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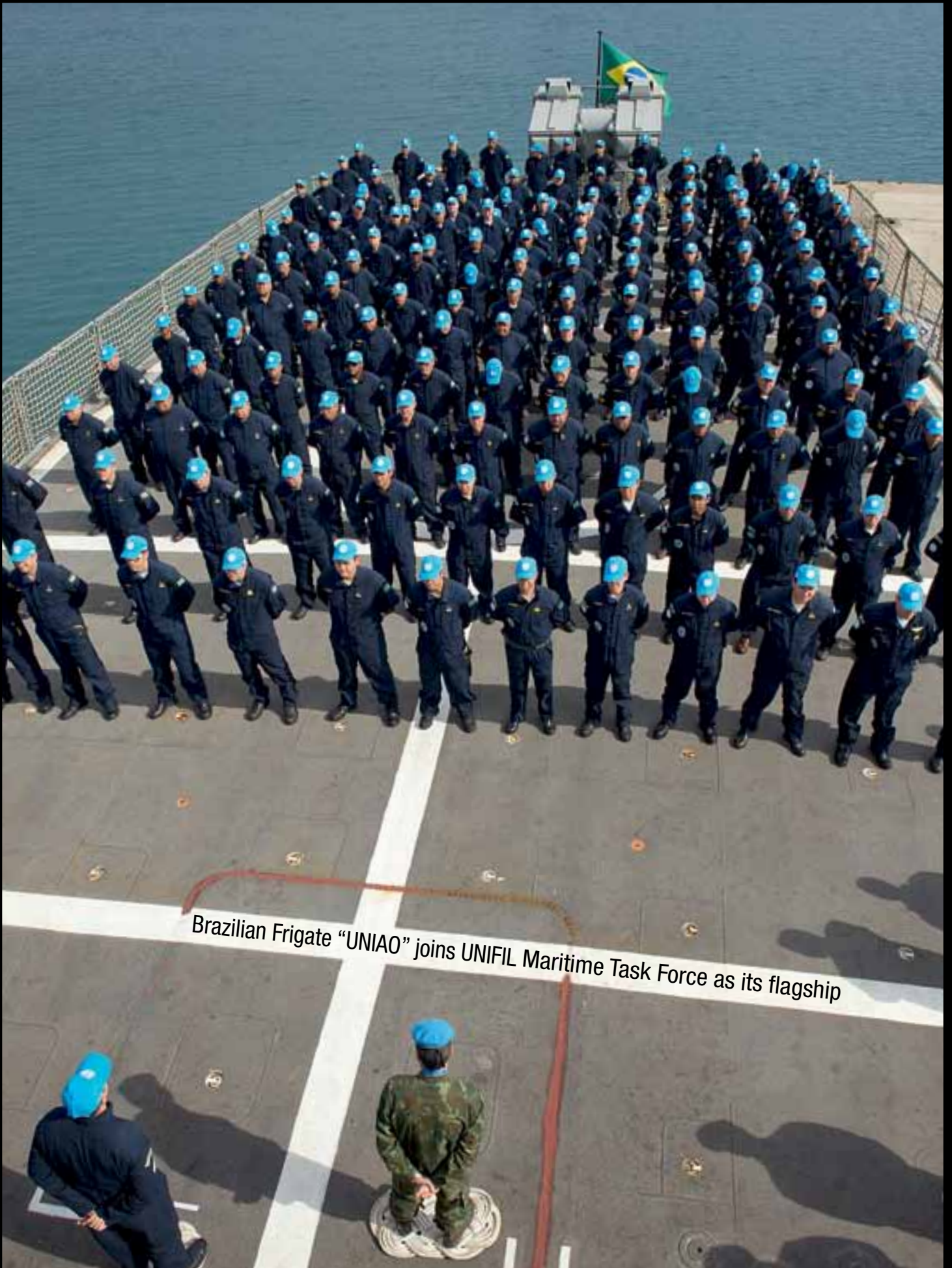
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A photograph showing UNIFIL soldiers in camouflage uniforms and blue berets working with a woman in a red shirt and black headscarf to harvest olives from a large tree. They are standing on a blue tarp spread on the ground. The scene is set outdoors with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

**A Helping
Hand**



Brazilian Frigate "UNIAO" joins UNIFIL Maritime Task Force as its flagship

A Helping Hand

The cover of this issue depicts UNIFIL's Nepalese peacekeepers assisting a woman pick olives at her grove in the village of Meiss ej Jebel in a remote part of southern Lebanon. Scanning through the photographs to make a selection, I was reminded of a story my friend Hassan Siklawi, a long-serving peacekeeper in the Mission, narrated for *'Al Janoub'* [June 2008] of how UNIFIL troops used to protect and assist farmers harvesting olives during the early years of the mission in the 1980s. "All of this was done by choice, by the peacekeepers, not because they were ordered to, but because they are normal people like anyone else," he said.

Those were the tumultuous years of conflicts and occupation when people required permission from UNIFIL even to move between villages through UN checkpoints, Siklawi recounted. There is none of that today as the security environment in the south has strategically changed for the better with the deployment of the Lebanese army together with an enhanced UNIFIL presence after 2006. What has not changed are the humane impulses: the mundane needs of the people, the peacekeepers' zeal to help out the best they can, and the ever growing bonds between UNIFIL and the people of the south.

This unique relationship built over decades caught particular attention of the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Asha Rose Migiro on her recent visit to southern Lebanon [\[see lead feature on page 6\]](#). The same spirit is evident in the reflections of Dutch veterans who returned on a visit here 25 years after having served with UNIFIL [\[see page 17\]](#).

The latter represents a characteristic magnetism south Lebanon has had for foreigners: from East or West, troops from 36 different countries and civilians from many more serving with UNIFIL, all attest to this same affinity for the south that some (particularly those not exposed to its charm) find baffling. After all, ravaged by years of conflicts, south Lebanon is not the most developed part of the country although economic activities and infrastructure development have picked up visibly in the last five years of unprecedented calm the area has witnessed.

