

# Beirut lands in full force in Paris

Lebanese authors, book sellers and publishers made the most of the 29th book fair in Paris, that took place between march 13th and 18th, to present the literary production of the land of the Cedars. It was an excellent occasion to meet a public that is always curious to find out what is happening in other parts of the world and to introduce "Beirut World book capital 2009"



## They were there...

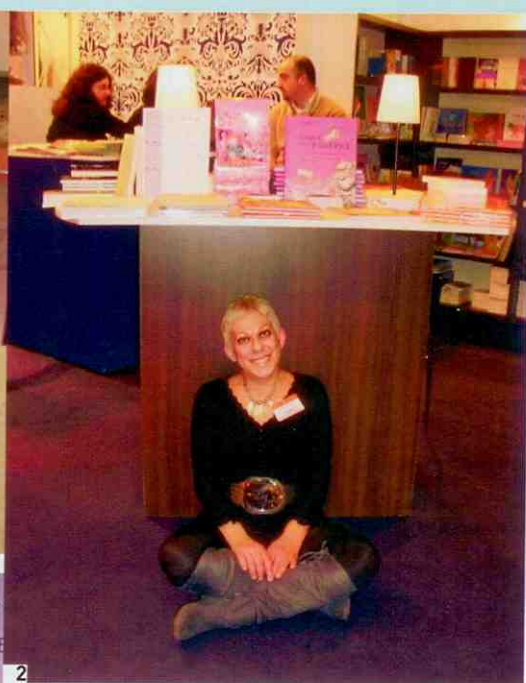
- Publishers and book sellers at the Paris Book Fair: Librairie el-Bourj, Tamyras, PUSJ, Aleph, Dar Onboz, Dar an-Nahar, l'Alba, Asala, Dar el-Hadaeq, CNRS, Souk el-Tayeb, "les Presses Universitaires (USJ)", "Librairie Stephan" and Dergham.
- Authors with book signings at the Lebanese stand: Marie-Noëlle Japy, Hareth Boustany,

Marie Choueifaty, Aurélie Carton, Joëlle Giappési, Nathalie Bontems and David Hury, Thierry Levy-Tadjine, Rita Bassil el-Ramy, Michèle Gharios, Abdo Kahi, Zeina Abirached, Anne Fakhoury, Joumana Arab Jamhoury and Georgia Makhlouf, Sami Toubia, Fouad Tabet, Kamal Mouzawak, Cherine Yazbek, Leila Zahed, Issa Makhlouf and Nabil Beyhum.

**T**hey came, they saw, they liked. "They?" They are Lebanese publishers, booksellers and authors that travelled from Lebanon for the 29th edition of the Paris book fair. Even though Mexico was the guest of honor this year, Lebanon did not miss out on the event especially after last year's boycott. With participation at around 198 500 visitors – up 20% from the year before – the Paris fair was an absolute must for all participants in the book industry in Lebanon and especially for the organizers of "Beirut world book capital".

### GOAL: MEETING FRENCH PUBLISHERS

The Ile-de-France region put at the disposal of "Beirut World book capital" a large stand divided into two sections. On one side, an open space with the colors of "Beirut World book capital" where authors had high visibility and so were able to meet with the public and sign their books. On the other side: an area overflowing with books where publishers were able to present the Lebanese literary production to the general public as well as to the professionals. Let's not forget that the Paris book fair that started in 1981 is open to the general



public as well as to professionals. Lebanese publishers were keen on meeting the latter so as to engage in future partnerships because they realize that even though publishing in Lebanon is good, it would be even better to be able to do so abroad as well. This is why they need to find partners. This situation was the subject of a round table that took place on March 16th and was organized by the Maison du livre (The Book house). The Lebanese Ministry of Culture subcontracted this publishing house to organize the Lebanese participation at the Paris book fair: Improving the distribution of Lebanese books abroad and facilitating the entry of Lebanese books on the Paris market. To address these issues there is no "ready to wear" solution, says Michel Choueiri head of the International association of French-speaking book sellers (AILF) and director of El-Borj bookstore. "There is no ideal solution to this problem. Publishers must collaborate and distribute their production at the same time, which is not always feasible."

Lebanese editors are looking for partnerships. "The book fair is an ideal meeting place for a publisher" says Tania Hadjithomas, general manager of Tamyras editions. "It is a place where we can show our know-how, forge relationships and win over booksellers and distributors. We've initiated discussions for future joint ventures in publishing or distribution of our

books in France. We leave this book fair with many projects in motion." It is important to make yourself known so as to be well placed in the French distribution network. According to Michel Choueiri "it is necessary to participate in this kind of event to keep up with suppliers and to create new contacts with them as well as to be able to discover new small publishers. The presence of many Lebanese publishers is essential and according to myself was well perceived." The same applies to Cynthia Ghobril, representative of "Presses Universitaires de l'USJ" (publishing house of Saint Joseph University). According to her, a book fair as important as the one in Paris is a key gathering

1. During the Paris Book Fair, Lebanese and French publishers established promising contacts.

2. Joelle Giappesi in a moment of rest after the signing of his book "Walls do not make a prison".

3. Historian Hareth Boustany during the signing of "Lebanese people from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the XX<sup>th</sup> century".

place to meet the general public as well as professionals in the field. "Selim Abou, manager of "Presses Universitaires" is extremely interested in co-publishing as well as establishing contacts with Hispanic publishing houses. We have been able establish some contacts in Mexico."

### BEIRUT WORLD BOOK CAPITAL, A PASSAGEWAY BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

The "Beirut World book capital" stand at the book fair was a big gateway for all players in Lebanese books. Nadim Tarazi, manager of Maison du livre was in Europe for the Paris book fair as well as for the one that takes place in Bologna, Italy.

