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Lebanese author and Brazilian publisher awarded UN Arab culture prize



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The United Nations cultural agency has [awarded](#) its annual prize recognizing efforts to increase awareness of Arab culture to Lebanese author Elias Khoury and Brazilian publisher João Baptista de Medeiros Vargens.

The laureates will each receive \$30,000 at a ceremony on 27 February at the Paris headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)).

The 2011 [UNESCO-Sharjah Prize](#) for Arab Culture, established at the initiative of the United Arab Emirates, honours individuals, groups or institutions that have made a significant

contribution to the development, dissemination and promotion of Arab culture worldwide, as well as the conservation and revitalization of Arab intangible heritage.

Mr. Khoury is a novelist, playwright, critic and academic, whose books – including *The Little Mountain*, *White Masks* and *Gate of the Sun* – have been translated into over 10 languages, according to a news release issued by UNESCO. As editor-in-chief of the literary supplement of the *An Nahar* newspaper between 1992 and 2009, he played a pivotal role in the promotion of Arab culture.

“He has witnessed and spread internationally the testimony of human suffering. His struggle and literary production created the image of a free intellectual who is giving a voice to the voiceless,” stated the international jury of the Prize, headed by Isabella Camera d’Afflito, of La Sapienza University in Rome.

Mr. Baptista de Medeiros Vargens is a publisher, writer, translator, lexicographer and professor of Arab language and culture. He is being rewarded “for his engagement in the study of the influence of the Arab language on Portuguese, and for his work shedding light on Arab Islamic culture on Brazil and in the Portuguese world in general,” according to the jury.

Next week’s ceremony will also celebrate the 10th anniversary of the prize, featuring debates on new forms of artistic expression by young Arabs and on Arab heritage and cultural diversity, as well as a concert of classical Arab music.

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