So what is it that makes the place so special? It has to be the people – the proverbial friendliness of southerners that strikes a chord, its resonance so enduring that you get drawn back here again and again. The bonhomie also brings out the most noble human traits in peacekeepers.

And so, in defiance of conflicts and adversities, peacekeepers have always gone a step beyond their calling to help their welcoming hosts. In fact back in 1982, recognising the protection and humanitarian assistance extended to the people of south Lebanon by UNIFIL troops amidst widespread hostilities, the UN Security Council by its resolution 511 asked that the peacekeepers continue this endeavour to the extent possible under the circumstances. It was then that the strong humanitarian disposition of UNIFIL took roots at the core of the mission and has since remained a defining factor in the way peacekeepers relate to the local population.

Notably, although the Mission now has an annual budget of half a million dollars for Quick Impact Projects among local communities, in the years until 2006 UNIFIL was not provided any resources for humanitarian assistance. It was left to the ingenuity and initiative of peacekeepers to find ways and means to address the most pressing needs of the people. The relationship therefore was never one of material 'give and take'; rather one based on mutual respect and genuine feelings of community where the peacekeepers equally benefit from the hospitality extended them by the local population and by sharing in the rich culture and traditions of south Lebanon.

UNIFIL now invests substantially in a variety of community projects and services to assist the people of south Lebanon. But what truly distinguishes the relationship is the care and concern that come from being together with the people, and simple personal gestures such as picking olives.

It is this enduring relationship between southerners and peacekeepers that provides the common strand through the different stages of UNIFIL's presence for the last 33 years.

Neeraj Singh
Editor-in-Chief

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“Ya Habibi Ya Jnoub”



In an effort to bridge the gap between different cultures while promoting local products, an artisan exhibition was held at Rokbatt (South Korean battalion) base in Tayr Dibba on 28 October. Nine women cooperatives from the south – seven from Tyre

area and two from Bint Jbeil – participated in the “Ya Habibi Ya Janoub” exhibition organized by UNIFIL Civil Affairs. South Korean peacekeepers, as the women noted, enjoyed the fresh olives, oregano, tomato juice and jam produced by

the women and weren't shy in eating more than one ‘Mankoushe’. Scarves, glass, wood and fabric handicrafts made by southern children with special needs drew the interest of soldiers as souvenirs to take back home for their loved ones.

Two prefabs to LAF

Two metal prefabricated structures were transferred from UNIFIL to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in a ceremony held at UNIFIL's Headquarters in Naqoura.

The structures have the unique feature that it can be dismantled, transported and reconstructed in alternative location.

“UNIFIL hopes that these buildings will support operations of the Lebanese Army in the south,” UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas said at the ceremony that was attended by LAF Commander for South Litani Sector, Brigadier-General Sadeq Tlais, UNIFIL Director of Mission Support Mr. Girish Sinha as well as several Lebanese and UNIFIL officers.



UN Day



UNIFIL celebrated the 66th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations at its headquarters in Naqoura with a ceremonial parade and the honouring of long-serving staff members. In the presence of senior officers of the Lebanese Armed Forces, Lebanese authorities, as well as representatives from various international organizations, NGOs and UN agencies, UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas recalled the universal values that underlie the global mission of the United Nations and UNIFIL's role in southern Lebanon in this context. He also presented certificates of recognition to eight Lebanese staff members who have completed 30 years of service with UNIFIL.

Story reading



The children were completely taken by Fatima Sharafeddine's stories. The six-year-olds from the Al Mbaratt orphanage and school in Khiyam as well as the Orthodox school in Marjayoun enjoyed Fatima's readings of her stories in an event organized by UNIFIL's Civil Affairs.

Fatima chose to read the stories “Tambouri's Shoes”, “Grandpa”, “Noura”, and “Who Am I” to the children who were mesmerized by the characters in her books. And after a day spent reading stories to the kids, Fatima felt at home as she expressed her delight to *‘Al-Janoub’*: “I am so happy I came, and I am even happier with the children's interaction with my stories.” The award-winning book writer insists on the freedom of her writing: “I don't necessarily have a message to relay in my stories, I just want the children reading my books to have a good laugh and enjoy their time,” Fatima said in the interview. Having written more than 50 books, Fatima a southerner herself, says she often wakes up in the middle of the night with an image in her head that quickly translates into a potential character or event for a picture book.

Deputy Secretary-General in south Lebanon

Building trust with people

The Deputy Secretary General, Asha Rose Migiro, on a visit to southern Lebanon appreciated UNIFIL's efforts to maintain peace and stability. She had special praise for the other UNIFIL activities of assisting the local population, activities that she believes builds mutual trust and effectively helps in carrying out the tasks the peacekeepers have come here for.



And in confirmation of her interest in the community work the Mission and its peacekeepers are doing, she made it a point to stop at a public school to inaugurate a project UNIFIL has funded to help in education.

"UNIFIL is establishing very good relations with the local population because they are the ones who judge us and who are supposed to benefit from our work," the Deputy Secretary-General said in an interview.

are doing and to work with them towards achieving the objectives of our presence here in Lebanon".

On top of its mandated tasks, UNIFIL attaches great importance to relations with the local population among whom the peacekeepers operate. The Mission has developed close human bonds with the people, a relationship that has been built over many years of conflict when the peacekeepers have stood by the people,

had a strong humanitarian disposition in addressing the consequences of conflict in southern Lebanon. Community projects undertaken by UNIFIL address some of the most pressing needs of the local population and support local authorities.

