving strategies of the Druze, Dr. Asuka Tsuji who presented on the surviving strategies of the Copts of Egypt, Dr. Hiroki Wakamatsu who discussed the surviving strategies of Alevi in Turkey, Dr. Antranik Dakessian who spoke about the surviving strategies of the Armenians of Lebanon, Dr. Ray J. Mouawad who talked about the surviving strategies of religious groups in Tripoli, and Dr. Souad Slim who presented on the surviving strategies of the Orthodox Christians in Lebanon.

The third meeting is scheduled to take place in September 2017 in Lebanon.