

## **Solidarity Statement from the UK Co-operative Movement to the First Conference of Co-operatives in North Syria, 21-22 October, 2017**

Members of the co-operative movement of the United Kingdom would like to send our heartfelt solidarity to the first co-operative conference of the Democratic Federation of North Syria.

Many of us have been following developments in the region closely since the start of the Rojava Revolution and we believe we have much to learn from and share with one another.

What is being attempted in North Syria – a transition to a largely co-operative economy during a time of war, economic embargo and instability – is amazing and inspiring, and an example to the world.

The co-operative movement in the UK today owes its existence to the Rochdale Pioneers, a group of working class people in the north of England who came together in 1844 to buy basic foods and open a small shop with collective ownership, to provide basic necessities to people at affordable prices. Customers could also become members of the co-operative, get a share of the profits and take part in making decisions. Workers in nearby towns were inspired by this and the idea began to spread across the country.

Today there are around 7,000 co-operatives in the UK, from consumer co-operatives like the one the Rochdale Pioneers opened; workers' co-operatives, owned and managed by the workers; housing co-operatives, owned and managed by the people who live in them; agricultural and farmers co-ops, and many more.

You, who are gathering together in North Syria today for your first co-operative conference, are the pioneers of your own co-operative movement. Future generations and members of co-operatives in what we hope will be a future peaceful and democratic Syria will look back on this historical moment and learn about what you are doing for the future of your region.

There will no doubt be great challenges and obstacles along the way, especially considering the situation of war, embargo and economic siege that you are facing. However, we believe in the creativity and resilience of the people in your region, and in the power of co-operative organising to create real and lasting change.

When there are needs in society or a community, the co-operative movement has the opportunity to step up to help meet the needs of the people.

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We look forward to developing a deeper relationship between members of co-operatives in both our regions and wish all co-operative projects in North Syria the greatest of success and prosperity.

Signed by:

1. Co-operative Economy in Rojava and Bakur research project
2. Solidarity Economy Association
3. Co-operatives UK
4. The Co-operative College
5. Birmingham Bike Foundry
6. Shoal Collective
7. Co-operative Business Consultants
8. Weir digans Workers' Co-op
9. Unicorn Grocery
10. LEDfantastic
11. Students for Co-operation
12. Cooperantics.coop
13. Bakers & Food Allied Workers Union (BFAWU)
14. Suma Wholefoods
15. Tangram Housing Co-operative, Leeds
16. The Swap and Reuse Hub Co-operative, Edinburgh
17. Out of Town Housing Co-operative
18. Sail Boat Project workers' co-operative
19. Firelight Housing Cooperative (Leeds)
20. Valley Organics
21. Infinity Foods
22. FairShares Association Ltd
23. FairShares Institute for Cooperative Social Entrepreneurship
24. UK Society for Cooperative Studies
25. Social Enterprise International Ltd
26. Wild Things ecological education collective Ltd
27. V3 Power Ltd
28. Wild Peak Housing Co-operative Ltd
29. The Hive Housing Coop, Bradford
30. Co-operative Assistance Network Limited
31. Footprint Workers' Co-operative, a member of the Radical Routes federation of co-operatives working for social change
32. Xanadu Housing Co-operative
33. Leeds Environmental Design Associates (LEDA)
34. Oblong Ltd/Woodhouse Community Centre, Leeds
35. Cornerstone Housing Co-operative, Leeds (a member of the Radical Routes federation of coops working for social change)