UNIFIL contingents provide free medical, dental, veterinary and such other assistance to the local population, conduct various training programs for people in computer, language, yoga, taekwondo, baking, cooking, knitting and others. The limited assistance includes projects such as helping refit a village school, filter drinking water, install water reservoirs and rehabilitate historical sites.

During the visit to the south, the Deputy Secretary-General inaugurated a Quick Impact Project funded by UNIFIL to build three new classrooms for the Naqoura village's only Intermediate Public School which helps provide improved access to education for the local community.

This project was followed through with the Portuguese engineering unit's assistance. After cutting the ribbon, Ms. Migiro engaged in a lively conversation with students who were impressed by her interest in their art work and studies.

Moving through the classes, Ms. Migiro sat among the children chatting with them and their teachers. She asked them intently about their drawings, which were part of a UN project on human rights, and their eyes lit up to her compliments.



In addition to addressing operational issues related to their mandate, she said, UNIFIL troops "are also looking at work that touches the daily lives of the people here, to get them really to appreciate the work we

protected them and provided all possible assistance within the available means.

Although not a humanitarian or development agency, UNIFIL has from the early years of its deployment in 1978



At a small ceremony at the school, the Deputy Secretary-General praised the close relationship between UNIFIL, the authorities, and the community. "I hope that this cooperation is deepened in an effort to make a difference in people's lives," she said.

During her one-day visit to southern Lebanon on 24 November, Ms. Migiro was briefed at Mission Headquarters in Naqoura about UNIFIL's operations, attended a town hall meeting with the civilian staff members and was hosted by members of the UNIFIL contingent from her native Tanzania. She also attended a luncheon organized by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in the city of Tyre.

"UNIFIL is doing a great job here, on behalf of the United Nations, but (also) on behalf of humanity in general," Ms. Migiro told *'Al-Janoub'*.

She also lauded the cooperation between LAF and UNIFIL, a policy that is at the core of the peacekeepers' mission in southern Lebanon, and touched on the strategic review of UNIFIL requested by the Security Council in its latest resolution 2004 of 30 August 2011.

"The strategic review should enable us to complete the objective of our presence - that is to finally hand over responsibilities," Ms. Migiro said. "We are addressing issues that relate to building their capacity and we're creating an environment where there

is also trust so that at the end of the day the tasks that are being undertaken by UNIFIL can be handed over to the Lebanese Armed Forces."

The strategic review will "give us an opportunity also to plan something that will be sustainable so that when UNIFIL draws down, the Lebanese Armed Forces can stand on its own feet, so to speak, and they can take the overall responsibility for peace and security in the country," she added.

In public speeches during the visit, the Deputy Secretary-General highlighted the significance of UNIFIL's deployment for peace and security. "UNIFIL's presence aims to help create a window of opportunity for establishing a permanent ceasefire and finding a long-term solution to the conflict," she said.

Ms. Migiro lauded the progress achieved in southern Lebanon, noting the respect for the cessation of hostilities by the parties and the unprecedented stability as well as the "strong peacekeeping partnership" between LAF and UNIFIL to maintain the stability.

"We could never succeed in our mission without cooperation from our hosts. Here in Lebanon, we benefit from an excellent partnership ... Let us pledge to do our utmost together so that this country will find lasting peace and prosperity," Ms. Migiro said.

Issues relating to the security and safety of UNIFIL personnel, military and

civilian, were also raised during the visit, particularly that UNIFIL convoys have been attacked in the past few months by roadside bombings injuring a number of soldiers.

"The security of the military, of the civilian capacity for us is of great concern," she told *'Al-Janoub'*. UNIFIL is doing all it can to address these issues, but preventing those incidents remains a challenge, she said.

"I know that these incidents are serious, but I hope they are isolated, especially as we work to address not only the technical component of military or security work, but also community-related work which will build that confidence and trust that the UN is here in the interests of peace, security and development for the Lebanese, and in that way to also contribute to the stability of the region," the Deputy Secretary-General said.

In a speech to the UNIFIL staff, Ms. Migiro said peacekeepers' resolve will not waver in the face of challenges and attacks. She recalled the sacrifices of UNIFIL, which lost 293 peacekeepers since its establishment, noting that these tragic losses were the largest in any peacekeeping operation.

"The best way to honour their sacrifice is to carry on their work. That is what you are doing with great dedication and professionalism," she said.

Samir F. Ghattas UNIFIL Public Information

A career break



For the 39 young women and men from the Bint Jbeil area, what appeared at first to be a fun activity to kill time soon developed into the chance of a lifetime.

Instead of juggling from one unsatisfactory job to another, a career in hairdressing now awaits them, mostly high school dropouts in their teens, thanks to training sessions funded by UNIFIL and the French contingent that constitutes UNIFIL's "Force Commander Reserve" (FCR).

The male trainees, a dozen of them, met up every Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday for six consecutive weeks, to learn hairdressing skills. And if they thought they could take the training lightly, their trainer Mohammad Nimir Dagher was determined to make "his kids," as he likes to call them, professional hairdressers.

Flitting from one chair to another, commenting on their styling with professional tips, he expressed pride about his students.

"They are really learning the correct technique in hair cutting," he told *'Al-Janoub'*.

Although the smile never leaves his face, Mr. Dagher knows it is still a long way before they acquire all there is to learn. Yet, he assures them of their potential to develop as hairdressers.

"Let us pick Samer, our weakest trainee. He will perform a haircut right now and you shall be the judge," he said, exuding confidence.

And so Samer stepped up to the challenge.

"Don't worry about him, you'll see that he

is good," said a fellow trainee, Ali Fakih, "Our trainer taught us well and although he points out our weaknesses, he never criticizes us."

Mr. Dagher did indeed point out Samer's weaknesses as the teenager clipped away. "We all make mistakes, that's how we learn and develop," the trainer pointed out.

Similar was the quest of the 27 female trainees under hairdresser Solange Sabah. A 60-hour program over a period of six weeks aimed to teach how to wash the hair, trim, cut, color, and brush it in multiple styles.

