



# L'ÉCHO DU CÈDRE

**Jeunesse du Liban, lève toi et marche !**

**L'Echo du Cèdre**, est un journal par les jeunes et pour les jeunes.

Le journal est destiné aux libanais qui rêvent d'un Liban meilleur, où qu'ils soient dans le monde.

C'est un mensuel de langue française d'information économique, sociale et culturelle, fondé en novembre 2012 par deux étudiants franco-libanais nouvellement installés en France.

Il a pour objectif de rassembler les jeunes libanais de France et de la diaspora.

L'Echo du Cèdre cherche à encourager ces derniers à partager leur vision du monde et à faire découvrir à tous ceux qui l'ignorent la grandeur culturelle et intellectuelle de leur pays d'origine.

**L'Echo du Cèdre** is a monthly electronic newspaper in French and English, featuring analytical economic, social, cultural, and political information from Lebanon.

It was founded in November 2012, by two Lebanese students who had moved to Paris to pursue their studies.

L'Echo du Cèdre targets those students living overseas who are proud of their ancestry and who are willing to contribute time and effort in building a new and modern state.

Its main objective is to bring together the NextGen Lebanese diaspora and provide them with an interactive platform where they can share their vision and exchange their views freely.

## **L'âme du Liban**

A travers ces mots, j'aimerais vous parler du Liban.

C'est l'histoire d'un pays qui, après avoir été tiraillé par d'innombrables guerres et mis sous perfusion par des accommodements de dernière minute, se trouve encore une fois au bout du gouffre.

C'est l'histoire d'un peuple qui souffre, mais qui aspire au renouveau.

C'est aussi, l'histoire d'un peuple qui a confiance que le meilleur reste à venir.

Bien que chaque libanais ait son histoire, ses origines, son parcours, ses préférences et sa singularité, nous nous retrouvons unis par notre appartenance à une même Nation ayant ses valeurs propres, ses principes, sa culture, sa langue et ses institutions.

Chaque génération porte en elle les germes du changement et, comme pour une partition musicale, chacun d'entre nous semble avoir un rôle prédestiné à jouer pour faire aboutir ce changement.

Nous sommes unis dans notre diversité et ensemble nous aspirons à un Liban nouveau, un Liban où priment le dévouement à l'intérêt général en donnant une chance à tous les citoyens de réussir, la préservation de l'intégrité de notre territoire face aux puissances étrangères, le refus de tout diktat féodal ou partisan sur l'évolution politique de notre pays, la démocratisation des institutions, la promotion de la méritocratie et le partage du pouvoir de façon juste et équitable entre toutes les communautés qui composent notre société.

Notre pays nous appelle à nous réinventer et à imaginer une nouvelle formule de coexistence.

Une réinvention qui doit se faire dans la justice, l'égalité et le respect des valeurs universelles.

Comme toute chose dotée de vie et de ressentis, le Liban a une âme. L'âme de notre pays réside dans sa diversité. La diversité de son peuple, de sa géographie, de son climat, de sa culture, de ses traditions et de ses racines.

Notre diversité c'est la sève qui alimente notre âme. C'est elle qui nous donne espoir en l'avenir et c'est elle qui fait du Liban une terre immortelle, pour d'aucuns une aberration, mais pour d'autres un exemple de cohabitation et de coexistence unique. « Le Liban est un message » disait Jean-Paul II ; en effet, un message de paix et de tolérance, dans un contexte régional en ébullition constante.

**Erik W. Chiniara**

## The Absurd Beauty of Lebanon

I am sitting, typing these words in a small café on the outskirts of the Omani capital of Muscat. Thumbing through the menu, I notice that one adjective repeats itself on almost every page: Lebanese. Lebanese kebabs, Lebanese cocktails, Lebanese sandwiches abound. Here in Oman – as in every country that Lebanese culture has touched – the unique soul of the country of the Cedars shines brilliantly.

It is often difficult for those who truly care about the plight of Lebanon to maintain a sense of optimism when faced with the ceaseless dysfunction of the country's political system. For every sliver of news that produces some hope for a permanent, long-term solution to the chronic diseases afflicting the country, another problem emerges to smother it. Thus, it is necessary from time to time to take a step back from the ceaseless march of doubts and insecurities that plague the nation to admire the absurd, senseless beauty of the country.

In “From Beirut to Jerusalem”, Thomas Friedman's stellar account of the Lebanese Civil War, the journalist often discusses the strange resilience of the average Lebanese citizen in the midst of near-constant artillery strikes, car bombs, and sniper exchanges that pockmarked the land for 15 long years. While civilians in other nations may have quickly resorted to nihilism and defeatism in the face of such continuous trauma, the Lebanese would dance and throw parties while shells exploded outside. My father, who endured the brutal Syrian siege of Zahlé, used to speak to me of tense daytime hours listening to SAA jets screech overhead, followed by nights of arak and argileh where the problems of the daytime – while always present – would fade in the company of close friends and the soul-satisfying food that has defined Lebanon in the eyes of millions around the world.

Here, we see the senseless magnificence of a country that has not had a truly proper, functioning government since the childhoods of its now-elderly citizens. Here, we see the reason that no Lebanese, no son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter of Lebanon should ever abandon the cause of the Middle East's most splendid nation. The useless rhetoric of Lebanon's major parties may drone on like static in the background of a room, but the heart and soul of the country does not, will not, ever rest in their hands. These politicians can bicker and whine, pound their fists on the tables like teary-eyed children in the midst of a tantrum, but they can never steal the brilliant pride that illuminates the hearts of those who have seen firsthand the potential of the nation.

