

U.S. GOVERNMENT FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA

For a Better Future

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Tunisian Woman's Work Reaches the U.S Market

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Neira Khouja is a talented Tunisian artisan who participated in the Tunisian-American Association of Young Professionals (TAYP) U.S.-funded project "Tunisian Handicraft Export Initiative." She used that experience to develop her company "Art & Co" and to create her own handicraft brand "Tuline." Neira's main focus is converting vintage pieces into unique, cotemporary items. Drawing on inspiration from Tunisia's heritage, Tuline's mission is to preserve and recycle vintage traditional textile, fur, and handicrafts and reintroduce them to our daily lives, giving them a second life by turning them into unique pieces of furniture and decorative accessories, armchairs, sofas, cushions, bags, etc.

Through the TAYP project, Ms. Khouja pursued her dream of promoting Tunisian handicraft in the U.S and preserving Tunisian cultural heritage, and positively impacting the lives of over 20 artisans who work with her including carpenters, cabinetmakers, weavers, upholsterers, and others.

Ms. Khouja and seven other Tunisian artisans participated in "NY Now," one of the most prestigious handicraft trade shows in the United States. She first participated in 2013 and then again three more times: twice in 2014 and in 2015. Her participation in the



Tuline Booth in NY, August 2014

trade show helped the "Tuline" brand to catch the attention of several U.S. buyers and she has since then received ongoing orders from a number of U.S. companies.

The success of Neira and the other 13 artisans is due to their efforts, to the opportunity provided by the U.S Embassy and to the efforts of all the project's partners mainly the Tunisian Ministry of Commerce, the Tunisian Office of Handicraft (ONAT) and Centre de Promotion des exportations (CEPEX).

Due to the increasing demand of Tunisian handicraft in the U.S market, the U.S Embassy in Tunis extended the project for another ten months to help resolve the artisan's supply chain challenge.

Tunisian Women Introduce Congressional Spouses to Tunisian Handicrafts

On March 12, 2015, U.S Embassy held a handicraft trade show to bring together congressional spouses and rural women who benefited from U.S-funded projects.

During this event, Tunisian women artisans displayed their handmade products, and explained to congressional spouses the origin of the material used, how each piece was made, and how they can be used.

The fair was an opportunity for the Congressional spouses to discover Tunisian handicrafts and to encourage the artisans to use the skills they learned which enabled them to become financially independent.



At the end of the event, the artisans gave a Tunisian gift to each of the Americans as a souvenir of their visit.

Tunisian Entrepreneur Develops his New Ecological Business and Generates Employment



“Eco Lav” Shop

Mehdi Ben Hmida is the manager of “Eco Lav”, a U.S.-funded ecological dry-cleaning business. He earlier received coaching assistance from the “Souk At-Tanmia” project. Through this project, Mehdi is providing his services to some Tunisian companies at a preferential rate, and offering them a free pick-up and delivery service.

The project created one manager position and ten permanent jobs for youth. Mehdi was also able to open a second shop and sign two franchise agreements in Tunisia. He will attend the “Franchise Expo” in Paris in March 2015.

Tunisian Student Leaders Participate in the MEPI Alumni Annual Conference in Rabat

Fourteen MEPI Alumni from Tunisia participated in the MEPI Alumni annual conference in Rabat, March 7-10, 2015. The Tunisians were able to share their ideas and learn from the other alumni from other Arab countries. They also attended workshops and training sessions designed to help them develop civil society in their hometowns.

Tunisian MEPI alumna Issrar Chamackh observed, *“MEPI changed my life and gave me an international family. My heart feels bigger with all the love that I feel for each and every one of them. The past week has been exhausting yet rewarding and humbling in a way that I cannot explain. Thank you is not enough.”*



MEPI Student Leaders 2014 Alumni During MEPI Alumni Annual Conference Held in Rabat

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On the Web soon!

<http://tunisia.usembassy.gov/>

Since the January 2011 revolution, the United States has provided approximately \$550 million to support Tunisia's transition, focusing on technical and financial assistance to Tunisia's economic growth, support for peace and stability, and support for civil society and democratic practices. The U.S. Government plans to allocate more than \$60 million in Fiscal Year 2014 funding, building on assistance programs initiated after the revolution.

