

## Lebanese - South African Group Visits LERC

*Jasmin Lilian Diab, LERC*  
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The Lebanese Emigration Research Center (LERC) at Notre Dame University – Louaizé (NDU), has recently welcomed, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, a South African group of Lebanese descent which consisted of around fifteen members who are touring Lebanon.

The group is led by Mr. Ken Hanna, a journalist and a historian of the Lebanese in South Africa who was honored by LERC for his contributions in May 2014. Members of the group held different well recognized Lebanese family names such as Phillips, Sarkis, Fahry, Farah, Kairouz, and Thomas.



*The Delegation with Ms. Haddad at the LERC Museum (NDU, May 2015)*

The visitors bombarded Dr. Guita Hourani, the Director of the Center, and Mrs. Liliane Haddad with questions regarding ways to retrace the history of their families. Hourani and Haddad

explained to the visitors the importance of conducting research first in South Africa starting with the citizenship records and moving forward towards birth, baptism, death, military, education records and the like in order to put the pieces of the puzzle together towards building a more realistic story about their ancestors. Following this exercise, the Center can then help trace their families in Lebanon.



*Mr. Kenn Hanna, Dr. Hourani and Ms. Haddad at the LERC Museum (NDU, May 2015)*

Lebanese Migration to South Africa began in the late 1800s. According to Father Peter Alam, one of the pastors who served at Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Johannesburg, the history of the Lebanese community in South Africa “goes back to circa 1893. Most immigrants came from the Northern part of Lebanon -- Sib'el, Baz'oun, Bcharre, Hadeth el-Jobbeh, Miziara, Hasroun, Zahle, Zghorta, Kartaba, Tripoli, Batroun, Jounieh, Ghosta, Beit Merri, Beit ed Dine, Deir El-Amar, and 'Ain Zhalta. The majority of the immigrants were Maronites.” (Alam n.d.) Family names include but are not limited to the following: Abdo, Allem, Ansara, Ashkar, Azaham, Azzie, Bakkos, Basel, Bolus, Cah, Chami, Cheketri, Daher, Dieb (Deeb), Emmanuel, Essey, Farah, Faris, Gandur, Gossayn, Haddad, Hanna, Jacobs, Jammine, Joseph, Kalil, Karam, Kairuz, Khoury, Kourie, Kudsee, Kurdachi, Lahoud, Lebanon, Lebos, Leicher, Maroun, Masters, Mazaham, Mezher, Nacouzi, Nader, Najjar, Nofal, Rezek, Risha, Saad, Sadie, Sahade, Sasseen, Sauma, Sham, Shamley, Shehab, Shelela, Shkhytiri, Simaan, Toweel, Yazbek, and Zoghby.

The Lebanese in South Africa are currently about 20,000 strong. Approximately 17,000 of them live in Johannesburg. The absolute majority of the community remains Maronite. There are two Maronite Churches -- Our Lady of Lebanon and Our Lady of the Cedars. The Maronite Lebanese Missionaries, a Maronite Patriarchal order of monks headquartered in Lebanon, has been serving the community since 1905.

The members of the group were very thrilled to have visited the Lebanese Migration Nucleus Museum (LMNM). Each visitor received a certificate to commemorate the visit.