

Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan

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Club Number 30893
District 2452 Rotary International



Marhaba

2023-2024
November & December 2023 Issue

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Lothian, Scotland

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**CREATE HOPE
in the WORLD**



Letter from the Editor PP Mona Jarudi

It's that time of year again where we reflect and take stock of all what took place in this year that we will bid farewell to in few days!

2023 in so many ways was not a pleasant year. Environmental changes that caused earthquakes and devastation, economic downturns that wreaked havoc in people's lives and most importantly, the wars taking place with the loss of innocent lives that to date rivals losses of world wars. We cannot but stop and shed tears for the thousands of children who lost their lives before they even knew they had a life to live. We have to bow our heads with respect to honor the medical teams who have operated under the most dire of circumstances, buckling under the emotional pressure of losing their own families and their helplessness in trying to fulfill their oath to preserve life and human dignity. Nothing is sacred anymore... no international laws are respected, no human rights laws are observed.. the world became a stage for hatred, ugliness and greed. Humanity is screaming ENOUGH and no one is listening!

Where do we stand as Rotarians in the midst of all this terror and chaos?

We, as Rotarians belonging to the ultimate humanitarian organization in the world, can have our voices heard and our actions will always speak louder than words. We will continue to abide by our motto Service Above Self and we will continue to forge ahead with the message of Peace and the message that we are all equal in the eyes of the divine. We will continue to fight for every child to live in dignity, disease free. We will continue to fight for the right of education, the right to a clean environment. We will continue to ensure that those who are less privileged, those buckling under the pressures affecting their mental health will have our support!

On another note, we will not lose hope.. we will always trust that love trumps hate, and peace dominates over chaos! Hope springs eternal in the human heart..

Wishing you all a very happy and prosperous 2024!



IVO FREIJSEN

UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE IN LEBANON AT UNICEF LEBANON

"THE REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) IN LEBANON BRIEFS ON THE SITUATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON AND UNHCR'S POLICY ON DURABLE SOLUTIONS."

Business Meeting
Via Zoom

November 14, 2023

The world this past year has been witnessing unprecedented calamities, war atrocities, hunger, migrations and in certain areas catastrophic economic situations. Lebanon, the tiny country on the Mediterranean, has been undergoing for the past four years the worst threats politically, socially and economically. Its location has proved to be a curse than a blessing. Since 1948, Lebanon has been receiving refugees from nearby countries and to date there are over 1.6 million refugees from the Occupied Palestinian territory, from Iraq and Syria, numbers that are equivalent to its citizens which are taxing its infrastructure and social fabric.

Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan invited the United Nations High Commission for Refugees Representative Mr. Ivo Freijsen to shed a light on the refugee status in Lebanon and perhaps share glimpses into what's next.

