

Nadine Labaki | Joumana Sayegh | Dima Sadek

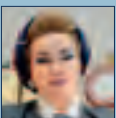
# al-janoub

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**UNIFIL**  
magazine



Interview with **Randa Berri**



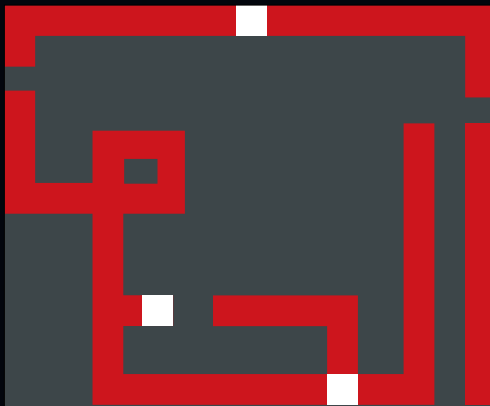
Interview with **Derek Plumbly**



# البنتُ الصَّغيرةُ التي...

**Fatima Sharafeddine**, daughter of the South, is an award winning author who has been fully dedicated to writing and translating for children and young adults since 2001. She has written and published over 90 books. Her educational background is in Early Childhood Education and Modern Arabic Literature. She conducts writing workshops and regularly travels in the Arab world and Europe to participate in book fair events, author tours and workshops. She is an active member in LBBY, the Lebanese branch of IBBY (The International Board on Books for Young People).

# Contents



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UNIFIL Photo: Pasqual G. Marcos

## Mrs Randa Berri: Building a strong Lebanese society

For the past 30 years, Mrs. Randa Berri has devoted her time to a wide array of charitable, cultural, educational and environmental projects. She is founder and President of the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped, founder and Vice-President of the National Committee for Lebanese Women's Affairs, and founder and chairperson of the National Association for the Protection of the Heritage of South-Lebanon. She is also the chairperson of other associations and public opinion cultural institutions (Ibhar) and a youth institution like the Phoenix Forum for Arab Youth just to name a few. She is also the wife of the President of the National Assembly, Mr. Nabih Berri.

**W**hen we met Mrs. Berri in her office, we were not only struck by her poise and determination, but also by the vast number of awards she had received in recognition of her work and dedication to improving the lives of others. She lent herself to be interviewed with elegance and conviction and eager to discuss the situation of women in Lebanon, hoping that her experience may help others, in particular in southern Lebanon.

Mrs. Berri grew up in Beirut. In line with Lebanese tradition, she remains close

to her roots. Her father, who worked in the field of publishing and book industry, instilled in her as well as in her eight siblings the importance of humanity. In her family, girls received special treatment and her parents paid particular attention to developing their personalities, to turn them into decision makers.

Mrs. Berri has long entertained a special relationship with the South, a region one visits to "refresh one's humanity and culture. It is where one connects with nature. The South knows the price of

suffering. No one in that area could ever be convinced to leave their homes, even during the worst of the suffering, as there is a deep attachment to land."

After the destruction of a number of historic sites in the South, Mrs. Berri contacted UNESCO to urge them to act. Protecting stones and cultural heritage is important to preserving one's identity. "Protecting people doesn't mean letting all the fortunes of culture disappear," she said. "We must invest in people, education, culture, tourism and science".

During the Civil War, Mrs. Berri saw the suffering of the most vulnerable, including refugees, orphans and the disabled, and decided to do something about it. She refused to accept the plight of the physically and mentally challenged, and this is why she established the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped to provide care and support to them. Mrs. Berri is still supporting this cause, as she founded and established

She also commended the peacekeepers for their sense of sacrifice, "away from their homes and loved ones". Politically, UNIFIL is doing what it can within its limited mandate. It is helping to bring about some peace, but real peace can not be brought about by UNIFIL alone.

When asked how motherhood affected her life as a prominent social activist,

in the activities of women through the National Committee for Lebanese Women's Affairs, which seeks to abolish the discriminatory laws against Lebanese women and enhance their roles.

For Mrs Berri, the path to happiness is more about giving than receiving. It is both a personal quest, achieved through hard work and loyalty to one's beliefs. True happiness is giving joy to others, in times of war or peace.

Mrs. Berri proudly displayed pictures of her many grandchildren. Despite their busy agendas, Mrs. Berri and her husband make time every week to see them.

The best advice she would give any daughter is to be true to herself, and even if the odds are against you, perseverance will eventually lead to success. "Study your environment, be well-informed always and do not let others decide for you. Reinvent yourself on a daily basis, and discover continually. The road to success is long and testing, but hard work will get you there. Don't let failure be an option," she concluded.