The idea came from the appeals by the women themselves to Hassan Joumy, the director of the Cultural Movement Centre of Bint Jbeil.

"They requested that we organize a beauty training session where females, especially widows and single women, could learn a skill that enables them to make their own money and become financially secure and independent," explained Joumy.

Thus, five months later and after several meetings with UNIFIL's Civil Affairs office, the training sessions materialised. The Cultural Movement Centre in the town of Bint Jbeil hosted the sessions while UNIFIL and FCR funded the materiel and equipment such as chairs and scissors as well as the cost of trainers and transportation.

Each Monday and Friday these women met to learn from Ms. Sabah, as she made the rounds, pointing out mistakes, giving hints, but most importantly making them believe that they could do it.

"I never imagined or anticipated these women will be such quick learners," Ms. Sabah said of her trainees. "They are so eager to learn, and maybe to later start their own hair salons," she added with a smile.

That is a dream shared by most trainees, who aim at benefitting the most from the sessions, as Zaynab Ibrahim said: "This training allowed me to have a dream. And today I can hope that someday I will be able to open my own salon and make women beautiful and happy."

"Hairdressing started as a hobby for me, until I joined this training session, where one can't help but take it seriously," Ibtissam Fadel told *'Al-Janoub'*, expecting to work the first couple of years from her home.

"We are very happy to have found such a training course with the best standards in the area and for free, and all that was possible thanks to UNIFIL," concluded Zaynab Bazzi, another trainee.

Ghinwa El-Deek UNIFIL Public Information

Cooking Italian ...



Lebanese love for Italian food is not surprising, given the two peoples share the Mediterranean and the history. But for southern Lebanon women, cookery lessons offered by UNIFIL's Italian contingent bring an added value to their culinary skills.

It is an opportunity for them to learn the techniques, and the knowhow of traditional Italian cooking with a modern flair. The aim of the training at the Italian army base at the village of Maarakeh is to enhance the pizza, pasta and lasagna's cooking methods used by the women, which in addition brings the community and the peacekeepers closer together.

Baking the authentic Italian way is a specialty of Chef Salvatore La Rosa, a soldier from Sicily also known as "Toto". Fourteen women and youngsters from the women's association in Qana attended a two-day cooking class he presented. Chef Toto shared his recipes' secrets with the women and taught them how to mix, knead and roll the dough. He also introduced the women to the history, technique, and skills to making the perfect Italian pizza, and trained them how to prepare specialty dishes from his native Sicily.

"Cooking is my passion and I want to share it with the southern women" said Chef La Rosa, praising the women's enthusiasm that adds to his energy, "they love learning, and since obviously they are very good cooks, it's very easy for them to apply what I'm teaching them".

Divided into three teams, those energetic women were given the exact measurements and off they went mixing, kneading, and rolling dough before they moved to the sauce under the supervision of the chef,

urging him to reveal more tips that will make all the difference in the taste, thus adding to their menu a few Italian dishes.

Raymonda Salloum could not wait to get home and apply what she learned: "I cooked pizza for my husband the same night. He really enjoyed it!" she told the class the next day.

The women were able to become a "Pizzaiolo", pizza maker, on the first day, whereas the second day included the preparation of a multi-course meal from the traditional Italian recipes.

The course ended with a demonstration of Italian music, singing, lunch and distribution of certificates along with a jar of Pesto Genovese Sauce for each of the participants, who left with a hope to add Italian cuisine to a business they plan in their village of Qana for visitors to a shrine of the Virgin Mary that will be built there.

And that was not enough to cover the women's passion for Italian cooking, nor the gracious hosting spirit at the Italian base. A couple of weeks later, the Italians again welcomed 22 Lebanese women from four different cooperatives, to share with them cooking secrets and recipes. UNIFIL's Civil Affairs Sector West was keen on making sure that the three-day program will enable these already successful businesswomen to evolve in food production, especially those already in the business, each in her respective cooperative.

"I didn't just come here to participate, but to really learn," stated Adibbe Eizzedine, while Hannaa Houssayni hoped to learn new recipes, "that we can later use in our cooperatives where we are nowadays manufacturing certain food items."

"Not only we will make use of this knowledge in our cooperatives, where pizza is one of the most ordered foods, but also at home at our family's dining table," said Daad Ismael, pointing out that such training sessions with UNIFIL help women in their professions.

As the training sessions came to an end, Zaynab Harb Kashmar, told *'Al-Janoub'* how amazing the experience was, especially because she cooks for a traditional restaurant in Beirut.

"I used to cook the pizza, pasta, and the lasagna randomly. But now I know how to cook them the real Italian way," she said. Her witty 10-year-old daughter, Raha, expressed gratitude to UNIFIL for the lessons on how to cook, and she does in fact cook, and pizza will soon taste differently from her hands as she promised.

And the pizza did taste differently, said the women unanimously, when they, along with their tutor and Italian soldiers, shared a Lebanese Italian cooked meal at the end of the program.

Ikhlas Khalife UNIFIL Language Assistant





UNIFIL's community assistance enhances capabilities of children and school dropouts.





Laughing all the way

His father had told him long time ago that southerners are good hearted and hospitable people. Only today he realized it.

Prominent Lebanese comedian and actor George Khabaz, who is known for his ability to create laughter in most needed times, took his knowledge to southern Lebanon, spending a day with children from Marjayoun, Halta and Houla, burdened by the stress of conflict.

The visit was organized by UNIFIL's Sector East Civil Affairs office and it comes after a show for children in UNIFIL-funded project for school dropouts in a theater production in Beirut.

