



Memorial Remembers the Life and Accomplishments of Late Ambassador Nadim Dimechkie

Thursday October 15, 2009

The life and achievements of late Lebanese ambassador Nadim Dimechkie were remembered on the evening of October 14, at a memorial ceremony at Assembly Hall, which attracted a host of dignitaries who had known the late ambassador.

Dimechkie succumbed to pneumonia on March 31, 2009.

Among those present were Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, former Foreign Minister of Algeria and Undersecretary General of the U.N. Lakhdar Brahimi; Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Institute for Palestine Studies and President of the Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association Hisham Nashabe; American University of Beirut President Peter Dorman; Chair of the AUB Board of Trustees Philip Khoury; former Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at AUB Huda Zurayk; as well as friends and family of the late ambassador.

Khoury opened the ceremony by lauding Dimechkie's generosity to AUB when he was President of the AUB Alumni Association (1995-98), Chairman of the AUB College Hall Fundraising Committee (1994-98), and Chairman of the Scholarship Fundraising Campaign (1998-2003).

"He was a dedicated and active trustee who gave a part of himself throughout any of his endeavors," said Khoury, adding that AUB had honored Dimechkie's service to the University in 2006 by awarding him the President's Medal for Outstanding Voluntary Service. "He is a reminder that we can make a difference in the lives of others and the institutions we care about," said Khoury.

The president of the Board of Directors of the Worldwide Alumni Association of the American University of Beirut (WAAAUB), Khalil Makkawi's speech—which was read by the Association's Secretary, Muhieddine Doughan—highlighted Dimechkie's passion towards Lebanon and the Palestinian cause, crediting him with developing Lebanon's diplomatic identity. Zurayk described Dimechkie as a close family friend and lifelong friend of her father, the late Constantine Zurayk, a prominent intellectual and former acting president of AUB. She recalled Dimechkie's strong advocate for Arab unity to confront the dangers facing the region. The late ambassador, she added, believed that education was key to maintaining this unity. He also recognized the need to bridge the gap between East and West, organizing several lectures and seminars in this respect. Zurayk said, "He leaves us with a legacy in holding active dialogue." Nashabe spoke of Dimechkie's passion for Beirut and Palestine, as well as his attachment to the Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association. Dimechkie's parents had met while working for the association, he recounted, noting that the couple was inter-religious. This bond, said Nashabe, would be frowned upon in today's society, where sectarianism abounds. "This is an occasion to revive Dimechkie's values and not simply an occasion to commemorate him," he said.

As for Brahimi, he described the late ambassador as a "very close and dear friend and an outstanding Lebanese diplomat." The two diplomats had worked together in London where Dimechkie served as Lebanon's ambassador to England. Brahimi also called Dimechkie his mentor who was generous with his time in teaching him about "the peculiarities of the British". He added that the late ambassador had managed to make several connections in England, a difficult feat for an ambassador of a small nation. This, said Brahimi, is a testament to Dimechkie's hard work and passion towards Lebanon.

Former Minister of Information of Egypt, Mohamad Hassanein Heikal's speech was read Fouad al-Turk, former Lebanese ambassador to the United Nations, remembered Dimechkie as an "innovative individual" who sought hard to maintain Arab unity. He noted that the late ambassador went to great lengths to cover up the fractures emerging in the Arab world, but he was unable to thwart its eventual division.

Siniora said, "When we remember Dimechkie, we are remembering a generation of pioneers of the Arab world who set down a number of values that seem to be lost today." Calling Dimechkie "the founding father of Lebanese diplomacy and one of the founding fathers of the values we hold today," Siniora said: "The more time passes by, the more I learn about his contributions."

Dimechkie's son Riad, the director of the Executive MBA Program at AUB, shared a few memories of family life with his father. He also described his father as an Arab nationalist who resisted French colonialism in Lebanon. As a diplomat, said Dimechkie, the late ambassador enjoyed the company of larger-than-life Arab leaders and was able to reach out to the people in power in the countries in which he served. He said that his father "had a great sense of humor, was a strict disciplinarian, had a generous spirit, and was a child at heart."

The late ambassador Nadim Dimechkie was born in Beirut in 1919. He earned his BA in economics from AUB in 1940 and his MA in 1955. He started his diplomatic career in 1944 where he served in Lebanon's first embassy in the world, which was located in London. His career took him to Canada, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia. He served as ambassador to the United States from 1958 until 1962. He concluded his diplomatic career as ambassador to England from 1966 until 1978. Dimechkie represented Lebanon at many international organizations and conferences. He attended the first preparatory session of the U.N. in London in 1946 and all U.N. sessions in New York between 1957 and 1974. After his retirement, he remained involved in Lebanese and Arab causes. He was involved in the Arab British Chamber of Commerce, the Institute of Palestine Studies, and the Arab Cultural Club. He was an active member of the AUB community through Alumni Association, and chairing the AUB College Hall Fundraising Committee, and the Scholarship Fundraising Committee. His decorations include the Commander of the Order of the Cedar in Lebanon, the Grand Cordon of the Egyptian Order of Merit and Grand Officer of the Egyptian Order of Ismail, and the Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order from the UK.

Dimechkie is survived by his wife Margaret Sherlock, his sons Riad, and Ramez, the Lebanese ambassador to Germany.