

## **LERC Representatives Attend the WLCU Annual Dinner**

August 16, 2012, LERC, NDU

Reported by Maritta Sislian, LERC Staff

The World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) held its annual dinner at Le Royal Hotel, Dbayeh, on August 3, 2012, in the presence of notable figures and Bishop Edgard Madi, representing the Maronite Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros al-Rai. Staff members of the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU) were invited to attend the event. Ms. Guita Hourani, Director of the LERC, Ms. Maritta Sislian, and Ms. Victoria Huerta represented the LERC.

Following the national anthem, the Secretary-General of the WLCU, Mr. Toni Kaddissi, welcomed everyone to the event and extended a sincere salutation to the Lebanese Army on behalf of the diaspora. In his address, Mr. Kaddissi implored the Lebanese government to implement a mechanism that helps the diaspora feel that they are an irreplaceable core of this country's social, political, and cultural life.



*Members of the WLCU and Maronite Foundation (August 2012)*

For his part, Mr. Salim Sfeir, the General Manager of Bank of Beirut, praised the event and expressed his heartfelt appreciation to the WLCU for honoring the Maronite Foundation. He stressed on the importance of this foundation, which has facilitated communication and bonds between the Lebanese living abroad. Mr. Sfeir emphasized that Bank of Beirut is committed to serve as a bridge between Lebanon and its diaspora.

Bishop Edgard Madi delivered his speech on behalf of Patriarch Al-Rai who described the event as an older brother honoring a younger one. Bishop Madi also stressed on the importance of the automatic right of Lebanese living abroad to possess the Lebanese citizenship, which would enhance their national sense of belonging.



*From left: Ms. Victoria Huerta, Ms. Guita Hourani and Ms. Maritta Sislian*

Mr. Michel Douaihy, President of the WLCU, expressed his personal convictions that fall in line with those of the WLCU that Lebanon should always remain a uniquely pluralistic country of unity and culture.

Mr. Douaihy also honored the Maronite Foundation, which was represented by Mr. Nehme Aphram. Mr. Aphram in turn thanked the WLCU for organizing the event on behalf of Minister Michel Eddé, the President of the Maronite Foundation. Mr. Aphram discussed the important role of Lebanese expatriates and their right to citizenship. He concluded his speech with a list of “commandments” aimed at the Lebanese diaspora:

1. Receive your education in Lebanon before thinking of emigrating; this way, you will consolidate your attachment to your country’s cultural values and its plurality.
2. Visit houses of worship abroad to quench to your spiritual thirst and to remember your origins.

3. Respect the laws of the countries in which you reside and participate in its social life, and deliver a positive and authentic picture of Lebanon and not a distorted one.
4. Do not enter into contest with fellow Lebanese; instead, integrate and cooperate to support Lebanon politically and economically, acting as a positive pressure group.
5. Marry a man/woman from your homeland and register your marriage and children in Lebanon.
6. Recount your memories about living in Lebanon to your children. To help your children preserve their Lebanese identity, teach them about our history, our rich culture, and our mother language.
7. When your children grow up, visit Lebanon with them and let them integrate with the Lebanese of their own age.
8. When your children become university students, encourage them to choose exchange programs with Lebanese universities.
9. When you attain success, buy property in your village and repair your old houses, contribute toward developing your village, and invest in its productive sector.
10. When retired, choose Lebanon in which to spend the rest of your life and ask to be buried in its soil.