"I am so happy and proud to have met new people through UNIFIL," he said in an interview in south Lebanon. "The kids here are amazing; I wouldn't have expected such interaction." Organizers of the tour emphasized on Khabaz's interaction with the people, to give the southerners a chance to talk to the comedian, to screen together favorite clips of his films and hear directly from the artist, to get his autograph or even snap a few souvenir pictures.

A member of Marjayoun Municipality, Hassan Abla, commended Mr. Khabaz's visit since the village was in dire need for entertainment and UNIFIL's constant assistance. "UNIFIL is always assisting us, either in schools or through diverse projects," Mr. Abla said.

Bouncing from one village to another, and having participated in the children's talent event in Halta, and enjoying the Indian Battalion's cultural show Mr. Khabaz was struck by the lively interaction with the children, fans of his work. "We were able to communicate in a very plausible and pleasant manner," he said. The children, on the other hand, expressed appreciation for Mr. Khabaz as well as for UNIFIL for assisting on this project. Suha Shreim spoke of how happy and honoured she felt with the actor's presence, while Malak Shreim lauded UNIFIL's entertainment activities in the town.



The day of fun continued, where Mr. Khabaz was surprised at the following event in Houla watching Ghady and Majd, two young students, mimicking him in a live sketch on stage. "I think he was happy to see us imitating him," said Majd at the end of the show, expressing his utter admiration for the actor. Khabaz gave the boys his blessing and encouraged other talents as well, those who sang, played music, or mimicked his own sketches, transforming an encounter with the artist into an unforgettable carnival. The show in Houla was coloured by the cultural show put up by Nepalese peacekeepers who entertained the audience with their own folklore.

As the day was wrapping up after another event in Marjayoun and a lunch with the Sector East CO, Mr. Khabaz was left with more than just one memory of his hours spent in south Lebanon. He said: "A woman from Halta praised me in the Lebanese traditional way, known as *zalgouta* (ululating by fast moving the

tongue while producing voice). However, I couldn't understand a word she said; instead I decided to chant with her 'Lililililili' amongst waves of laughter."

Thanking UNIFIL for the chance of exploring his own country, Mr. Khabaz expressed sorrow for the years during which the south was isolated from the rest of the country. Only today, he added, "I am so glad we can easily visit the south since war is over and UNIFIL is restoring the peace."

It was a day of laughter for the southern children and an expedition for the Lebanese actor who came from the north to mingle with his own country folks from different backgrounds and sects. Providing entertainment to the people of the south in the form of festivals, youth days, or comedy as in the case of Khabaz, are one of the many UNIFIL activities. Priorities of course are given to maintaining peace and stability.

Yury Kushko UNIFIL Public Information

In blood as in peace

A long-awaited dream of having a blood bank to serve a wide area of southern Lebanon has finally come true.

On 31 October, the city of Tyr in south Lebanon got a well equipped Blood Bank that will serve as a vital lifeline for all those in need of blood transfusion in the wider area. In the works for some time now, the 100,000-dollar project got a fillip recently with donations from UNIFIL, its Italian and South Korean contingents, as well as from private contribution.

In fact it is the first facility of the kind south of the Litani river, although two such facilities exist elsewhere in the south and 11 others across the country. The Tyr Blood Bank plans to serve not only the city but also 72 adjacent villages in addition to covering the area of Bint Jbeil near the Blue Line.

UNIFIL's Civil Affairs Office, in partnership with the Italian and South Korean contingents of UNIFIL, sponsored the purchase of the required equipment while a Lebanese individual funded the construction.

The Blood Bank will help save lives in south Lebanon, said the head of Lebanese Red Cross branch in Tyr, Mouzayane Ajami, during the inauguration of the facility.

Ms. Ajami expressed gratitude to UNIFIL's Civil Affairs. "I am not sure this project would have seen the light without UNIFIL and its contribution to acquiring the medical equipment we needed."

This appreciation also was highlighted by the head of the Lebanese Red Cross, Sami Dahdah, who stressed the importance of UNIFIL's contributions without which such projects would not have materialized.

"UNIFIL has equipped the Blood Bank facility with the best technologies available in cooperation with the Italian and South Korean contingents" Mr. Dahdad said.



The facility is not only the first of the kind south of the Litani river, it is also the first time that national funds were provided by UNIFIL's Italian and South Korean contingents to supplement UNIFIL's Quick Impact Project funding, noted Major-General Alberto Asarta Cuevas, the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander.

"The collaboration between local stakeholders and different UNIFIL components is a testimony to the ever growing partnership and friendship between UNIFIL and the southern people," he added at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The Force Commander appreciated the Lebanese Health Minister's commitment to cover the operational and maintenance costs of the Blood Bank, thus ensuring sustainability and local ownership of the facility.

UNIFIL has longstanding relationship with the local branches of the Red Cross in the south and the cooperation goes back many years. In the Red Cross office in Tyr, people recall that it was the peacekeepers that donated a vehicle and equipped five clinics and the pharmacy in the south.

Partners in blood as in peace.

Ghinwa El-Deek UNIFIL Public Information

Qlayaa

The town of Qlayaa stretches for three kilometres on a rocky hill about 700 metres above sea level, separated from “Beaufort” (Shaqif) Castle towering atop a cliff to the west by the Litani River and from the town of Khyam on the foothills of Jabal al-Sheikh (Mount Hermon) on the other side by the “Dardara” stream and the Marjayoun plains. It so closely abuts on the towns of Jdeidet Marjayoun to the north and Burj Al-Muluk to the south that it is hard to figure out the town limits. Its total municipal area is 32 square kilometres.

Buffeted by conflict...

According to various references, the history of Qlayaa dates back to a little over 500 years, when a member of the Hashem family fled south from the mountain town of Aqoura in Mount Lebanon in the country's centre. A prince from the Shehab family in the town of Hasbaya granted the man a piece of land on a rocky hill and another plot in the Marjayoun plains so he could earn his living. Family members and Maronite Christians joined him from other parts of Mount Lebanon and Baalbek in the northeast, forming the core of the town's original inhabitants.