I have walked through the streets of Byblos, the world's oldest continuously inhabited city, and gazed in wonder at the marks left by some of Earth's mightiest civilizations. I have winded my way through the verdant slopes of the cedar forests, where King Solomon once dispatched his subjects to collect the wood to build his mighty temple. I have danced in Beirut nightclubs with what seems like members of half of the world's nations, basking in the lights and sounds of a city that refuses to extinguish its fiery soul. I have looked in the verdant hazel eyes of my grandmother – a woman born when the country truly embraced the title of “Switzerland of the Middle East” (although that name in and of itself is doing Lebanon a disservice; the country can stand on its own without being compared to any other land) and who has since witnessed some of humanity's most shameful deeds perpetrated on her homeland. I have listened to the crooning, sultry voice of Fairouz and the biting, sarcastic wit of Ziad Rahbani and I have realized why I will never abandon the cause of Lebanon.

No bomb or blast, no governmental collapse or even foreign invasion will ever alter the identity of Lebanon.



At times, I feel a deep sense of fatigue when I contemplate the myriad, endless problems that the land of my father will face for years to come.

When I read the constant stream of headlines that foreshadow more and more heartache for its people, I find it difficult to avoid burying my head in the sand and giving up on the almost surreal nature of the issues that Lebanon must overcome. But here I sit, reading this menu, and I am moved from the deepest, most personal corners of my heart. I am filled with a pride that no one will ever be able to take from me. Through the haze of a thousand failures, a million bullets and a billion gasps of breath from the proud people of the land of the Phoenicians: *Vive le Liban!*

## **Claude Khalife**

### **The Twelfth Floor**

I took the elevator up to the eleventh floor. I had the call numbers of a certain book ready in my hand. My last academic semester was finally over and I had just finished my final exams; it was time to get started on my summer reading list. Once I got to the twelfth floor, the elevator doors slowly disappeared into either side of the wall and in front of me emerged an impressive collection of books. The twelfth floor was redolent of old books. It consisted of alphabetically organised corridors stemming out from the foyer in front of the elevators. Taking in the waft of old parchments and book covers, I smiled as I stood in one of the most impressive and elaborate libraries in the entire city.

The call number in my hand began with PJ78... and I forget the rest of the figures. Looking around, I found the corridor designated PJ and began walking towards it. With the end of the academic semester already passed, students had vacated the city and the library was quite and tranquil. I could hear my own footsteps as I approached corridor PJ. The bookshelves that rested in the corridor were laden with old but seemingly untouched books. The spines of the books were mostly annotated with Arabic letters; other spines had Latin letters on them but were combined to form words that are not native to the English language. Corridor PJ was home to a unique set of books, making it an anomaly to the rest of the books in the library. Moreover, in a library that was located in the heart of a predominantly Anglo-American city, it was impressive that corridor PJ, and the books therein, had even existed there.

As I neared the dark corridor I noticed that a light at the end of the corridor was lit. Once I stepped into the territory of corridor PJ, the neon lights above my head immediately lit up. The library had installed censored lights in its corridors that turn on once an individual is detected within the corridor.



Looking down the corridor I saw a woman sitting on a stool and examining a set of books that she had picked up from the shelves. Her presence was unexpected as PJ was indeed “not on the map” in the library. An anomaly in its right, it was often bypassed by the students within the library. I went about my business, collecting the book I desired based on the call number in my hand. Once I had found what I was looking for, I departed from the corridor and left the woman to enjoy PJ, once again, in solitude. A few moments later I heard a voice call behind me saying: “This library has quite an impressive collection of Arabic books.” I turned around and saw the woman walking a few steps behind me. She smiled kindly and I reciprocated. I noted, “Yes, it really does! It’s a wonderful library, the largest in the country.” The woman asked me if I could help her find a particular set of books. She was looking for books written in Arabic and was having trouble finding the call numbers on the online server seeing as the keyboards only had Latin letters on them. She said, “I am looking for books by the author Nijmeh Hajjar.” I tried a couple of different key words on the search bar to find the books she desired. I asked her what the books were about and who the author was and she replied saying, “Well, I am the author.” It was an incredibly unique moment. I had never met the author of a set of scholarly books before under such circumstances. She explained to me that she was in the city for a conference and is flying back to her residence in just a few days. She told me that she was the Chair of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the university she taught at. We exchanged our backgrounds and I asked her about how she had liked the city so far. In the midst of our discussion we came to learn that we were both Lebanese. Ms. Najjar has written books on a Lebanese-American poet that I was not familiar with until I met her. The poet’s name is Ameen Rihani and he was part of a dialogue that tried to engage East and West. He sought to bring ideals of liberation and unity back to the Arab world through his work and his literature.

After meeting Ms. Najjar I decided to borrow her book from Ameen Rihani from the library. I told Ms. Najjar that being part of a Lebanese youth diaspora, it often difficult to connect to our country because I lived so far away from it all my life. In this disposition, I found my connection with Ameen Rihani. In that moment, I realised more than ever, that I am going through the same struggle that Rihani went through even though I did not know him or live in his time. Struggles for identity, peace and democracy transcend religion and time. From one Lebanese citizen to another, Ms. Hajjar helped me see and understand this more than ever before. She had taught me something new that helped me understand my society and my culture through a different perspective. This is the beauty of belonging to a nation irrespective of our backgrounds and our religions. The convoluted politics of our country has caused politicians and their followers to stop learning from others and engaging with others simply because “others” do not belong to their preferred sect. My acquaintance with Ms. Najjar taught me, through firsthand experience, that we, as Lebanese citizens, can learn new perspectives from one another regardless of our social identities. By promoting such encounters, we have a shot at overcoming political deadlock.

**Nour Chehabeddine**



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Youth of Lebanon, rise and move forward !

## L'Echo du Cèdre ... Information

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