



**Let us rebuild BRIDGES..
Let us tear down WALLS..**



«We cannot undo the **past**,
but we can change the **future**»

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Fighters for Peace (FFP) is a Lebanon-based NGO founded in 2014 by ex-combatants from the Lebanese civil war with the aim to foster a national reconciliation process and prevent violent extremism in Lebanon and the Arab region.

All of FFP's ex-combatants have engaged in a process of critical self-reflection that spans years and leads to meaningful personal change. This change has allowed former enemies from different militias join together to become leaders for civil peace and reconciliation.

The organization provides a safe space in which ex-fighters and former extremists can seek support for their personal transformation processes. FFP members are living examples that even the fiercest partisans can transition from war to peace. For those who have engaged in war or violent extremism there is a dire need to gain new perspectives for their lives in new, non-violent leadership roles. FFP members meet those who are currently engaged in violence, helping them walk away from conflict or transition from the past to new roles. FFP supports them in finding an alternative sense of purpose and belonging, trains them and then puts them in the front line for the fight for peace and the prevention of violent extremism. They reach out to fellow combatants, youth as well as the general public.

It is crucial for societies emerging from conflict that ex-combatants are successfully and sustainably reintegrated, as they provide the most powerful voices warding against new cycles of violence. This can be done only when the incentives of war and violence are replaced by other meaningful incentives, which allow former fighters and extremists to find a new, positive and non-violent purpose in their lives.



Our Story

When violence erupted between competing Muslim sects in the North Lebanese city of Tripoli in 2012, bloody street battles were a stark reminder of the Lebanese civil war that claimed 150,000 lives. As a response, in 2012 a group of ex-combatants from the Lebanese civil war saw the unfolding violence in Tripoli as a threat to the entire country and decided to come together, as former enemies, addressing an open letter to the new generation of fighters. This letter, urging the young people not to repeat the same mistakes they once had committed, marked the creation of the FFP organization. It also called on political leaders to opt for dialogue over confrontation.

Being ex-combatants from different political and sectarian backgrounds, they wanted to dedicate the rest of their lives to prevent hatred from spreading, extremist ideologies taking root in the minds and to prevent new conflicts in Lebanon and the region.

Being former enemies, it was not easy to overcome past-violent history and political differences, often borne from unknowing prejudice and hatred. They had to build trust between each other to form a working relationship and become a team.

And while going through a personal process of transformation and forming bonds with the former “others”, through this organization they created new friendships, as well as a new family, a new home and safe space for ex-combatants and former extremists who are willing to change.

FFP is aware that the current violence in the region will lead to more suffering, with the destruction of homes and collapse of community relations that will negatively impact Lebanon. Therefore, it is vital to take advantage of their traumatic experience to lend a hand and reach out to the countries around them, to support the fighters to turn away from violence and therefore overcome hatred, engage in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes.

Violent extremism isn't confined to the Arab region. Europe has seen a growth of terrorist attacks by Daesh (IS) and Right Wing groups. It is clear that responses to violence and extremism must not be confined to singular country approaches and that the solution lies in international cooperation where best practice can be exchanged. This includes valuing the experience of grassroots efforts, national government policies and international organizations agenda.

Fighters for Peace is a legally registered NGO since 2014.



- Prevent a new civil war in Lebanon by engaging in peace building, reconciliation and transitional justice efforts in Lebanon on local community and national levels.
- Ensure that combatants leave behind violence to help contribute towards a peaceful future through mentorship when tackling their past experiences.
- Share war experiences, lessons learned, reflections on war and stories of personal change from combatants to peacemakers to Lebanese youth and other target groups in order to encourage them to engage in dialogue instead of violent conflict.
- Expand the network of ex-combatants in a region beset by civil conflict to assist in peace building efforts and create an alliance of peacemakers who use FFPs proven Theory of Change (ToC).
- Grow the FFP network to include international partners engaged in preventing and countering violent extremism and profit from a mutual experience exchange.



What We Do

Our Theory of Change:

FFP's Theory of Change (ToC) focuses on the dual goals of prevention of violence in the first instance and reconciliation and rehabilitation in the aftermath of conflict. To accomplish these tasks FFP uses the authoritative personal experience and professional capacities of former combatants trained within the organization and other professionals. FFP then delivers programs to the identified beneficiaries as the local key change-makers.

How we work:

① FFP assists ex-combatants and former extremists in their personal transformation process through methods of biography work, inner reflection and other psychosocial support mechanisms

FFP supports ex-combatants through biography work, which facilitates a safe reflective process of one's life lines, trauma and grievances. The process connects the past with the present and helps develop future perspectives. Biography work builds on values and helps former combatants reflect their inner resources to identify their resilience strategies.

Biography work is conducted in a group setting. The participants share their stories and memories in a safe space without being judged. They can see similarities of each other's' life lines, and this enables them to create deeply rooted bonds. It also puts personal responsibilities and experiences into a broader socio-political context. The main tool for biography work is story-telling, which will eventually lead to public engagement with their past.

