



Building Bridges through Fair Trade

Beirut, March 25th 2016

Dear Fair Trade Towns coordinators, advocates and stakeholders,

Since 2001, more and more Fair Trade Towns are joining the International Fair Trade Towns network, and it is our pleasure to host the 10th International Fair Trade Town Conference in Baskinta, Lebanon. Indeed, since the inauguration of Menjez as the first Fair Trade Town in Lebanon in 2013, 9 other towns have joined the movement and are now spreading Fair Trade movements across the country through advocacy trainings, reaching out to schools and different institutions.

Why Lebanon? Lebanon is a producer country and the first country in the Middle East to join the Fair Trade Towns movements. The theme of the conference "Building Bridges" is hoped to reflect how Fair Trade Towns in Lebanon have created social and economic links between communities of different sects and faiths. Lebanon, with its 18 different sects has benefited from the exchange of Fair Trade products, the bringing together of campaigners across previous divides and the development of a platform for solidarity and mutual support. 'Building Bridges' between different communities is a side effect of the Fair Trade Town campaigns. It became a way to exchange experiences and unite efforts to fight for a common goal and the improvement of their own communities.

What about Safety and Security? We are aware that some of your embassies discourage you from visiting Lebanon or some parts of Lebanon. However, the conference is located in Baskinta, a very safe village that has not been subject to any conflicts in the past. The safety and security of every invitee is at the heart of Fair Trade Lebanon's key concerns. Indeed, FTL carefully monitors the situation for every trip and insures the safety of all participants at all times from their arrival to Lebanon to their return home by organizing all the transports and hotel bookings. If, for any reason whatsoever, Fair Trade Lebanon feels that the conference cannot be held in extremely secure conditions, it will inform you as early as possible, and will reimburse registration fees or any other payments made to Fair Trade Lebanon.

As a French citizen living in Lebanon for more than 30 years, I have noticed that unfortunately western media tends to amplify localized conflicts into dramatic situations making it very difficult for foreigners to truly assess the severity of the situation. Please be assured that Fair Trade Lebanon will spare no efforts in maintaining the safety, security and well-being of each and every participant of the conference.

Please check our website regularly (<http://www.fairtradelebanon.org>) and like our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/LebaneseFairTradeTowns/>) for updates about the conference.

We look forward to seeing you all in July!

Warmest regards,

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