**Hassan Siklawi and Rhitu Rose -**  
Political Affairs Office



UNIFIL Force Commander and Head of Mission Major-General Paolo Serra, Lebanese National Commission for Lebanese Women Chairperson, Lebanese First Lady Mrs. Wafaa Sleiman, Co-Vice Chairperson Mrs. Randa Berri - 2012  
UNIFIL Photo: Pasqual G. Marcos

the Nabih Berri Center for providing care to the disabled, which is the second largest center in the Middle East. The center includes treatment departments for the disabled, vocational schools and workshops aimed at increasing the skills in order to change the disability into energy. She also dreams one day of opening a university for all, including the disabled.

During the war in 1996 in South Lebanon people were suffering and many Lebanese families were sheltered at UNIFIL positions, including in Qana where UNIFIL Fijians were posted. The position in question was subjected to "sudden Israeli shelling that led to the martyrdom of more than a hundred people, mostly women and children." At that time, Mrs. Berri contacted UNIFIL and, in cooperation with the teams of the Islamic Message Scouts and a large number of volunteers, she had provided medical aid and food on the ground to the needy in Qana and the affected villages, in addition to coordinating the travel of some people with critical injuries for treatment outside Lebanon and providing care for their loved ones. She was reassured by UNIFIL's presence in the area.

Mrs. Berri expressed appreciation for the difficult mission undertaken by UNIFIL.

she observed that when one believes in what one does and has a good support system, one is well equipped to resolve any problem that may arise. Undoubtedly, her husband has been important in her own personal and professional development. "He has always been my strongest support system" she confided.

Her first responsibility is towards her family, her second is to nurturing youth to make them strong members in a society.

"What I dream for South Lebanon, I dream for all Lebanon. I dream of a society where respect for others is a given. I dream of building a citizen that recognizes the other," she said.

Her dream is to build a strong society based on faith in Lebanon as a final home for each of his sons; a country founded on the formula of coexistence.

While she is proud of the strides made to empower women in Lebanon, Mrs. Berri asserts that women still do not have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of society and state, specially the political, economical, social and cultural fields. Mrs. Berri is a key figure

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**What I dream for South Lebanon, I dream for all Lebanon. I dream of a society where respect for others is a given.**

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# Derek Plumbly

## on UN's crucial role in Lebanon

In an interview with UNIFIL's *Al Janoub* magazine, Derek Plumbly - the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon – speaks about his role as the Representative of the United Nations and gives insights into the overall work the UN is doing in the region.

Mr. Plumbly, a veteran British diplomat, has worked as a Middle East specialist during his 35 years in the service. He previously served as UK Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and to Egypt. He also served as Chairperson of Assessment and Evaluation Commission in Sudan, charged with monitoring the implementation of the country's Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

He was appointed by the UN Secretary-General as Special Coordinator for Lebanon in January 2012 and is tasked with representing the United Nations on all aspects of the organization's work in Lebanon. These include the political aspects of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, working with all Lebanese stakeholders in support of Lebanon's stability, and also what he terms as "a light" coordinating role of UN activities, involving advocacy politically and articulation in the media.

Mr. Plumbly sees the conflict in Syria as posing one of the most significant challenges to stability in Lebanon. Addressing the impact of the Syrian crisis – including the more than 500,000 Syrians seeking or receiving assistance in Lebanon, and the increasing number of cross-border incidents along the Lebanon/Syria border – is a major priority for stability in Lebanon, which is a key concern of Resolution 1701.

Speaking one year after a strategic review of UNIFIL recommended greater cooperation and coordination among the UN branches in Lebanon and the 35th anniversary of UNIFIL's peacekeeping in Lebanon, Mr. Plumbly said the coordination between the agencies is now, as a result of the review, indeed even greater. Mr. Plumbly's office, UNSCOL, works closely with UNIFIL and UN agencies on a range of political, security,

humanitarian and development issues, all of which impact in one way or another on Lebanon's stability and security.

He gave *Al Janoub* his insights into the progress made in the implementation of Resolution 1701.

"Seven years since the resolution came into force," Plumbly says, "a great deal in terms of the cessation of hostilities has been achieved and there continues to be relative calm on both sides of the Blue Line."

The calm, he adds, is largely attributed to the commitment of the parties and the work UNIFIL does on the ground. One result is that South Lebanon has enjoyed impressive reconstruction and development.

Mr. Plumbly said the region as a whole is facing a very uncertain period of conflict, change and threats. It is commendable, therefore, he says, that the Blue Line has continued to remain calm.

"Resolution 1701 is resilient and robust and, a major contributor to the security and stability of Lebanon," he adds. "However, it needs to be further built upon".

Since its long-term agenda is to achieve a permanent cease-fire, he argues, it is important to keep reminding the parties of the need to fully implement the resolution. This, he says, formed an important part of the recent report of the UN Secretary General, and featured in the discussions at the Security Council. Mr. Plumbly reiterates that Lebanon – and its stability and territorial integrity – remain of serious concern to the Security Council.