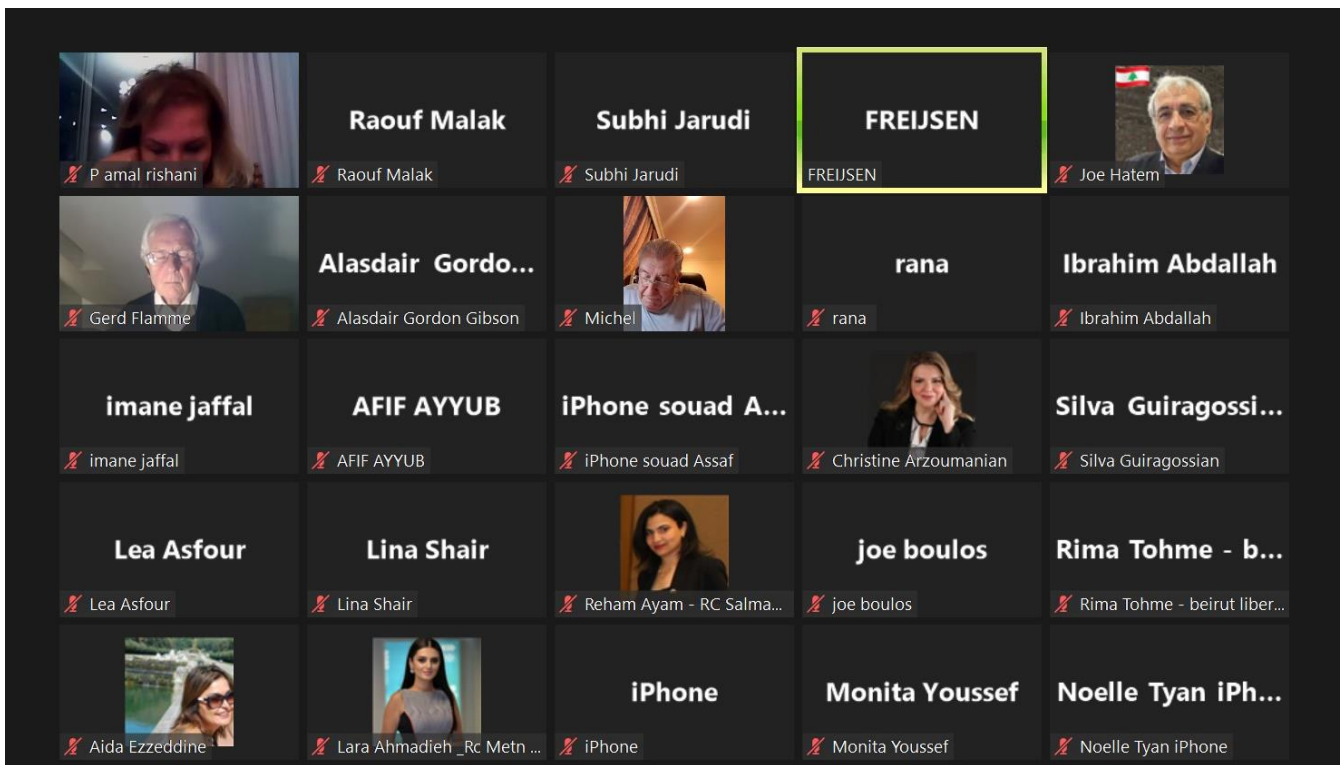
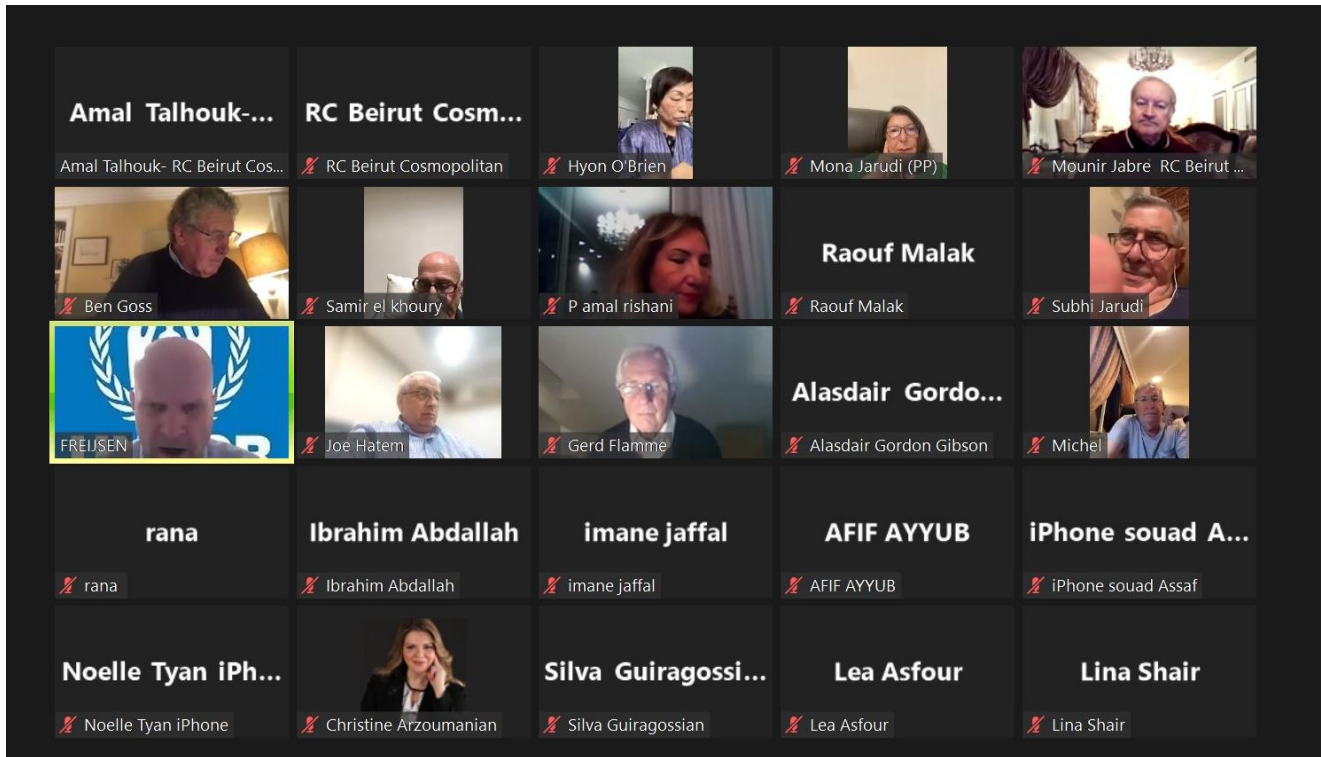
Mr. Freijsen has 30 years of experience in the Humanitarian field and has lived in many countries and speaks five languages fluently including Arabic. He started his talk by saying that there are 110 million people displaced in the world, 60% are internally displaced and 40% are refugees. Of this high number, 40% are children and that is a real sad statistic. Climate change plays an important role in forcing people to leave for better climates and if existing political conflicts and wars are not mitigated; every border will be flooded with refugees. The following facts present themselves:

- Lebanon has the highest proportion of refugees in the world. There are 1.5 million Syrians, not to mention other nationalities.
- Refugees do not flee because of generous aid packages but due to life threatening conditions due to direct and indirect consequences of conflict.
- People do not resist returning to their abandoned countries due to the good life they experience in refuge.
- The challenges faced in Lebanon:
 - A. The majority live under the poverty line
 - B. International assistance does not cover everyone and the assistance is shrinking
 - C. With dwindling funds, there is an increase reliance on negative coping mechanisms. Refugees have enormous amounts of debt so they reduce their food consumption and take their children out of school to work and help with daily livelihood.
- The host community, Lebanon, has similar challenges: huge economic crisis, schools are closing, high health care costs and lack of jobs.
- Add to all this now, the precarious security in the South, that has created another layer of refugees, 26,000 of them to further tax our infrastructure.
- UNHCR response, past and present:
- Coordinating with the Lebanese government to protect the rights of the refugees to access basic needs.
- Helping to find durable solutions to resettle refugees to other countries or force the voluntary return to Syria.
- Studying the impact of displacement on peoples' lives and continue to provide support to refugees and host communities.

Since 2011, UNHCR gave \$ 378 million to Lebanon to contribute to the Lebanese crisis and mitigate the impact of the refugees on the host country. More than \$ 177 million went to help host with solar panels, waste water management and street lighting. Over \$ 9.6 billion was received by Lebanon since 2015 under the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan coordinated with the Lebanese government.

In response to the concern of the audience, Mr. Freijsen assured us that there is NO international conspiracy to keep refugees in Lebanon and no Hidden agendas by the international community.

The audience were very appreciative of the remarks and the work of UNHCR in Lebanon with the hope that durable solutions will be found to satisfy the good livelihood of all.



KARINA EL HELOU

DIRECTOR OF SURSOCK MUSEUM

"A TOUR & TALK ABOUT THE SURSOCK MUSEUM AND ITS HISTORY"

Business Meeting
The Sursock Museum

November 28, 2023

Beirut Sursock Museum, one of the most important cultural landmarks in a country seeped in culture, a unique structure showcasing the beauty of artisanal craftsmanship, be it breathtaking stained-glass windows or intricate woodwork from the finest cedars of Lebanon, or the beautiful scents from a garden rich with jasmine.

On Tuesday November 28, Sursock Museum was our meeting venue. We wanted to be part of the perfect reconstruction work that took three years to complete after the devastating Beirut Port Explosion that disemboweled half of our beautiful Beirut. The reconstruction was done lovingly and to perfection by Lebanese artisans and craftspeople who continue to make their mark in preserving our rich Lebanese heritage and culture.

The director of the museum Ms Karina Helou was gracious to open the doors of the museum for our club and treated us to a private guided tour, recounting the history, reliving the explosion moments and painstakingly showing the extensive research done in order to bring the museum back to life.

The museum opened its doors on 18 November 1961 with an "Exhibition of works by Lebanese painters and sculptors", later known as the Salon d'Automne, a juried open call exhibition showcasing contemporary Lebanese art. Notable Lebanese artists featured in Sursock's Salon throughout the 1960s include Chafic Abboud, Yvette Achkar, Etel Adnan, Michel Basbous, Saloua Rawda Choucair, Paul Guiragossian, Eli Kanaan, Aref el Rayess and Adel Saghir.

