

## NDU-Louaize Lebanon Dialogue Initiative Energizes Argentina

**By Jasmin Diab**  
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Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU), a leading private university in Lebanon, launched a global initiative titled, “*Lebanon: Land of Dialogue Among Civilizations and Cultures* (LDC).” The initiative addresses the Secretary-General and Member States of the United Nations to encourage them to designate and establish an international center in Lebanon for this purpose. Dr. Edward Alam, the Director of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (CRVP) at NDU, is in charge of this global campaign.

Dr. Guita Hourani, Director of the Lebanese Emigration and Research Center (LERC) at NDU and Director of the LDC initiative, was tasked by NDU to promote and publicize the campaign on a global scale. Dr. Hourani traveled to Argentina to propagate the initiative and to encourage the Lebanese, Argentineans of Lebanese descent, and believers in dialogue to sign a public petition [[link http://chn.ge/SVwBrc](http://chn.ge/SVwBrc)].

The petition is a call to action, which was issued to the public and to people around the world to support the objectives of the initiative. The petition is available through *change.org*, a secure and transparent organization.

Dr. Hourani’s visit to Argentina was organized by the following: Prof. Walter Muller Mujir, the LERC Liaison Officer for Argentina; the Sociedad Libanesa de Rosario; the Centro Argentino de Investigación sobre la Inmigración Libanesa (CAIIL); Mrs. Alicia Daher, President of the Nínawa Daher Foundation; and many Argentineans of Lebanese descent.

His Excellency the Ambassador of Lebanon to Mexico Dr. Hicham Hamdan attended every official event and lent his invaluable support to the LDC campaign. Dr. Hourani’s gracious host His Eminence Habib Chamieh, Maronite Bishop of Argentina, was a staunch supporter of her mission and was present at every event that took place in Buenos Aires.

- The first leg of the campaign took place on August 7, 2014, in Buenos Aires. Dr. Hourani began her campaign by attending and speaking at the lunch that was held in her honor and organized by His Excellency the Ambassador of Lebanon to Argentina Mr. Antonio Andary. H. E. Bishop Habib Chamieh, Bishop Chrisostomos Ghazali, Sheikh Mohamed Zanaty, Dr. Juan Alejandro Tobias Rector of the Universidad del Salvador (USAL), Dr. María Ester Jozami of the Universidad J. F. Kennedy, Ms. Alicia Daher President of Fundación Ninawa Daher, Mr. Daniel Attar President of the Asociación Drusa, Professor Walter Muller Mujir President of the Centro de Investigacion sobre la Inmigracion Libanesa (CAIIL), Mr. José Asseff Club Libanés, Mr. Néstor Hage President World Lebanese Cultural Union, Mr. Daniel Vittar journalist with the *Clarín*, Mr. Laureano Perez Izquierdo Journalist with *Infobae*, Mr. Jorge Elías journalist, Mr. Yaoudat BRAHIM – Director *Diario Sirio Libanés*, Ms. Lidia Naim Director of FUNLAC, Mr. Daniel Asade, And Mr. Khaled Hallar – T.V. El Cálamo attended the lunch.



**Dr. Hourani at the Residence of Ambassador Andary of Lebanon during the Lunch in Honor of Her Mission, Buenos Aires, Argentina**



**Dr. G. Hourani and Ambassador Antonio Andari (center), surrounded by the Invitees to the Dialogue Lunch at the Lebanese Embassy, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

- An important event took place at the National Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Argentine Republic (ISEN) in Buenos Aires, also known as the School of Diplomats, which trains professional diplomats for service. The event was preceded by a private meeting with His Excellency Juan Vale Raleigh, Director of ISEN. Dr. Hourani addressed more than 120 attendees to speak about the LDC initiative and respond to questions. The meeting was also attended by Ambassador Andary, His Eminence Habib Chamieh, and notable Argentinean figures of Lebanese descent. This event was made possible through the cooperation of Ms. Alicia Daher of Ninawa Daher Foundation.