“Qlayaa” is Arabic for a “mini-castle”. Various references present two theories on the origin of the name. One claims that its inhabitants dwelled on a big rock carved by nature in the shape of a castle or that the area was a remnant of a Crusaders' castle named “Shaqafin”, while the other theory suggests that the rocky nature and its proximity to the massive “Beaufort” (Shaqif) castle was behind its name.

The decaying walls of an abandoned

old monastery of Saint Anne still stand in the town, its roof collapsed by an earthquake that struck the area over 100 years ago. The town's church, built in 1900, is one of the principal historical sites. On the main square there is a statue of a horse-mounted Saint George, the town's patron saint who is celebrated annually on 23 April with song and dance parties as well as prayers and lighting of candles.

Qlayaa suffered during the Lebanese civil war and a number of residents suffered in the conflicts since. Lebanese Army soldiers who hailed from the town retreated home and dug in, to be besieged for two years by opposing forces. The area came under Israeli occupation from 1978 to 2000.

“Since independence in 1943, the town's main income came from the 400 men serving in the Lebanese Army, in addition to many others who held government jobs, particularly in the education sector,” said Shafiq Wanna, the Deputy Mayor of Qlayaa.

Some 2,400 of Qlayaa's estimated population of 6,000 reside in the town. The rest moved to America and Europe, with 1,000 making Sweden their home. Remittance from immigrants makes up the main source of income for its people. Others earn their living from employment in public services or from growing olives and vegetables.

Some 350 students attend Qlayaa's public intermediate school and two private schools. The Municipal Council comprises 15 members.

There are no UNIFIL positions in the town, but its people have witnessed the arrival of the peacekeepers in 1978 and have fostered good relations with its contingents and soldiers, said Wanna.

“UNIFIL soldiers are welcome guests. They have carried out many development projects in the town, particularly after 2006 and there have been marriages between townspeople and members of UNIFIL.”

Sultan Sleiman UNIFIL Civil Affairs



... Buoyed by peace



Since the arrival of UNIFIL to the border area in southern Lebanon in the spring of 1978, we - the population of the south in general and Qlayaa townspeople in particular - are enjoying calm and stability, thanks to the international peacekeepers who are ensuring security and peace.

And because no one can live without peace, we Qlayaa townspeople were waiting eagerly for the arrival of the international peacekeeping forces to put an end to the painful events that were taking place in our area 33 years ago.

Back then, Lebanese official military and security forces were unable to protect the citizens due to the presence of armed groups in Lebanon and around it. Consequently, the international peacekeeping forces were dispatched to Lebanon upon an official request from the Government of Lebanon and under a United Nations Security Council resolution.

Since 1978, we have built with UNIFIL soldiers and officers the best possible social relations in an atmosphere of friendship, cooperation and respect. We see through this international presence a hope for permanent peace, not to mention that this presence is useful to us at the security, economic, developmental and social levels.

At the social level, we have built close relations, individually and collectively, with the international forces, a relationship that is based on mutual trust and deep understanding.

We, the Qlayaa townspeople, are grateful to UNIFIL and appreciate its role. We do not differentiate at all between the Command of UNIFIL and the Command of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), as we regard both commands as one.

We are aware that these multinational troops are carrying out the tasks assigned to them in a foreign country. Despite the fact that they do not speak the local language, and despite the fact that they are unfamiliar with the local customs and traditions, the UNIFIL peacekeepers are carrying out their tasks successfully, which raises the level of our admiration towards them, noting that they are serving away from home and families.

We appreciate this lofty mission for peace. We also appreciate the dedication of these peacekeepers. In Qlayaa, we are proud to regard each UNIFIL peacekeeper as a brother or son.

We, as Qlayaa townspeople, know very well the sacrifices of UNIFIL for the sake of our southern soil. UNIFIL peacekeepers have fallen to give us the peace that we have dreamed of for generations and generations.

We pay tribute to the parents of these martyrs, we appreciate their sacrifice and devotion, and may God bless them. As Qlayaa townspeople, we bow in memory of all UNIFIL's martyrs, knowing that during its 33 years of presence in Lebanon, UNIFIL lost nearly 300 personnel. These martyrs will always live in the hearts and minds of the Qlayaa people. We pray every day in every Mass for these martyrs who lost their lives in the service of humanity.

In the end, we hope our homeland Lebanon will regain its former glory as a land of human rights, freedoms and peace. We also hope that all UNIFIL peacekeepers return to their families safely and peacefully after the completion of their mission; this same mission that contributes to establishing lasting peace through their much appreciated support to the Lebanese Army and security forces.

Long live UNIFIL,
Long live Lebanon.

Hanna Edmond Daher Mayor of Qlayaa



Time for harvest

It is the time of year when everyone is called out to the field. Men, women, children - anyone with enough muscle - are called upon to help in the olive harvest.

Hundreds of olive trees are ready to be picked, the black olives set aside from the green ones, and then pressed for multiple usages, as olive oil is produced in addition to traditional soap.

The work load can always use an extra pair of hands, thus UNIFIL's Nepalese soldiers offered theirs.

Around 30 soldiers from the Nepalese battalion "deployed" to the olive groves to help the farmers of Mayss el-Jabal in early November. They were "armed" with only long sticks and they followed Umm Ali Nasrallah's instructions.

"This is the first time that someone from UNIFIL comes to assist us in harvesting olives," the middle-aged woman said. "Usually, the family members join in for the task. But when we heard of UNIFIL's desire to help us, we were very happy and immediately accepted their offer," she added in an interview.

Harvesting olives is seasonal work, but UNIFIL's assistance to the local population is a year round commitment. In addition to assisting in the actual harvest, UNIFIL contingents - specifically the French, Italians and Spanish who traditionally have olive oil industry back

home - have provided expertise, training and machinery worth some one million dollars to several areas of southern Lebanon, yet another manifestation of the close bonds between the peacekeepers and the local communities.