It is also important to note, he says, that Resolution 1701 is not the only instrument for addressing the peace effort in Lebanon, although it is central to the restoration of calm and cessation of hostilities.

Lebanon was set to hold parliamentary elections this year but Parliament's term was extended for 17 months in the absence of agreement on an electoral law. Mr. Plumbly stresses the importance of Lebanon's leaders continuing to strive for agreement on the electoral law. "Holding elections is important for stability for Lebanon," he says. "It is safer for Lebanon to legitimise its institutions."

Mr. Plumbly chairs the elections forum, which brings together 30 diplomatic missions in Lebanon. The election process is supported by a UNDP technical team.

The UN Secretary General, he says, has identified increasing the participation of women's representation as a high priority for the UN globally. Plumbly says that Lebanon ranks very low in women's representation in government, with only four in the current parliament of 128 members. And there is not a single female cabinet minister. He hopes the elections, when they take place, will enhance the representation of women in the next parliament and government, and he points to the pledge by Lebanon's leaders to ensure an increase in women's representation in upcoming elections.

With regard to the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon, Mr. Plumbly underscores the enormous number of Syrian refugees already in Lebanon, and the projection that more than one million will be in the country before the end of 2013. All UN agencies in Lebanon are engaged in one way or another. The UNHCR presence has tripled and it will soon be opening more refugee registration centres. He commends the Lebanese people for welcoming the Syrians into their homes, and the Government of Lebanon for

maintaining an open border policy. More must be done, he says, to meet the immediate needs of the refugees, and he encourages international donors to redouble efforts to meet the funding needs identified by the UN and the Lebanese authorities.

Highlighting other challenges facing Lebanon, Mr. Plumbly singles out the violence in Tripoli, in the north of the country. The LAF, already overstretched by the domestic security needs, has deployed in a robust manner in Tripoli to contain the violence. Plumbly highlights the importance of supporting the army in these activities, and more broadly encouraging the central role of the state in addressing stability.

On the situation along the Syria– Lebanon border and reports of incursions into Lebanese territory, Mr. Plumbly says the Security Council has repeatedly called for the maintenance of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. The Council has also called for Lebanon to abide by its policy of disassociation from regional conflicts, which Mr. Plumbly notes has contributed greatly to Lebanon's resilience to the conflict thus far.

Border security, he says, is under the mandate of the LAF, which has also presented a five-year programme to enhance its capacity throughout the country. Given how stretched the LAF is at this time, the UN is urging all international partners to give additional support to the Lebanese military.

UNSCOL also has a long-term programme initiated in 2006, through which friends of Lebanon and key donors are supporting border management. Other mechanisms to boost the military's capacity include the strategic dialogue, a mechanism through which UNIFIL supports LAF. However, Mr. Plumbly cautions that all the players must be realistic about what the UN alone can do.

Mr. Plumbly also expressed concern about reports of recurrent Israeli air violations of Lebanese airspace, saying that the concern has been strongly registered at various levels. It was also expressed in the latest report of the Secretary General to the Security Council, which cited the disturbing nature of the overflights. He says it is important to note that such violations of Resolution 1701 are discussed at the Tripartite Forum.

The tripartite mechanism is chaired by UNIFIL's Force Commander and attended by senior officials from the LAF and the Israeli Defence Forces. Topics of discussion include issues relevant to



UNIFIL Photo: Pasqual G. Marcos

the implementation of Resolution 1701, violations of the Blue Line and the findings of UNIFIL investigations into incidents.

Mr. Plumbly says the forum has over the years become a more flexible instrument to deal with the issues at hand, and is a key contributor to confidence-building between the parties. He sees willingness by the parties to look into the problems and try to resolve them in a pragmatic way which avoids escalation.

He also outlines the work that the UN is doing to support the Palestinians living in Lebanon as a significant part of the UN, especially UNRWA, which deals directly with the issue. He notes that there has

recently been an influx of Palestinians from Syria, with most of them living in camps, and commends Lebanon for honouring its humanitarian obligation of hosting the refugees.

"You cannot talk about the future of this region without talking about the Palestinians," he concludes. He is hopeful that something will come out of the peace process.

In conclusion, Plumbly thanked the people of South Lebanon for being good hosts: "I hope that the UN is seen as a friend, because it is. I hope our support and intervention is making a difference."

**Antonette Miday** - Public Information Office

# Writer, Director and Actor Nadine Labaki:

## “No Matter What, Just Dream”



Despite threats, neglect and violence, women struggle for peace and for better lives for their communities. Women are important peace builders but their work is often ignored as they are locked out from formal peace processes. Women have a role to play in bringing sustainable peace after conflicts. This is one of the themes Lebanese writer, director and actor Nadine Labaki explores.

