

LERC Attends LCPS Conference on “Decentralization for Development”

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Dozens of persons on Wednesday, July 16, 2014, dropped their projects and gathered at Hotel Monroe, Beirut, to take part in an enriching conference titled, “*Decentralization for Development*,” which the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) organized. The conference assessed the status of Decentralization in Lebanon from both a legal and practical perspective. Ms. Jasmin Lilian Diab and Mr. David Nassar both represented the Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU).

Mr. Sami Atallah, LCPS Executive Director, launched the event with a welcome speech. Mr. Atallah presented the all major developments from December 2011, which marked the beginning of the LCPS initiative on the subject of decentralization, until today. He brainstormed with the audience on both the subject and the aim of the gathering, which concentrated on decentralization at two levels: The Municipality and the Qada'a (Caza).



(from left) Mr. David Nassar (LERC Intern), H.E. former Ministry of Interior Mr. Ziad Baroud, and Ms. Jasmin Lilian Diab (LERC Research Assistant and Assistant Project Manager). [July 2014]

Regarding municipalities, which is the only form of decentralization in Lebanon, Mr. Atallah noted their lack of funding, which accounts for six percent of total national expenditure.

Former Minister of Interior and Municipalities H.E. Mr. Ziad Baroud, who is the President of the Decentralization Committee, which was tasked by Former Prime Minister Mr. Najib Mikati to draft a new Decentralization Law, then took the podium to present the Decentralization Draft Law and explain how it could serve in development.

Following this introduction, Dr. Mona Harb, Associate Professor of Urban Planning at the American University of Beirut (AUB) moderated the First Session, which included Mr. Ibrahim Chahrour, Mr. Mohammad Fawaz, and Mr. Khalil Harfouch, Director of the Department of Planning and Programming for the Council for Development and Construction (CDR), former Director General of Urban Planning, and President of the Municipal Union of Jezzine respectively. The session focused on the manner through which municipalities can use available space to better serve local development, at the social, economic, and environmental level. Mr. Harfouch presented the example of Jezzine and its Green Village, La Maison de la Foret. Mr. Fawaz emphasized on the need for “spaces to find serenity” after reporting the high demographic density of the capital, the lack of urban planning, and the pollution it generates.

The last session, moderated by Dr. Sati’ Arnaout, Program Leader for the World Bank, was about the ways municipalities can address the local investment gap. Dr. Kamal Hamdan, Managing Director at the Consultation and Research Institute presented to the audience how local investment can help improve socio-economic conditions. Mr. Ziyad Hayek, Secretary General of the Higher Council for Privatization continued by explaining how municipalities can finance local projects. The third and last speaker, Mr. Ibrahim Muhanna, Managing Director of Muhanna & Co Actuarial Consultants, addressed the audience about how can municipalities can become creditworthy.