

Beirut-shima !

Dear Friends, Dear Partners,

Yesterday, Tuesday, August 4, 2020, at 6:07pm local time, *we lived through Beirut-shima.*

I'm weighing my words here. What happened is simply indescribable. I have lived through the 15 years of civil war in Lebanon and the various wars that followed and I have never experienced an event of this magnitude!

My generation will have seen it all: wars, epidemics, political assassinations, car bombings, hostage-taking, currency devaluations and the scam of the century by our *leaders who stole \$160 billion over the last 20 years.* A textbook case that will undoubtedly be taught in leading business schools for generations to come.

But a *bomb of about 2,700 tons of explosives* that blows the capital and surrounding areas in seconds is unheard of.



Three hundred thousand people, a third of the capital's population, became homeless in a matter of seconds, *more than 10,000 businesses* were blown up by the explosion, shopping malls, traditional neighborhoods, old souks, traditional Beirut houses were razed to the ground.

I went to the scene of the explosion to try to grasp the scale of the disaster. Photos and videos cannot capture the disaster that has just struck our country. I walked more than two hours in the rubble. I saw dazed business owners sitting on what is left of the sidewalks in front of their businesses. Women and children, with haggard eyes, are also sitting on the ground. Men were watching in disbelief as entire sections of their houses lay on the road.

Apocalyptic scenes that rival the biggest Hollywood productions. And then there's the port of Beirut! Pictures of Hiroshima come back to my memory. Pure horror! **150 dead, hundreds of missing, 5,000 wounded** listed in all the hospitals of Lebanon, from North to South, and **more than 3 billion dollars of damage.**

I cannot hold back tears; are they tears of sadness? Are they tears of rage?





Improving lives

Today is the hour of reckoning.

What can we do in the face of this catastrophe that is beyond us?

One thing is certain: ***give nothing to the Lebanese state to finance reconstruction.*** Not one single penny. It will be wasted. It will go to finance the thieves and fund a regime that holds its people hostage.

Today Lebanon needs everything: food, medicine, social aid and reconstruction aid. At stake is the survival of this country and its 4.5 million inhabitants, who live in the dark, deprived of electricity and water, with their hard-earned savings stolen by the banking system: Central Bank of Lebanon, commercial banks and the ruling Mafia, which has depleted the state's money and citizens' deposits.

This is a call for international assistance, not only to support the Lebanese people, but also to deliver them from this corrupt regime that has bled them to the last penny and, worse, to their last breath.

Today's urgent needs are twofold:

1-Supporting the grassroots civil society movements that are working on the ground for the overthrow of the current regime. This regime must be judged and held accountable for its actions. This is the only way to avoid, in the future, the repetition of such actions, which have gone unpunished in the past.

2-Financing the reconstruction of destroyed businesses and houses, provide food and assistance to families through NGOs and other credible private sector actors.

In short, we must support what has made Lebanon strength and influential: education, civil society, the aspiration for democracy and freedom of expression, which is unique in this part of the world, and the entrepreneurship of the Lebanese people.

More concretely, our association, ***Fair Trade Lebanon***, which has been working in the field since 2006, as well as a collective of local NGOs with ***strong experience in managing public funds in a manner that is transparent, accountable, responsible and respectful of international procedures,*** are ready to collaborate for the delivery and distribution of funds. This collective has built up experience in reconstruction, food, education and health.

A communiqué, signed by all these member organizations will follow, along with a single account number for contributions. The funds will be distributed by the collective to participating NGOs in ***full transparency. Accurate reporting will be conducted, audited by international auditors and published*** on the collective's website.



Improving lives

Lebanon needs you today. ***We need you today.*** Let's make sure that not a penny is squandered.

Today, ***Fair Trade Lebanon puts all its teams at the disposal of this monumental national reconstruction effort.*** We are experienced in the management of public funds and we work according to the requirements of international donors.

We ask for your help, support and contributions in order to set up, as soon as possible, the following initiative:

A project that ***combines a humanitarian approach*** to respond to the current emergency situation ***with our mission of sustainable economic development.*** With your contributions, we will enable numerous food production units and cooperatives located in the regions to finance the production of food baskets to meet the needs of many disaster victims. We will protect existing jobs, enable hundreds of families to preserve their only source of income and meet the most urgent food security needs of the many disaster victims.

This dual intervention will target the three main issues:

- Vulnerable and disaster-stricken households*** without access to food.
- Survival of food production units*** threatened by the economic crisis.
- Job creation and income generation opportunities*** for unemployed youth.

Together, we will rise stronger.

Philippe Adaime
Co-founder, Administrator

A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to be "P. Adaime", written over a horizontal line.