Nadine has crossed languages, genres and territories with her two films that have gained international acclaim. But the stunning, poised writer, actor and director we see today started dreaming about her career in a very passionate way at home in Lebanon. She did not pick an easy subject matter for her debut “Caramel” on five Lebanese women who meet in a hair salon facing the struggles of everyday life in Lebanon. In her second film, “Where Do We Go Now?”

Nadine depicts with openness the savagery of war and how women from different ethnic groups overcome rivalries. She pokes fun at an otherwise dramatic conflict, where misinformation plays a critical role while taking you on an emotional rollercoaster.





Photos provided by Nadine Labaki

**You have written, directed and acted in two movies (“Caramel” and “Where Do we Go Now?”) already. How did you get there?**

I grew up during the war, and for this reason I had to spend most of my time at home. Schools in my neighbourhood were closed. I turned to films and tv to escape the boredom of my everyday life at home. During that time, I created other realities and wanted to live other stories.

When I grew up, there was no mainstream Lebanese film industry, so I started by directing commercials. The only way to learn the craft was to try. I knew I did not have the wisdom and maturity necessary to make full-length movies. Then I met an experienced French producer who pushed me to write. And so I wrote “Caramel” which was presented at the Cannes Film Festival.

I felt it was my responsibility to share my vision of the world as a woman. This felt natural to me as the topic was close to

my heart. When I became a mother I felt an added sense of responsibility, which I instilled in my second movie “Where Do We Go Now?”. This movie is a tribute to mothers. I have an admiration for all mothers, especially those who have suffered and lost so much in war yet carried on selflessly.

I wondered how am I going to raise a child in this world? The strong, funny women in the film found a solution to peace without picking up a weapon.

**Where did you get the idea for “Where Do We Go Now?”**

The movie is a fable that takes place in a village with no name. I wanted to show that the conflict could be between two races, two neighbours or two brothers anywhere. I tried to highlight the absurdity of war and the ridiculous solutions that woman in despair will come up with to end it. It is about how people are unable to tolerate differences. I want people to relate to their neighbour.

**Will we see you in the South soon?**

I would like to spend more time in the South, which I found so beautiful when I scouted for some locations for my last film. There was also a screening of my second movie through UNIFIL in Tyre last year.

**Did you face obstacles as a women in your career?**

The movie industry is tough for everybody, not only for women.

**If you had a daughter, what advice would you give her?**

I would give the same advice to anyone. I would tell her to never be afraid to dream big because anything can happen. People who do not have dreams are unhappy. Because of the war in Lebanon, I think people’s dreams have had to be short term. No matter what: just dream.

**Rhitu Rose - Political Affairs Office**

## Proverbs

**आदमी औरत के बिना अधुरा है !**

A man without a woman is only half a man  
- Indian -

**El hombre hace leyes; la mujer modales**

The man makes laws, the woman manners  
- Spanish -

**Derrière chaque grand homme, il y a une femme**

Behind every great man, there is a woman  
- French -

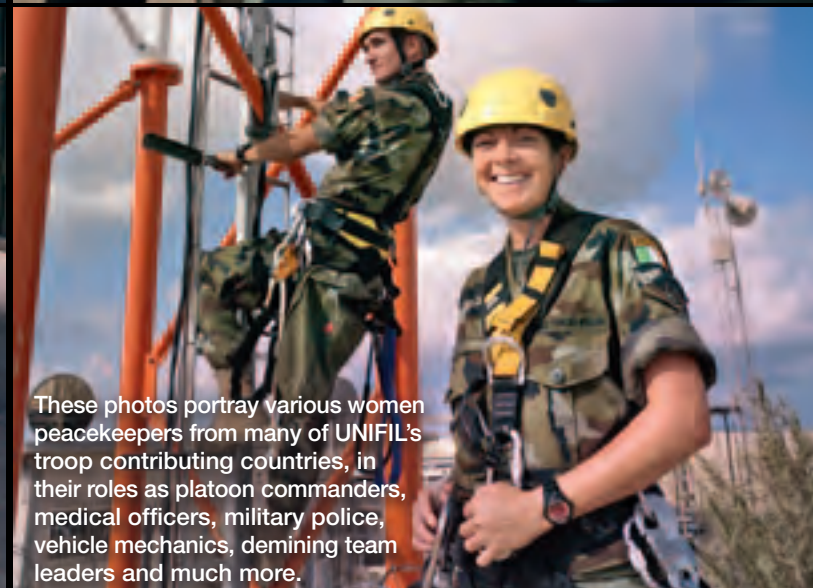
**Wo kyere barima adea a, woa kyere nipa baaku, nanso wo kyere obaa adea a, wa kyere oman nyinaa**

When you educate a man, you educate an individual, but when you educate a woman, you educate a whole nation

- Dr Kwegyir Aggrey, Ghana -



# WOMEN



These photos portray various women peacekeepers from many of UNIFIL's troop contributing countries, in their roles as platoon commanders, medical officers, military police, vehicle mechanics, demining team leaders and much more.

of UNIFIL



This woman peacekeeper is part of the first Naval Task Force (Maritime Task Force) ever to take part in a United Nations peacekeeping mission.