② Fighters for Peace Provides a New Home

Leaving a militia or an extremist group can often be the hardest step, as they provide material and support structures akin to a familial network to which individuals have been a part for many years. FFP steps into the void and provides a new home to ex-combatants and former extremists who wish to leave behind militias or extremist groups. Through group support FFP provides personal and psychosocial support and assists in the process of dealing with the transformation process. Targeting former and recent combatants as well as radicalized persons, FFP staff can intervene in small and larger group settings as well as in one-to-one meetings to support the deradicalization processes, while providing emotional support needed to physically leave the violent group. The support does not end with leaving the violent group, as the 'formers' continue with building their capacities to take on new leadership roles in society as change makers.



③ Women's Roles in War and Peace

FFP's ex-combatants include a number of former women fighters. The organization addresses the multiple roles women can play in times of war and peace. When speaking about women and war, women are often seen either solely as victims or as peacemakers – just because of their gender. FFP recognizes that women can play active roles usually attributed to men: They can be supporters of war and serve as informants, weapons smugglers, military trainers and leaders of women brigades.

For women, being active in war can mean that they reached a more equal status to men. In the post-war period, women are often pushed back to more traditional gender roles. At the same time, female ex-combatants suffer from a double stigmatization because female fighters don't correspond to the socially accepted gender norms. FFP supports former female combatants to deal with this stigmatization and enables them to become role models for peacebuilding, participating in mediation and dialogue (UNSCR 1325).

④ Preventing violent extremism through testimonies and inter-generational dialogue in schools, universities, youth clubs, public

FFP members convey their personal war experiences and stories of transformation to youth and the general public. Youth are the first ones drawn into violent extremism and civil wars because they are independent and don't have family responsibilities. Youth are idealistic and search for a sense of belonging and being. They might seek thrill and adventure that extremist groups pretend to offer. Having been young when entering the civil war, FFP's ex-combatants present alongside former enemies and the audience experiences competing narratives that helps disarm strong identity-based understandings of division, which are often passed on through generations. FFP's testimonies are followed by Q&A and an open discussion in which no questions are off limits. These sessions support critical thinking skills in youth and encourage audiences to reflect on their identity and co-existence with others. Authenticity of the FFP members make them unique from other peacebuilding organizations, providing the predominantly youth audience with alternative role models that help disturb the divisive discourse of political leaders that can lead to violent extremism. FFP has worked with 50 schools and 8 universities all over Lebanon and since 2014 has held over 400 dialogue sessions and other activities, reaching out to over 20,000 youth and adults from all of Lebanon's religious communities (numbers are from 2015 till mid 2019).



⑤ Dealing with the Past (DwP)

5 a. Reconciliation and societal healing through cultural activities

Since the end of the civil war in 1990, there hasn't been any meaningful, official process that seeks to deal with the past. As a result, a number of civil society organizations have taken on the task of DwP. FFP contributes to DwP through public available testimonies of ex-combatants, live events such as playback theater, film screenings, discussion rounds, guided walking tours along the former Green Line and photo exhibitions. FFP uses these events as tools to raise awareness about the past and to contribute to the collective memory in Lebanon. These tools are also very effective means of engaging the public in societal healing processes that stem from the wounds of war. Such initiatives are necessary to break the cycles of transgenerational trauma and begin a semblance of social cohesion between divided communities to avoid violence in the future.



5 b. Oral history

The main purpose of FFP's website (established 2016) was to provide a platform for public access to the organization's archive of oral history interviews with ex-combatants and others affected by war and conflict. The archive is a key contribution to opening up a wider conversation about the Lebanese war. New testimonies continue to be added as FFP members see the process as another landmark in their recovery from participation in violent groups. The success of the website through traffic has resulted in calls for FFP to expand oral history work, to which the organization has started to train students in proper oral history techniques. FFP ensures that discussing traumatic events does not do harm to the interviewees.

⑥ Building bridges in divided communities

Although the Lebanese civil war ended in 1990, due to the absence of a national reconciliation process and the failure to change the political sectarian system, Lebanon remains a deeply divided country. The political, religious and societal divisions surface more readily in interfacing communities with a history of tension. This is where FFP has been primarily focused. FFP's members are part of some of the most divided communities. They can use their personal authority as former community leaders and ex-combatants to dovetail with their capacity as trained inside mediators to bridge divided communities. An example of FFP's success was in Tripoli in 2016 by bringing sides that were in conflict together in workshops, cultural activities and public events, eventually allowing them to create bonds across sectarian and political lines.

⑦ Youth engagement: FFP volunteers and interns

Youth is important to Fighters for Peace because they are the future. FFP's young members have engaged in reaching out to youth from all over the country and created a volunteers section. Also FFP accepts interns and offers specific programs of engagement.



