

Director Hourani Lectures on Diaspora Politics at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Monday 20th February 2012, Tokyo, Japan.

LERC Staff

An invitation was extended to Ms. Guita Hourani, Director of LERC, by the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA) of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS), represented by Dr. Hademitsu Kuroki, Director of Japan Center for Middle Eastern Studies (JaCMES) in Beirut, to be a speaker at a workshop on “the Lebanese and Syrian Migrants: Integration and Interaction in the Global Age.”

Director Hourani presented one of her preliminary research findings on diaspora politics with a lecture entitled “*Diaspora Lobbies in the US and the Road to the Arab Spring: The Case of the Lebanese Christian Lobby 2003-2011*” on Friday February 17, 2012. The workshop, which was attended by Japanese professors and PhD candidates from TUFS, began with welcoming remarks by Dr. Kuroki, who was followed by Dr. Oswaldo Truzzi of the Federal University of São Carlos in São Paulo in Brazil. Dr. Truzzi’s presentation covered the mobility paths and social integration of the Lebanese and Syrians in São Paulo.



From left to right: Dr. Yuko Mio, Dr. Masato Iizuka and Dr. Hidemitsu Kuroki, TUFS, Tokyo, Japan, February 2012.

Director Hourani’s presentation illustrated the role of diasporic lobbies in the US as players in international politics. Hourani selected the Lebanese Christian lobby as her case study. She described how this lobby advocated freedom and democracy in the Middle East to various American administrations since its inception in 1976 and how this effort contributed to the understanding of the Arab Spring phenomenon. She also highlighted how, following the success of this group in lobbying the United States’ Congress and the United Nations Security Council to adopting the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSRA)

(December 12, 2003) and the UN Resolution 1559 (September 2, 2004) respectively, this lobby became a reference and a role-model to many Middle Eastern lobbies and activists. Hourani then concentrated on how members of this lobby are called upon to share their know-how with other Middle Eastern advocacy groups currently lobbying in the US in support of the Arab Spring. She concluded her lecture by stating that Diasporas that are integrated in their hostland and are networking with their homeland are engaged in transnational political activities and are, as non-state actors, important players in the present global age.

Following the presentation of Truzzi and Hourani, both discussants Dr. Aïda Kanafani-Zahar of L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (CNRS) in Paris and Mr. Nadim Shehadi of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London commented on the presentations. The workshop ended with a discussion session.



Director Guita Hourani responding to comments on her presentation, TUFSS, Tokyo, Japan, February 2012.

Hourani continues her work on diaspora politics and her next presentation will be on homeland political parties and diasporas, which she will deliver at “the Mashriq and the Mahjar: Migration from the Levant, 1800-2000” conference. The conference will take place at North Carolina State University in April 2012.