**Dr. Hourani Listening to H. E. Ambassador Juan Vale Raleigh, Director of ISEN, while Introducing her before her Presentation, Buenos Aires, Argentina**



**Dr. Hourani Presents Lebanon Dialogue Initiative at ISEN, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

- A large meeting, gathering more than 24 organizations and more than 100 individuals of Lebanese and Syro-Lebanese descent, was held at the Lebanese Club in Buenos Aires to help attendees learn more about the initiative. Dr. Hourani presented the LDC initiative and the petition and responded to various questions in the presence of Ambassador Andary, His Eminence Habib Chamieh, Ms. Daher, and various prominent figures of the community. Following the presentation, presidents of these organizations were called up to endorse the initiative by signing a statement of support and then receive a Certificate of Participation. The event was interpreted by Journalist Mr. Ronald Hamdan. The event was complemented by a sit-down dinner in a convivial ambiance.



**Dr. Hourani Introduces the Lebanon Dialogue Initiative at the Lebanese Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina**



**Attendees of the Lecture on Lebanon Dialogue Initiative at the Lebanese Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina**



**H. E. Habib Chamiyeh, Maronite Bishop of Argentina Endorses the Initiative, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

- Dr. Hourani also addressed academics, university administrators, alumna members, and students during a special lecture that was held at the Universidad Argentina John F. Kennedy by the Chair of Free Lebanon. The lecture was organized in cooperation with Dr. Maria Ester Jozami. The event was attended by about 50 individuals, including the Maronite Bishop of Argentina, Mr. Nestor Hage, President of the Sociedad Libanesa de Rosario, and Ms. Daher. The lecture allotted time for a Q&A session. Well known interpreter and political analyst Mr. Ghandour Daher interpreted for Dr. Hourani. The event ended with Dr. Hourani receiving another Certificate of Recognition for her efforts as Director of the LDC campaign.



**Dr. Muller Mujir, Translator Mr. Ghandour Daher, Dr. Hourani, Dr. Maria Ester Jozami, a student at JFK University, Argentina**



**Young Members of the Centro de Investigación (CAIIL) Operating Computers to Facilitate the Signing of the Dialogue Petition by the Lecture's Attendees, J. F. Kennedy University, Argentina**

- She was later received by Dr. John Tobias, Rector of the University of Salvador, who was extremely interested in participating in the initiative. Dr. Tobias offered showed his support for the initiative by putting both his contacts and himself at the service of the LDC.



**Ms. A. Daher, Dr. G. Hourani, Prof. W. Muller Mujir, Dr. Jonh Tobias and Bishop H. Chamieh, Buenos Aires, Argentina**

- Dr. Hourani was also received by Dr. Hannibal Jozami Rector of the University of Tres de Febrero (UNTREF) at the recently established Immigration Museum by the UNTREF. Representing the UNTREF were Dr. Diana Wechsler, Director of the Museum and Director of the Research Institute in Art and Culture, and Dr. Hamurabi Noufour, Director of the Master's Cultural Diversity Program. Following a tour of the museum, a private ceremony was held in which Dr. Jozami endorsed the project on behalf of his university and expressed interest in continuing to collaborate on the initiative.



**Dr. Hanibal Jozami President of UNTREF University Receives Certificate Following his Endorsement of the Initiative, Buenos Aires, Argentina**



**Dr. Hourani and Dr. Muller Mujir at the Immigrant's Museum in Buenos Aires, Argentina**



- Her next stop was the city of Rosario, which is home to one of the world's most active communities of Lebanese descendents. Before she was to give her talk on the initiative, Dr. Hourani was first received the Municipal Intendant Dr. Mónica Fein, and then by the President of the Municipal Congress of Rosario and the President of the Socialist Bloque Mr. Manuel Sciutto who declared her a “distinguished visitor” given her important mission and in “recognition of her career and on her visit to the city in search of support for the United Nations to declare ‘*Lebanon a Land of Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures.*’”



**Dr. Hourani and Dr. Fien, Mayor of Rosario**



**Meeting with MP Manuel Sciutto on the Dialogue when Dr. Hourani was Declared Distinguished Visitor, Rosario, Argentina**



**Dr. Hourani Presents Lebanon Dialogue Initiative to Representative of the Santa Fe Governorate, Argentina**

Dr. Mujir was offered the opportunity to address the Congress in its upcoming session to introduce the LDC initiative. She also met with the Secretary of International Relations and Integration of the Governor of Santa Fe province for the dialogue. Dr. Hourani found in the three policy areas excellent reception to her message and a willingness to strengthen the LDC initiative with the policy tools they have in each setting, convinced that dialogue, diversity and respect for the other as model is the best way to proceed.