Olives are the primary source of income for many people. In addition to olive oil that is a pride of Lebanese cuisine, olives are served pickled, and the wood from dying trees is sawed off and saved for heating in winter.

The work starts at sunrise. UNIFIL Nepalese soldiers are beginners when it comes to olive harvesting.

"They do not have olives in their native country so they are learning how to harvest for the first time," commented Umm Ali, adding that she and her family think that UNIFIL's initiative is a splendid gesture.

"They have come asking if they can help us, as if we are the ones doing them a favour, and that is so nice of them," the woman said.

Corporal Narin Karki of the Nepalese contingent of UNIFIL was not shy in admitting the hardship of olive harvesting.

"Olives are local products that are so famous in Lebanon, but harvesting them is not an easy task," he said. "We place a fabric sheet on the ground under the tree, and climb the ladder to pick the olives with a stick."

Corporal Arjun Khanal talks about a few olive trees they have in his village back home in Nepal: "The Lebanese olive trees don't look the same as ours, but I am very happy I am contributing to this activity, especially because it reminds me of my fruit garden in Nepal."

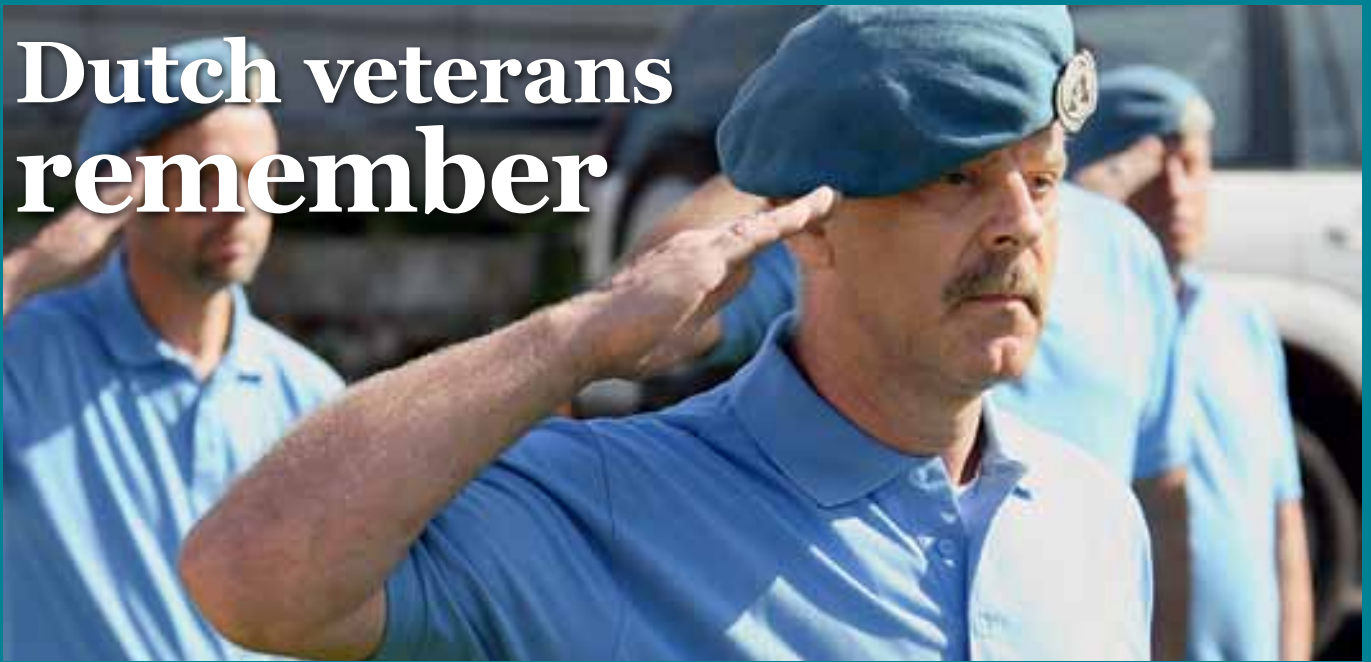
Joint efforts by the Mayss El Jabal Municipality and UNIFIL made this activity possible, and the locals are the primary beneficiaries.

About Ali, a member in the municipality, considers UNIFIL's help in the olive fields as an excellent tribute to the peacekeeping mission.

"UNIFIL not only provides us with a safe and secure situation with the help of the Lebanese Army but also helps us in our field harvesting," he added.

Ghinwa El-Deek UNIFIL Public Information

Dutch veterans remember



More than 25 years have passed since they were last here. Now back in southern Lebanon with their families, the UNIFIL Dutch veterans fondly speak of the memories of time spent as peacekeepers in this land.

About a dozen former peacekeepers from the Netherlands armed forces who served in Lebanon between 1979 and 1985 came back for a short visit in October 2011. They were accompanied by spouses and partners who wanted to get a visual of the place they heard endless stories about.

The memories are still fresh for most of them; they remember what the south looked like, the beautiful landscape, the bumpy roads, where they hung out, ate and slept and developed lifelong friendships.

For the veterans, the headquarters of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in Naqoura today is a far cry from what it was three decades ago.

Tom Events was among the first to be deployed to UNIFIL. "At first there was nothing here. I barely recognize the streets and the Area of Operation (now)," he told *'Al-Janoub'*.

Mr. Events, like many of his colleagues, cannot seem to hide his pride of service in south Lebanon.

"I always wanted my wife to visit Lebanon and interact with the people here and witness their everyday courage," he paused, as if jogging old memories, then added: "The southerners are the real veterans around here, not us."