Rose is directly involved in patrolling the Blue line. Her job is a difficult one, often physically demanding. Her family is very proud of her.



Claire and her 43 female colleagues of the French contingent are conscious of the importance to be part of this collective effort to bring safety and stability to South Lebanon.



Indonesia has a long tradition of women serving in the army. Since 1957 Indonesia has sent both male and female military and police personnel to six different UN peacekeeping missions.

# Dima Sadek...

## a woman living her dream

October 13, 1990 Dima approached her parents surprised with the recent events in the country.



"How did the war end? Why? Who won? She asked them. The answers were vague and evasive. On that day Dima was confident that she wanted to become a journalist. On that day she recorded her first amateur reportage.

From the town of Khyiam in South Lebanon, Dima Sadek has made her mark in the Lebanese media spectrum in such a brief period. She studied Political Science in the university and soon after started working in the Lebanese newspaper Assafir. Her debut on television was through the Orange television as a news anchor and political program presenter and four years later she joined the LBCI news station.

The young journalist had to prove herself, her credentials, and her added value as a journalist in the politicized Lebanese media field. "Just like in any other field, proving one's self is never an easy job. In my interviews I do not aim to convince the audience with my political views. On the contrary, I discuss with my guests their political agenda. They have to prove the validation of their political stance to everyone who is watching" she said.

Her eyes lit up when she mentioned her hometown, the southern village Khyiam. "I am proudly from the South and I love my town. Ever since I was a little girl I grew attached to it" she said in an interview with *Al-Janoub*.

Regardless the hardship, Dima was adamant in consistently visiting her town. "I love its natural beauty and

how it was reserved all through these years. Khyiam taught me what it means to miss something dearly and how to withstand all difficulties in life."

The sight of the blue helmets is familiar to the southern woman. Peaceful is what Dima feels when thinking about UNIFIL. "I want to smile whenever I think of those peacekeepers. We used to wave to them and they'd wave back with utmost friendliness. It used to be a big moment for us whenever we managed to interact with them, especially with the Norwegians in my time" she added.

Rebellious Dima suddenly becomes when asked about the change she would like to install in Lebanon's system.

"I want a country where an individual is completely free to live as he/she desires under the law."

She wants a better country for her daughter to live in. Yasmina, a five year old girl, is Dima's getaway from the real life.

"I just rush back home after work so I can get to spend the longest possible time with her. She is my life".

The southern journalist is someone who would rather stay home and hang out with her family. You would rarely see her in night clubs, but probably dining in cozy quiet restaurants with a small circle of friends.

Dima Sadek insists on giving her daughter Yasmina the choice of becoming the woman she would want to.

"I realized that I haven't yet introduced my daughter to any of the religions or sects. Maybe I want her to make up her mind for herself. She should decide whether she wants to be secular or pious."

However what is a must for Dima, is raising her child into becoming a strong, independent, and responsible woman.

**Ghinwa El Deek** - Public Information Office



# My roots in the South

She grew up running from one shelter to another. She used to dread the relentless and wail of the sirens. Her home, family, and existence were threatened daily, and some days, she despaired. But mainly, she rose to the challenge, with courage and conviction.

Originally from the village of Hanaway, Joumana Sayegh was born in Kenema, in Sierra Leone, West Africa, but her family returned back to Lebanon and to Tyre in particular, soon after her birth. Joumana has spent practically all of her life in Tyre, and her parents instilled in her a deep sense of attachment to southern Lebanon. She also learned long ago to hold on to her belongings, to her house, to her identity. South Lebanon taught her never to let go, but it also taught her to forgive.

"After the Israeli invasion in 1982 my parents sent me to Beirut to live with my aunt," Joumana said. People didn't really know what was happening in the South, she told *Al-Janoub*.

In 1991, two years after graduating from University in Beirut, Joumana ran into her friend Hassan Siklawi in Tyre. He informed her that UNIFIL was recruiting. She applied, and soon started working for UNIFIL in a small office in Tyre. Working alongside her in the Public Information Office were Hassan Siklawi and Rola Bzeih.

Joumana looked back at those early years with melancholy. Communications between Tyre, where she was based, and UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqoura, were not as good as today because of the war situation in the country, so when times got tough, humanity was your only salvation against what was taking place. "We lived through exceptionally tough times at work especially during the 1993 and 1996 wars. My parents had decided never to leave our home, under any circumstances," she said. Nor they nor Joumana left the area, even at the height of the fighting. When war broke out, Rola, Hassan and Joumana tended to the needs of almost 300 internally displaced men, women and children that were gathered in UNIFIL's base in Tyre.