- She also participated in the celebration of the 86<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sociedad Libanesa in Rosario where on behalf of NDU President Rev. Fr. Walid Moussa she presented two Acknowledgment Awards one to Prof. Walter Muller Mujir an Acknowledgment Award for his activities and contributions to the study of Lebanese Migration in Argentina and to Mr. Munir Nellmehdin his contributions to the preservation and promotion of Lebanese Folklore in Argentina and all of Latin America. This took place in the presence of more than 150 attendees from the Lebanese descendent community of Rosario.



**Dr. Hourani with the Board of the Lebanese Society before the 86th Anniversary celebration in Rosario, Argentina**



**Firkat Al Arz of Mr. Munir Nellmeldine Danced in Honor of Dr. Hourani, Rosario, Argentina**

- Dr. Hourani made herself available during a public presentation of the initiative to the people of Rosario on the Oroñy el Río Paraná. This event was an innovative idea to generate signatures for the LDC petition by introducing the initiative to families and individuals who frequent that area for sports and family promenade. In cooperation with the Sociedad Libanesa de Rosario and the Centro Argentino de Investigación sobre la Inmigración Libanesa (CAIIL), a team comprising of both genders and of various ages set up a station with Lebanese flags and balloons with the initiative's logo and approached people while carrying portable computers to explain the initiative and encourage people to sign the petition on the spot. The effort proved very successful with 120 signatures collected within a two-hour time frame.



**Dr. Hourani and the Lebanese of Rosario during the Public Promotion of the Dialogue, Rosario, Argentina**



**Dr. Hourani and Professor Muller Mujir with Argentinean Public who Signed the Petition, Rosario, Argentina**

- A major event to introduce the initiative and to obtain endorsements from organizations took place at the Sociedad Libanesa de Rosario. During this meeting, which was attended by more than 70 people, more than 10 organizations endorsed the initiative before Dr. Hourani. As an acknowledgment of their endorsement, each organization received a Certificate of Acknowledgment signed by Dr. Hourani.



**Head of the Muslim Community in Rosario Receives Certificate Following His Endorsement of the Initiative, Rosario, Argentina**



**Head of the Palestinian Organization in Rosario Receives Certificate Following his Endorsement of the Initiative, Rosario, Argentina**



**Attendees at Dr. Hourani's Lecture on Lebanon Dialogue Initiative at the Lebanese Center in Rosario, Argentina**

- Dr. Hourani also gave a lecture in the Espacio Cultural Universitario (ECU), which was attended by a large number of high school students from San Jorge Orthodox School and from Living and Coexist Together School in Rosario. Dean of the Faculty of Economics Prof. Javier Ganem, lecturers, and members of the Lebanese Rosary Society also attended this event. The initiative was presented interactively, which encouraged students to think and express their views about freedom, dialogue, and conviviality. Member of the Lebanese-Druze community of Rosario Mr. Camel Chaya interpreted from Arabic to Spanish.



**Dr. Hourani with students at ECU**

The visit to Argentina was a resounding success. The initiative was well received by both Lebanese-Argentineans and Argentineans who agreed that Lebanon is an ideal area for dialogue and the ideal host for an international center on dialogue. The work that Dr. Hourani launched will be continued by Prof. Mujir, Mr. Hage, Ms. Daher, and many friends of the project. In fact the enthusiasm generated during her visit and the hard work of the team in Argentina resulted in having Argentina place Lebanon in first position in regards to the number of signatures generated by countries for the week of September 15, 2014.