Peter Palsele noticed the change on every level, not just the landscape. "I was first here during the Israeli invasion in 1982, and back

then it was a very complex political phase. We didn't understand most of what used to happen," he said.

In reflection of the past, Mr. Palsele agrees with Mr. Events that the southerners are the most courageous and are developing an amazing sense of maturity while rejecting the violence that is sometimes forced upon them.

The former peacekeepers spent an entire day at UNIFIL Headquarters, where they were greeted and briefed by former colleagues and current officials of the UN peacekeeping force.

At the Naqoura headquarters, the veterans gathered at the Cenotaph to pay tribute to fellow peacekeepers who gave their lives in the service of peace. The former peacekeepers laid a wreath while their partners took photographs.

"My husband needed to come back, even for once, to see what has become of the place and its people whom he adored and shared food with years ago," said Plony Alhrest as she watched her husband so wrapped up in his memories.

Amid the photoshoots and the stories told again and again, Ellis Vanlent agreed with her husband how amazing south Lebanon really is, and especially Naqoura with its beautiful sea and gracious people.



"How friendly the southerners are especially to foreigners and UNIFIL soldiers," she told *'Al-Janoub'*.

The Dutch veterans came and left, but one among them is staying behind, as his Lebanese wife explained.

Ghinwa El-Deek UNIFIL Public Information

Child protection awareness

In August 2006, the Secretary General's report on the war said that the hostilities have had a "traumatic impact on the civilian population in Lebanon." The Secretary General said almost one million people have been displaced, about 1,200 are recorded dead and thousands injured, the majority of them women and children.

UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006) tasked UNIFIL to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon. The Security Council also mandated UNIFIL to extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.

In that context, a recent training program on child protection in the event of war or in post-conflict proved to be an essential eye opener for UNIFIL civilian staff members – and a vehicle to sensitize the military personnel of the Force on the subject.

With Lebanon's turbulent past, child protection in times of armed conflict has always been a priority. The fact that children could be victims of violence in times of armed conflict in Lebanon is of great concern for the United Nations and Sijetlana Jovic, who was appointed as child protection focal point for UNIFIL in 2008. Her job is to raise the sensitivity of the Mission to the needs of those girls and boys caught amidst the hostilities in this area.

"In a traditional mission, sometimes it can be a struggle to introduce new concepts of peacekeeping such as child protection," she says. UNIFIL has no mandate for active child protection activities such as the monitoring of child rights violations; however, the Mission is doing its best to build in-house knowledge and understanding of the role of peacekeepers in protecting girls and boys given the conflict and post-conflict environment and its effect on these children.



One method is to organize a series of workshops on child rights and child protection in partnership with Save the Children Sweden. Lebanese national staff members working with the military contingents are best positioned to fulfill the task and hence to participate in the training program. They are the ones who are always around and stay put as troops are regularly rotated to their home countries. The aim of the program is to train Lebanese national staff members of UNIFIL on the subject, so they in turn become trainers of troops from various military contingents deployed with UNIFIL.

"My idea was to introduce the concept of child protection across the Mission, to all UN staff - from military and international civilians to local personnel by training them," Ms. Jovic said.

The focus of the training is on national staff members since they are the ones who maintain the institutional memory within the field structure where battalions are deployed. They accompany military personnel on their daily patrols and can therefore serve as crucial child rights advocates. Acting at the forefront of UNIFIL, they are also UNIFIL's main interlocutors with the local communities.

The training provides guidance and tools on how to become a credible protector of children, who face difficulties during conflict and in post-conflict situations. A key objective of the training is, according to Sanna Johnson, Save the Children Sweden's Regional Director, "to enable UNIFIL's military and civilian components to better understand why and how children react and respond to violence (in times of armed conflict). This, in turn, will help peacekeepers formulate their response."

The eight days of training included briefings and discussions on the concept of childhood, the international legal standards, national legislation, the impact of armed conflict on children, and existing protection measures.

Perceptions of the rights of a child vary, as reflected by the heated discussion among

the 16 Lebanese UNIFIL staff members participating in the workshop, who came from different backgrounds and cultures. Yet all of the attendees were eager to learn.

"As a UNIFIL staff member working in a Peacekeeping Mission in southern Lebanon where more than 10,000 troops are deployed amid communities with children, it is an obligation to learn and improve my skills on child rights," UNIFIL Civil Affairs Officer Sarah Al Khoury explains.

Reflecting on the training, Monita Youssef, from the UNIFIL Welfare Office, viewed it as an opportunity "to better know the rights of the child according to the human rights charter and its legal status in Lebanese law."

This first training is only the beginning. Mainstreaming child protection remains a challenge for UNIFIL. There is hope that with a better understanding of the rights of children through training, the mobilization of child advocates in the Mission and in the local community, Lebanon's children who have seen so much in their young lives will be better protected.

Samir F. Ghattas UNIFIL Public Information





Salam from the South

UNIFIL Radio Program “Salam from the South”

A 10-minute episode broadcast every two weeks in Arabic on stations Al-Risala, Sawt El-Mada, Voice of Lebanon and Voice of the People brings voices of the people of south Lebanon and their views on UNIFIL, and at the same time explains the peacekeepers’ activities in the Area of Operation.

“Discover UNIFIL in 60 Seconds”

A video rich in action that depicts UNIFIL troops conducting various tasks and in just 1 minute highlights one of those many activities in south Lebanon, such as the Blue Line marking and patrolling. The clip airs on Lebanese stations NBN, New TV and TeleLiban.



UNIFIL on the Web

The UNIFIL website (<http://unifil.unmissions.org>) in both English and Arabic is continuously updated with the latest in news, photos, radio and video about the Mission, its history and past and current activities, along with a whole range of background information, from troop strength and Troop Contributing Countries to related UN documents and Secretary-General’s reports.

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Keeping vigil at sea

UNIFIL MTF patrols the coastline