After sharing the history of the museum, Director Karina walked us through another landmark BEYOND RUPTURES which takes the form of a historical timeline from 1952 until 2023 exploring three chronologies: that of Sursock museum, of its exhibitions, and of the significant local socio-political events, drawing parallels with the artistic production of the country. This exhibition, based on archives and documentation of rehabilitation works, identifies six interruptions throughout its 62 years of existence; from the first rupture between 1952 to 1961 which resulted in a legal battle to transform the residence of Nicholas Ibrahim Sursock into a Museum, to the most recent Beirut port blast on August 4, 2020.

This museum is a must see in the beautiful city of Beirut. The visit hardly scratched the surface because it can take hours to savor its beauty and give its history the credit it deserves. This beautiful evening culminated in the utmost spirit of fellowship with our club members and guests. The presence of Rotary Club Beirut Cedars President Ramzi Abu Samah, PP Joe Kanaan and Professor Kamal Kallab from Rotary Club Byblos added to the camaraderie of the evening.





GENERAL CLUB ASSEMBLY

The Phoenicia Hotel

December 5, 2023

On December 5, Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan had its General Assembly in the presence of AG Toufic Ariss to elect the new board for RY 24-25 and the President Nominee for RY 25-26.

The new board is:

- Incoming President: Haytham Kurdi
- Vice President: Mona Jarudi
- IPP Amal Talhouk
- Club Secretary: Abbas Sibai
- Club Treasurer: Christine Arzoumanian
- Club Director: Joe Boulos
- Club Director: Joelle Feghali
- Club Director: Toufic Abillamah
- President Elect: Christine Arzoumanian

Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan prides itself on team work, dedication to the Rotary mission and values and great fellowship spirit.

Congratulations to the new board! Success always!



ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

Bazalt Restaurant, Ashrafieh
December 12, 2023

Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan is steeped in tradition that has been honored since inception. One of these is the annual Christmas dinner that the club hosts for its members and guests to celebrate the holiday spirit.

This year, the event was held at Basalt restaurant where everyone enjoyed good food, good wine and of course, the Secret Santa that created an added joviality to the evening.



SERVICE PROJECT

One of the most important service projects that our club undertakes is planning events for underprivileged children. Christmas is a festive time, it is a giving time, it is a time to be reminded of the good in the world.

This year, our service projects committee chaired by Rt. Silva Guiragossian, chose the hospital and school of Deir el Saleeb to spread Christmas cheer among 75 children ages 4 to 14, from every walk of life. 15 of these children were from the mental hospital and the rest from the school housing underprivileged kids.

This event was in collaboration with the newly chartered peace building club Rotary Club Beirut Pax Potentia (Power of Peace) and with the Rotaract Club of Beirut Cosmopolitan. The planning of the event took weeks, a lot of the young members of the club displayed their talent by making handmade gifts for the kids. Donations poured in from friends who bought toys in the name of every child. Cupcakes, cakes and Lebanese sweets were donated by members, food boxes were enjoyed by all.

This event could not have been more successful! The energy and smiles of the kids were priceless!

Many thanks go to the three clubs who made this event a success.

Merry Christmas to all!



FUNDRAISING EVENT

Arouss El Bahr Café
Manara

On Saturday, November 25, 2023 Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan hosted a fundraising brunch, a typical Lebanese breakfast, that was attended by Rotarian friends from Rotary Club Beyrouth, Rotary Club Beirut Liberty, Rotary Club Aley, Rotary Club Metn and Rotary Club Beirut Cedars.



REACHING OUT

Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan
Participation

Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan President Amal Talhouk represented our club by attending many events given by other Rotary Clubs. Rotary is about service, fellowship and supporting one another to create meaningful connections among each other.

Maternal a Child Care & Gift of Life Lebanon Meeting at Le Gabriel Hotel November 30,2023



Fundraising Event for the Rotary Club Beirut Cadmos with Matteo El Khodr



Rotary Club of Beirut Ad Astra, jointly with Rotary Beirut Pax Potentia, Rotaract Beirut Cosmopolitan and Rotaract AUB hosted the HOPE4HER – Panel Discussion closing conference



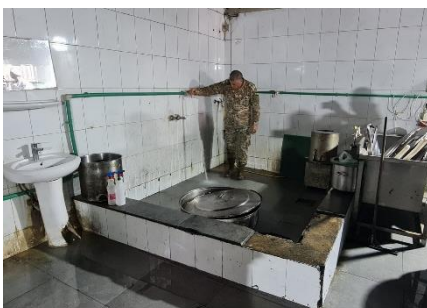
Rotary Club Beirut Liberty Fundraiser at Mona Rasamni's House in Ashrafieh
December 11, 2023