UNIFIL Photo: Ghifar Charafeddine

"I decided to stay at work of my own free will. We spent 16 long days at work, sleeping on the floor, barely eating. This was the toughest time of my life, but it was also the most gratifying. People were thanking us in the most memorable and rewarding ways," remembers Joumana.

22 years later, years of hard work and long hours, Joumana still works for UNIFIL.

"I worked very hard to prove myself. This was especially important as I started off as a contractor and our offices were far from Naqoura. So I had a tough time making myself recognized."

Her perseverance and diligence have borne fruit though. Joumana is now Media Monitoring Supervisor at the UNIFIL base in Naqoura. Additionally, she says she has "also made some amazing friendships over the years with international staff members. I became more tolerant of differences between cultures and beliefs. The job has strengthened my personality."

Four years ago, Joumana took on a second position, one just as demanding as being a Media Monitoring Supervisor: she became a mother.

"With my daughter I spend the most wonderful time of my life" she says with a broad smile. When she comes home after a long day of news and press releases, she usually bakes a cake, cooks some pasta or goes out with her daughter for a stroll.

"No matter how tired I am, I dedicate my time after work to my daughter. She takes up a lot of my energy, but she gives me so much back!"

Being a supervisor and running a household is extremely demanding. Yet Joumana and her husband, who is an international peacekeeper from Italy, find the time to instill in their daughter the principles that she was taught as a child. "I want to be able to teach her forgiveness and love. My daughter needs to know how to be strong and independent, so she can rise after a fall. Because she will fall."

Joumana, who is happiest when surrounded by her family, close and extended members, has also transmitted to her daughter her love of southern Lebanon.

**Ghinwa El Deek** - Public Information Office



# Lines of Life

Compared to the work of Mariam, a mother of nine and sheepherder in Halta- I have a lot of catching up to do. Women like Mariam still do the majority of household tasks -- like child-rearing, cleaning, cooking and working in the stables. They also contribute to economic activity, for instance by preparing and selling the bread on the “saj” and labneh. All in her extended family, which consists of 50-60 members, embrace the philosophy of equality and loyalty.

Mariam, a widow, clearly remembers returning to Halta at the age of twelve during the civil war. What she wished for the most at that time was to become a teacher. While 650 baby goats bleat in the background, she tells me that she learned the practical skills to run a household and make decisions that affect her family’s livelihoods by the time she was married, at the age of fifteen. With one of her grandsons clinging to her, she proudly says that her children and grandchildren help with the cattle and the running of the farm.

The day I was there, the UNIFIL Veterinarian was paying a house visit. Mariam says four goats had broken legs, and the Vet plastered the goats’ legs and provided them with medicine. The young, baby goats are still weak, and the vitamins given by the Vet will help make them stronger so they will be able to graze grass, she remarks. She adds “Our economic status is average. We live because of God’s grace and these cattle.”

She notes that at the height of the conflict, her own days looked much different. With the presence of UNIFIL, she feels grateful for the landmines that have been cleared so that her children can take the sheep to graze.

Mariam shows her strong, hard hands with deep lines that tell the tales of her life of chores. With her nine children, she has rebuilt what has fallen apart, and she says, “Although the location here is a bit hard, living here is hard, but every hour we stay here means a life-time for us. We worked hard here to build and maintain this place.” Mariam’s final comments are about how destructive divisions can be and hopes her family and village will remain united and peaceful.

**Rhithu Rose** - Political Affairs Office

## Nepalese dentist serving her country, UNIFIL and patients in the South

Amazing is the word Captain Dr. Barsha Bajracharya from the Nepalese army chose to describe her 6 months tenure in UNIFIL, both in its highs and lows. She is certain that she is going to miss all of her newly made Lebanese friends and fellow peacekeepers.

She always knew she wanted to be a doctor. She pursued her dream, and yet she felt something was amiss.

"While growing up you see your fellow countrymen sacrificing their own lives for the welfare of the country, so I thought I should do something in return" she said in an interview. And so Dr. Bajracharya joined the army two and a half years ago.

"Peacekeeping came along as a long awaited opportunity to serve for a noble cause. I was randomly chosen to join UNIFIL" she added.

Dr. Bajracharya speaks openly about her experience in South Lebanon. As a female peacekeeper the challenge was of an emotional nature.

"The most challenging aspect of my experience was to leave my family and friends and come to Lebanon. However this mission has made me a stronger woman. I have learned how to deal with people from different cultures and backgrounds. I also learned a lot as a doctor through my dental campaigns" she added.

Dr. Bajracharya is especially fond of the sea and the snow in Lebanon. She has managed



UNIFIL Photo: Pasqual G. Marcos

between her dental campaigns in the villages to learn a few Lebanese recipes and indulge herself in some Lebanese coffee.

