

Uruguay Receives With Open Arms NDU-Louaize Initiative Titled, “*Lebanon: Land of Dialogue Among Civilizations and Cultures*”

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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. Luis de la Fuente Abdala, LERC Liaison Officer for Uruguay, His Excellency Jorge Jure, former Ambassador of Uruguay to Lebanon, and Ms. Sylvia Gulpio of the Sociedad Libanesa were the main organizers of Dr. Hourani’s visit to Uruguay.

Dr. Hourani began her campaign in Uruguay on August 14, 2014. Her first stop was at the Universidad Católica del Uruguay (UCU) where she introduced the LDC initiative to over 70 individuals. Mag. Susana Mangana, Director of the Department of International Negotiation and Integration at the Faculty of Business, UCU, initiated the session with a general introduction to the topic. The event was attended by H. E. Jorge Curi of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Prof. Alberto Conzález Ramagli, representing UCU President Eduardo Casarotti; Prof. Washington Baliero, Director of the Instituto de Drecho Internacional Público of the Universidad de la Rpublica; intellectuals; researchers; and members of the public interested in the topic.



Dr. Hourani is Being Introduced by Prof. Susana Mangana at the Catholic University in Uruguay



Attendees at Dr. Hourani's Lecture on Lebanon Dialogue at the Catholic University in Uruguay

- An important event took place at the Instituto Artigas del Servicio Exterior at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also known as the School of Diplomats, which trains professional diplomats for service. Dr. Hourani addressed more than 45 attendees to speak about the LDC initiative and responded to questions. The meeting was also attended by His Excellency the Ambassador of Lebanon to Uruguay Dr. Jorge Jury, several ambassadors and administrators from the institute, and Head of the Maronite Maronite Mission in Uruguay Fr. Elie Tarabay. The efforts of Ambassador Jury and Dr. Abdala made this successful event possible.



Dr. Hourani Lectures on Lebanon Dialogue at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Uruguay with Ambassador Dr. Jorge Juri Former Ambassador of Uruguay in Lebanon, Uruguay



Future Diplomats Attending Dr. Hourani's Presentation on Lebanon Land of Dialogue at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Uruguay



Future Diplomats Discussing Issues Related to Lebanon with Dr. Hourani at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Presentation, Uruguay

- The highlight of the campaign took place at the Uruguayan Parliament where Dr. Abdala organized an official meeting with the Uruguay-Lebanon Friendship Group of the Parliament. Parliamentarians Dr. Pablo Abdala and Dr. Daniel Radío Presta were present and were accompanied by six aids and administrators. Following a welcome speech delivered by MP Abdala, Dr. Hourani presented the dialogue. Both MPs Abdala and Presta welcomed the LDC initiative and pledged to work in favor of this Initiative on the personal and parliamentary levels and promised to assist in promoting it in parliament especially in the Commission of Foreign Affairs for it to gain approval from the UN.



*Dr. L. De la Fuente Abdala, MP D. Radío Presta, Dr. G. Hourani, and MP P. Abdala
(Courtesy: Departamento de Fotografía del Parlamento Nacional)*

- The Asociación Libanesa Femenina organized a prestigious tea party to honor Dr. Hourani and her unique mission. The event was attended by the association's President Nelly Abi Rizk, its board members, Dr. Abdalla, Ms. Fatima Abdel Ghani, President of the World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) in Uruguay, and members of the association. Following a brief overview of the LDC initiative, members began signing the petition with Dr. Abdala.



Dr. Hourani with Asociación Libanesa Femenina and the President of WLCU Uruguay, Uruguay



Ms. Abdel Ghanim, President Abi Rizk, Dr. Hourani and members of Asociación Libanesa Femenina, Uruguay

- Dr. Hourani gave an interview to *La País*, one of Uruguay most prominent newspapers, on the topics of the LDC initiative and the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. It is worth mentioning that Uruguay offered to allow ten Syrian refugee families to settle in the country. The article was published on Saturday August 16.

- She also met with the WLCU President Ms. Abdul Ghani at her office in the Uruguayan Parliament where she works with Parliamentarian Amin Niffouri Banco. Ms. Abdul Ghani signed the petition and also endorsed the LDC initiative.



Dr. Hourani Presents Certificate Following Ms. Abdel Ghani's Endorsement of the Initiative, Uruguay

- The campaign continued at a large gathering, which was held at the Lebanese Club in Montevideo with the presence of Dr. Omar Mauad, where more than 100 individuals of Lebanese descent attended. Dr. Hourani presented both the LDC initiative and the petition, and then responded to various questions in the presence of Ms. Ana Brum Nasser representing Dr. Jorge Chediak the Minister of the Supreme Court of Justice and various presidents of organizations, prominent figures, and members of the public interested in the topic. Following the presentation, presidents of these organizations were called upon to endorse the initiative by signing a statement of support, and in turn, receive a Certificate of Participation. The event was complemented by a cocktail in a convivial ambiance. Prior to this event, the Lebanese Club organized a lunch with the community in honor of Dr. Hourani's mission.



Members of the Lebanese Community in Uruguay Attending Dr. Hourani's Presentation on Lebanon Dialogue at the Lebanese Center in Montevideo, Uruguay



Ms. Ana Brum Nasser representing Dr. Jorge Chediak the Minister of the Supreme Court of Justice, Dr. Hourani and Dr. De la Fuente Abdala at the Lebanese Center in Uruguay



Dr. de La Funte Abdala, Dr. Hourani and Dr. Omar Mauad President of the Lebanese Club of Montevideo Endorsing the Initiative, Uruguay

- Representatives from Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that Dr. Hourani make herself available for half a day to meet with diplomats, human rights officials, and analysts to discuss the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon. She welcomed the invitation and shared her extensive knowledge on the subject. She also gave several interviews to various newspapers and newsletters on the topic of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

The visit to Uruguay was a resounding success. The initiative was well received by both Lebanese-Uruguayans and Uruguayans 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 Dr. Abdala, Ms. Gulpio, and many friends of the project. In fact the enthusiasm generated during her visit and the hard work of Fr. Antonio Feghali who visited the Lebanese descendents in their villages and encouraged them to sign the petition increased the number of signatories from Uruguay.