

For Immediate Release

BeMA Embarks on a Historic Journey Feb. 25, 2022

BEIRUT, Lebanon—In a race of confidence against despair in Lebanon, Prime Minister Najib Mikati is scheduled to lay the first stone in a groundbreaking ceremony Friday at the site of the Beirut Museum of Art BeMA in the heart of the Lebanese capital.

The prime minister underlined culture's pivotal role in forging "an inclusive dialogue" which would unite Lebanon's religious faiths to "preserve our common history, our national identity and sense of belonging". This is the first major project of its kind to take root in the wake of a series of crises that have rocked the country since 2019.

Culture Minister Mohammad Wissam Al Mortada said the much-anticipated construction launch was a crucial milestone in "the return of Lebanese cultural life to some sense of normalcy." The patronage of the prime minister of the key ceremony at the invitation of the ministry of culture and in collaboration with St. Joseph University comes at a critical and existential time for Lebanon.

Joe Saddi, chairman of the board of trustees of the BeMA association said the BeMA museum was envisioned to boost cross-cultural encounters, an "act of resistance and courage for an open Lebanon" and daring defiance in the face of "violence, pessimism, and frustration." Erection of the compartmentalized edifice exposing open-air spaces to Beirut's diverse neighborhoods is meant to be a stepping stone for reweaving the fabric of sustainable societies and cities, Saddi added, and choice of this moment was "no mere coincidence."

The opening of the museum is scheduled for 2026. The symbolic venue made available to BeMA by the St. Joseph University lies across from the National Museum of Beirut which straddles the city's green line along the Damascus Road which split the city in half in the mid-seventies. BeMA's mission is to gather communities in a location that once divided them.

Sandra Abu Nader, who founded BeMA with Rita Nammour, noted, "Art is not a luxury. Art is a tool for peace." Nammour pointed out that "today, and more than ever, we are convinced that the museum must engage in a process of change."



New York-based designer Amale Andraos, former dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture and current special adviser to the President of the University described her design of the planned building as “an act of willful optimism” to help the Lebanese “imagine a joyful future”. The building was conceived to be accessible to all with the art it showcases and the vital cultural interactions it can generate around it, she added, “The building’s architecture is in conversation with the city’s past urban histories and its present vibrancy.”

About BeMA

BeMA is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, founded in 2017 and managed and financed by a 17-member board of directors. Modern museums are becoming more people centric to survive and thrive in their habitat. BeMA plans to capitalize on civil society, social freedoms and to document and preserve Lebanon’s cultural heritage with research, archival collections, science, communication, and innovation. An agreement between BeMA and Lebanon’s Ministry of Culture is now focused on the restoration and preservation of 3000 paintings and sculptures.

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