Rotary Club Aley West – Business Meeting
Dr. Brigitte Khoury - Clinical Psychologist at AUBMC
“Daily Stress Struggles”



The Inauguration of the Water Filtration District Grant
to the Army Post at the Hadath/ Kfarshima Barracks
Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan, Rotary Club Beirut Cadmos, and Rotary Club Aley West
November 27, 2023



Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan collaborated with Rotary Club Beirut Cadmos
on a Mental Health Awareness campaign

AGBU Schools
December 15, 2023

On December 15, Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan collaborated with Rotary Club Beirut Cadmos on a Mental Health Awareness campaign with all Lebanon Rotary Clubs and EMBRACE NGO.

Mental Health Awareness is much needed in the world now, and happens to be one of the priorities for RI President Gordon McNally for this rotary year. The project aims at “conducting mental health awareness interactive sessions with NGO Embrace and in partnership with UNICEF that are tailored for adolescents and youth between 15-18 years old. The aim is to empower the segment of the population to identify early mental health distress symptoms and to be engaged regarding their own well being and communities.”

This collaboration was led by RT. Christine Arzoumanian on behalf of our club RCBC. An AGBU school in Dbayeh was chosen for this collaboration. The session was very successful and was attended by President of Rotary Club Beirut Cadmos President Gulshan Saghlam and Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan President Amal Talhouk.

Many thanks go to Rotary Club Beirut Cadmos for this very important Service project. We await the results of this campaign in February when RI President will be visiting Lebanon to participate in the “Mental Health Conference in the Arab Region”.



SILENT TRIUMPHS

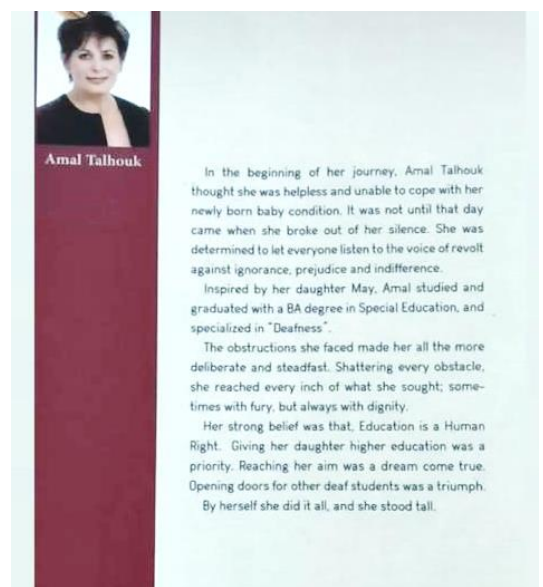
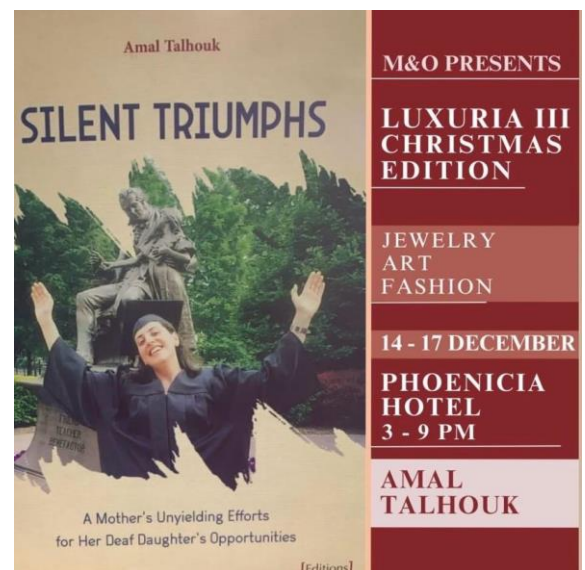
AMAL TALHOUK

Very often, life presents us with challenges and unexpected twists and turns that force us to dig deep and transform these challenges to strengths.

Rotary Club Beirut Cosmopolitan President, Amal Talhouk, is the embodiment of resolute and resolve. After years, she found her voice and shared it with the world with her newly released book *Silent Triumphs*.

It is a book about the trials and tribulations and of the daily struggles of finding a balance of happiness and grit.

We are so proud of our author, and even more proud of the hero of the story, her daughter May.





November Birthdays

Michel Mansour (5)

Sona Kourtian (17)

December Birthdays

Subhi Jarudi (7)