⑧ Beyond Lebanon: International outreach, activities and cooperation

Lebanon is surrounded by countries in conflict and war and is affected by the multiple regional crisis. Therefore, FFP has been reaching out to Palestinian ex-fighters living in Lebanon as part of reconciliation efforts in Lebanon. FFP reaches out to recent fighters and refugees from countries such as Syria and Iraq, giving their testimonies, holding dialogue sessions and trainings and engaging in mediation efforts to transfer the lessons learned in a peer-to-peer environment to aid their reconciliation and reintegration efforts. FFP also supports communities hosting large numbers of refugees in social cohesion strategies.

Furthermore, these wars and crisis also go beyond regional borders, reaching Europe as well. In Germany, as well as in other places such as UK and Scandinavia, FFP worked with refugees and recent fighters from the Arab region, in particular from Syria. Violent extremism has shown that it goes beyond regions through the radicalization of people around the world. FFP seeks to contribute to the growing practice of de-radicalization internationally by taking part in further knowledge exchanges and is regularly invited to expert workshops and conferences related to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism, conveying their experiences as first-line practitioners to an international expert audience. As a result of these contributions FFP is a member of various international networks.

⑨ FFP works in accordance with international frameworks

2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) article 5 and 16

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

UN Security Council Resolution 2419 and 2250 on Disengagement, Reintegration, Youth, Peace and Security.

Plan of Action to Prevent Extremism (2015)

Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration Standards (IDDRS 2004).

National Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism (Lebanon).

OUR VOICES

“During the war, we had great dreams and high hopes for a just and equal society. But we realized that war killed our dreams and violence never leads to a better society.” Ziad Saab, former commander

“One morning I woke up and looked into the mirror and saw the monster in me. I had blood on my hands. I had reached the moment when I realized that I had to change profoundly and become a different human being.” Assaad Chaftari, former intelligence officer

“It took Salwa Saad one year to shake hands with Assaad Chaftari. They fought on opposite sides of the Lebanese Civil War (1975 – 1990), Saad for the Communists and Chaftari for a right-wing Christian militia. Today, they both work with Fighters for Peace – the only organization in Lebanon that brings together former combatants from both sides – to steer young people away from violence.” From an article by Alicia Media, Equal Times online magazine Spain

“We, the former fighters, have decided to become fighters for peace” - Fighters for Peace

“Let us choose peace over killing, dialogue over fighting, and love over hatred” - Fighters for Peace

“We cannot undo the past, but we can change the future.” Fighters for Peace



"I really enjoyed working with fighters for peace, it allowed me to work on the subject of the memory of civil war and therefore allowed me to progress a lot for my academic work/ final thesis I was able to meet different partners of fighters for peace and so I was able to meet people who mastered different subjects in a very specific way and interviewing them was a great opportunity." Marine, research intern, 23 years old

"I first got introduced to Fighters for Peace through their walking tour event with one of the ex-fighters. Ever since then, I've been interested in any of their events. Not to mention that their Oral History program was really beneficial. It helped me to let my interest in the Lebanese Civil War be more organized." Samira Ezzo, youth committee member, 23 years old

"As 'Un Ponte Per', it's a pleasure to work with such passionate people who went through very hard and terrible experiences to become what they are today. Such a powerful transformation, such a powerful process they went through to become Fighters for Peace." David, 31 Head of Un Ponte Per's Lebanon office





“Creativity and success are due to those who deserve it. As Fighters For Peace, we stood by you today, creative men and women. As a final appeal, I ask you, can we have more encounters like this one!!!!
 ... a two-hour long workshop... surprisingly, without a single dull moment, everyone worked relentlessly and partook in a state of harmonious interaction that left all participants yearning for more... as champions of peace, we all made our contribution, coloring the discussion part of our identity, style and passion...”

Amina El Hage, Chhim Highschool, Principal

MEASURABLES & IMPACT



Total number of projects
(2015 – 2019)

16

Total number of activities
(2015 – 2019)

400+

Total number of beneficiaries
reached by 2019

22K+

Media appearances in major national, regional and international media outlets such as: Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, arte, BBC, CNN, Reuters, DW TV, RT Turkish TV, Future TV, LBC, New TV, OTV, An Nahar, Mustaqbal newspaper, As-Safir, Al Moudoun, Radio Monte Carlo, Lebanese radio shows

FFP has been covered by researchers from national and international universities such as AUB, LAU, Lebanese University, Arab University, Belfast University, Warwick University, Aarhus University, Marburg University, among others.

Over 30 collaborations with media, newspapers and researchers in 2019 only

DONORS AND PARTNERS

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Institute for Foreign Relations (IFA/zivik)
KiLag Germany
L'Atelier
Norwegian Embassy
UNDP
UNESCO



PARTNERS AND NETWORK

Forum for Cities in Transition (FCT)
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Inside Out (IO) Germany
Laban Lactic Culture Theater Troupe
Lebanese American University
Lebanese University Institute for Social Sciences
March
Queens University Belfast
Radicalization Awareness Network (ran)
Social Movement Lebanon
Wahdatouna Khalasouna

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