"I learned how to prepare the "Labneh" especially with olive oil which we lack in Nepal. Whereas the Lebanese coffee is stronger than ours but I grew used to it and now I find it very special and very tasty."

Amidst the interview Dr. Bajracharya pauses for a second. And she adds as a realization perhaps: "Not only are the women equal to men and are able to perform any of their

duties, but it is easier for us to enter any community than a group of men. People are simply more comfortable around women".

The Nepalese doctor tells her family about her visits to southern towns and the warm welcomes she receives from the local people.

"I respect the people here a lot and their culture and hospitality. The Lebanese women are very family oriented just like the Nepalese."

**Ghinwa El Deek** - Public Information Office

## Maria introduces Mr Blue Barrel



UNIFIL Photo: Pasqual G. Marcos

Maria smiles and hugs one of the children from the last school visited. Even today, there were others to follow as he explained how to pay attention to the blue line and minefields. Now they are all there waiting to have their photo taken with her. "Since we came here we visited more than 30 schools so far - adds satisfied - and it is

not over yet". Maria Di Fonzo is an Italian Army first corporal major, comes from the 28th Regt. "Pavia" of Pesaro, a military unit that is responsible for operational communications. Here in Naqoura she is part of MCOU (Military Community Outreach Unit) team, a structure composed of UNIFIL Italian soldiers and Indonesian characterized

by relations with the local population, the visits to schools, mayors and mukhtars of several villages south of the Litani. The group is composed of 24 soldiers and six Lebanese language assistants; she is the only female soldier. "It is very important to have a female approach also to this work, you create a different feeling with the boys. The look of a woman is often more human, inclusive: they accept you even if you're wearing a uniform, because here it is a uniform of Peace". Always on the go, always ready to go for another meeting, to other eyes of kids eager for a better future. For some months MCOU had a valuable ally in communications. "This is Mr. Blue Barrel", Maria says with satisfaction-a puppet of plastic that has the appearance of barrels placed on the line of withdrawal. Unlike real barrels - adds Maria- Mr. Blue Barrel smiles to children and warns them of the danger that would run across the blue line. "After seeing them in action, we are convinced that thanks to these Lebanese children we will have better future.

**Major Pier Paolo De Salvo**

## Reforestation Campaign

A reforestation campaign was launched by UNIFIL, the Lebanese Armed Forces and a local civil society group, in order to promote environmental health in Marjayoun. The campaign's aim is to plant 6,000 trees on municipal land.



UNIFIL Photo: Pasqual G. Marcos

## International Mine Awareness Day



UNIFIL Photo: Ghifar Charafeddine

An estimated 425,000 landmines continue to pose a daily threat to Lebanon's communities and more than 18 square kilometres of land remain contaminated by cluster bombs. The contamination continues to deny communities access to large areas of prime agricultural or grazing land and has a direct impact on their lives. As of 1 March 2013, UNIFIL demining teams had completed over 80,000 sq metres of mine clearance. During 2002–2008, mine clearance in southern Lebanon was coordinated by UN Mine Action Coordination Centre of Southern Lebanon as a partnership between the UN and Lebanese Armed Forces. In April, a ceremony, organized by the United Nations Mine Action Support Team (UNMAST), was held at the UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura where students from local schools participated in the event where they received mine awareness trainings and had the opportunity to see the demonstrations.

## Road Safety Awareness



UNIFIL Photo: Pasqual G. Marcos

The Road Safety Awareness campaign was launched in March, targeting children aged between 6 and 10 years. UNIFIL in collaboration with the local NGO Kunhadi and UNIFIL's Italian and Tanzanian military police units conducted the second round of their Road Safety Awareness campaign targeting 280 15 to 17 year olds at the Tyre Co-educational Secondary school.

# ASK UNIFIL

## Will UNIFIL deploy along the Lebanese - Syrian border?

In relation to media reports suggesting possible changes in UNIFIL's role and activities in the broader context of the developments in Syria, the Mission would like to emphasize that UNIFIL operates only in the framework of its mandate under UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

UNIFIL has no role or activity whatsoever in Syria.

The mandate of UNIFIL is a prerogative of the Security Council and we are not authorized to operate outside the framework of that mandate. Our focus is the implementation of our mandate, limited to UNIFIL's AO which is in South Lebanon between the Litani river and the Blue Line.

UNIFIL's deployment and tasks are related to the cessation of hostilities between Lebanon and Israel; ensuring respect for the Blue Line; preventive hostile activities or any violation of Security Council Resolution 1701 and create an environment of peace and stability in South of Lebanon.

Media reports implying of any possible role for UNIFIL outside this framework are unfounded.

All the troops deployed with UNIFIL, are under UN command exercised on the ground by UNIFIL Force Commander and Head of Mission. The tasks that UNIFIL troops perform and their rules of engagement are drawn strictly from Security Council Resolution 1701 and are clearly defined.

