

Lebanese from the Dominican Republic, Mr. Elvis Alam and wife visit LERC and donate vast collection of materials

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Reported by Elie Nabhan

Mr. Elvis Louis Alam, a Civil Engineer by trade and owner of the Alamco company in the Dominican Republic, paid a visit to the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, accompanied by his wife, Mrs. Hala Hraiz de Alam.

Mr. Alam is a third-generation Dominican of Lebanese descent. His grandfather Tarios Alam emigrated to the Dominican Republic from the village of Bsarma, in Koura, Northern Lebanon, on the 12th July, 1898 with his wife Arze Rizk Alam.

Vice-President of the Club Libanese Santo Domingo, Mr. Alam has long nurtured a love of all things Lebanese and has worked studiously to collect documents about the Lebanese in the Dominican Republic. His main research has been with the Dominican Republic's Archivo General de la Nacion, where he sifted through mountains of names to digitally photograph original documents including entry permits, residence permits and their renewal forms, as well as re-entry visas for Lebanese who have chosen to retain their Lebanese nationality.



Mrs. H. Hraiz de Alam (right) and Mr. Elvis Louis Alam with Mrs. L. Haddad at the LEAD offices (May 2011).

Mr. Alam intended to come to LERC to donate copies of his on-going collection. Among the materials he donated are photographed documents concerning the Jabbour family,

known in the Republic as the Yapor family, articles and references about Mr. Antonio Zaglul from the renowned Zaglul family, digital photographs of the magazine, *Libanesa: Revista Dominica Libanesa*, from the first issue in 1943 to the last in 1967. The magazine covers all aspects of Lebanese life in Santo Domingo such as business, social and cultural events, births, marriages, deaths etc.



Libanesa: Revista Dominica Libanesa, 20 July 1943, No.1

Mr. Alam has on his own initiative found and documented the names of all the non-naturalized Lebanese families in the Dominican Republic, including details such as origins and archive numbers. His aim is to collect enough material to author a book.

After paying his first visit to Lebanon in 1997, he started regularly visiting the country, arriving on a yearly basis between 2004 till the present date. On his yearly visits he usually persuades Lebanese from the Republic's capital, Santo Domingo, to accompany him and discover the beauty of the land, while putting them in contact with their original villages and family members in the home country.

In this way, he has been responsible for bringing together such families as the Jarjura, Moussa, Farfoud, Abu Haroun, Choueiri and Merheb by connecting the Dominican members to their relatives in Lebanon. Other recognized families such as the Doumits, Alams, Naser, Abou Rahal, Keirouz have accompanied him on his trips to Lebanon.

Mr. Alam is a close friend of Mr. Michel Edde, and is also a member of the Maronite Foundation in the World, whose mission is to assist Lebanese Christian emigrants and their descendents in re-acquiring their Lebanese citizenship.

Mr. Alam was accompanied by his Lebanese wife Ms. Hala, who originates from Zahle, and who, although relatively new to the country, having emigrated in 2007, has started her own business. She is the Operations Manager of Hala Import-Export that imports Lebanese products, such as juice and wines, to the country. Also a member of the Centro Cultural Libanese, she assists the community by teaching those who wish to learn colloquial Lebanese.

After being given a presentation of all the materials LERC collects in its electronic archives, the couple were then taken on a tour of the Lebanese Migration Museum at NDU. They saw first-hand how LERC preserves its material, and how digital copies are made in case an item is too valuable or too rare to be displayed.

Visibly impressed, both the Alams then met with LERC Director Ms. Guita Hourani, when matters pertaining to institutionalizing cooperation were covered. Following an hour of so of discussion, Director Hourani designated Mr. Alam as LERC's Liaison Officer for the Dominican Republic. Mr. Alam said that being associated with LERC was what he had wished for ever since he knew about the Center. Upon leaving he commended LERC for the wonderful job it was doing for Lebanon's future, urging the Center to continue its fine work.