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MIT Honors Lebanese Club as “Agent of Change”

Cambridge, May 21— At its annual Student Leader Awards ceremony, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) presented the 2007 *Agent of Change* award to the Lebanese Club at MIT (LCM). In announcing the winner, an MIT spokesperson described how “during the July 2006 Israeli-Lebanese conflict, the LCM moved swiftly into action, organizing the ongoing *Boston to Lebanon* grassroots fundraising campaign to raise public awareness and funds for Lebanon”.

“At a time when the local Lebanese community needed the most support, [the LCM] found a way to positively channel the community's energy into a productive, proactive effort on behalf of Lebanon”, she added. The LCM was also officially credited for making “the highest deposit ever by a student group after a single event fundraiser”, in reference to a benefit concert held by the club during the 34-day conflict.

The annual *Agent of Change* award honors the MIT student organization that best displays commitment to and passion for justice and activism to create positive change in and beyond MIT. The Lebanese Club received the award because of its “dedication, resourcefulness, and professionalism in spearheading this Boston-wide campaign”, according to MIT. The Institute hosts over 300 student-run groups and organizations.

“This prestigious honor is a powerful endorsement by MIT of our efforts to bring justice, awareness, and aid to Lebanon”, said Loai Naamani, President of the Lebanese Club at MIT. Naamani dedicated the award to “the memory of Lebanon’s lost ones; to the countless innocent victims of the savagery we call the July 2006 Conflict and to the statesmen and leaders of thought & action who have been cowardly eliminated through political assassination in Lebanon’s recent history.”

Anchored at MIT and managed by the Lebanese Club, the *Boston to Lebanon* fund offers donors tax exemption and ensures direct transfer of all proceeds to local NGOs in Lebanon at 0% overhead. The campaign is apolitical and sheds light on the massive need for economic and humanitarian aid in Lebanon. Activities supported by the campaign and conducted by local beneficiaries, such as Bahr Lubnan, Offre Joie, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), and the Lebanese Red Cross include cleaning up the Ramlet El Baida beach from the oil-spill by paying the daily salaries of 20 fishermen, reconstructing 4 households in the widely demolished Qaouzah village, removing unexploded mines in South Lebanon by supporting 7 skilled technicians, and purchasing the equipment for a new blood bank in Jbeil.

LCM member and former Secretary, Mesrob Ohannessian, a PhD Candidate in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, was also recognized at the 2007 awards

convocation with a *Distinguished Dedication* award for his “selflessness and dedication, which was most evident during TECHLEB |06”, according to MIT.

TECHLEB |06 is the 1st International Conference on Technology Development in Lebanon, held at MIT in May of 2006. The 3-day conference attracted registrants from 15 countries and 20 US states, representing 168 unique companies and organizations. Bringing together the stakeholders of Lebanon’s technology sector in one place for the first time, the conference proved to be an ideal vehicle for defining and building consensus on the pressing requirements for developing Lebanon’s technology sector and for transitioning Lebanon towards a knowledge-based economy. The outcomes of TECHLEB were officially endorsed by Lebanon’s Council of Ministers and mandated by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora to a newly founded Coordination Unit responsible for supervising their implementation.

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The Lebanese Club at MIT (LCM) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan MIT-based organization established in 1970 to foster a sense of community among the Lebanese students at MIT and to promote Lebanese culture and concerns at the Institute and the Greater Boston area at large. For more information about the LCM and its members, events, and programs: <http://web.mit.edu/lebanon> | lebanon-exec@mit.edu | +1 (617) 452-5380



LCM President, Loai Naamani (left), and LCM Treasurer, Fadi Kanaan (right), receive the Institute’s *Agent of Change Award* for 2007