## What does UNIFIL do about the Israeli air violations?

UNIFIL expresses concern about the reports of over flights over Lebanese airspace. Israeli over flights into Lebanese air space are in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and of Resolution 1701. They undermine the credibility of both UNIFIL and the LAF, and are in contravention of our objectives and efforts to reduce tensions and establish a stable security environment in southern Lebanon. We, including the Secretary-General himself, have repeatedly called on Israel to cease these overflights.

Have a question for UNIFIL? Go to [www.facebook.com/UNIFIL](https://www.facebook.com/UNIFIL) and send a message

# Traditions

Wonder how countries celebrate a baby's birth, in particular some countries that contribute troops to UNIFIL?



### Lebanon

Special sweets "Meghli" (rice powder, ginger, cinnamon, sugar, etc) are prepared at home for the guests

who keep visiting the family of the new born baby. Only after 40 days of confinement, do the mother and her baby visit family and friends. Friends will offer the baby a small present, along with the wishes that the baby make his/her next visits on foot- symbolically meaning growing up and wishing him/her a long life.

### Indonesia

On the 40th day after birth, the "Cukuran/Marhabaan" ceremony by Javanese-Indonesian welcomes the new born baby by shaving the baby's (girl or boy) hair in act of purity and as gratitude to the Almighty God. Before the baby's head is shaven, family and friends take turns to cut the baby's hair with scissors. Special

food, Bubur Merah (sweets) and Bubur Putih (salty rice) is prepared on that day.

### Austria

In Austria, it was believed that the souls of unborn children lived in watery areas such as wells, springs, and ponds. Since storks frequented such areas, the idea was that storks would fetch the babies' souls and deliver them to their parents. Nowadays, the stork is associated with the father's family and friends gathering at a "Father Party" at the time of birth. Stork statues are placed around the entrance and walls of the house. The stork statue is passed down through families with the names and dates of birth written on the statue.



# International Women's Day



Performance of a Lebanese musician at the International Women's Day celebration held at Tyr's Cultural centre.



UNIFIL peacekeepers after their performance at the International Women's Day celebration held at Tyr's Cultural centre.



UNIFIL peacekeepers at a photo exhibition organized by UNIFIL to celebrate International Women's Day held at Tyr's Cultural centre.



UNIFIL Korean peacekeeper buying handicrafts from the local southern cooperatives at the International Women's Day celebration held at Tyr's Cultural centre.

UNIFIL joined the rest of the world in observing 2013 International Women's Day which was celebrated on 8 March at the Basel Al Assad Cultural Centre in Tyre, South Lebanon with the "Women of UNIFIL" photo exhibition and a cultural celebration.

In addition to the photo exhibit, guests were treated to a cultural celebration

featuring a blend of Lebanese traditional food and handicrafts by South Lebanese women belonging to cooperatives and societies in the South.

Entertainment was provided by a musical performance featuring a Lebanese female artist and cultural groups belonging to five UNIFIL contingents: Cambodians, Chinese, Indians, Nepalese and Indonesians.

Increasingly, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.

**Ghinwa El Deek** - Public Information Office



Photo by Christelle Nassour, age 14

# Conversation with history

The Mayor of Burj al-Muluk, Suleiman Suleiman reminisces about the great stories passed down generations on the role of his village, “the tower of kings”. Suleiman immediately recognizes the above photo that young Christine has taken as one of the only 15 beautiful, historic houses left standing in the village. Historic sites have a critical role to play in this village, which was central for commuting, and you can still see where an old airport was built during French and German occupation. These remarkable 120 year-old houses were built under the influence of the Turkish rule in the

South, he remarks. Kings from the region passed through Burj al-Muluk in many instances to Damascus or Turkey and other interesting destinations. A man who travelled through Burj al-Muluk rested at huge castles and water springs were plentiful. After the first and second world wars, most of these ancient castles unfortunately have been destroyed. Through the Mayor’s efforts at that time, a decree issued by the Lebanese Minister Council allowed the village to retain its historic name as “the tower of kings” in 1963. Mayor Suleiman was grateful for the presence of UNIFIL which promotes

a conducive environment for security, peace and stability and supports jobs and work for the local community. He said that UNIFIL has influenced migration patterns where people now have access to resources and opportunities in the village who otherwise would have moved to cities or out of the country. Mayor Suleiman’s hope is for Lebanese abroad, especially the youth to connect to their roots, preserve these memorable, historic houses and invest in Lebanon.

**Hassan Siklawi and Rhitu Rose -**  
Political Affairs Office



**The Blue Line** is the line of withdrawal that was identified in the year 2000 by the United Nations for the purpose of confirming the withdrawal of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) from Lebanese territory in conformity with Security Council Resolution 425 (1978). The Blue Line is not the border between Lebanon and Israel