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# al-janoub

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**UNIFIL**  
magazine

ONE DAY  
AT A TIME





# UNIFIL's relations with the people of south Lebanon

It has been a very long time, for more than three decades, that UNIFIL peacekeepers have been with the people of south Lebanon; almost two generations, one might say. A very natural question therefore is: how do the UNIFIL peacekeepers and the people here relate to each other.

It has been a very long time, for more than three decades, that UNIFIL peacekeepers have been with the people of south Lebanon; almost two generations, one might say. A very natural question therefore is: how do the UNIFIL peacekeepers and the people here relate to each other.

I find it easier to describe than to define this relationship: so deep rooted in time, drawing so deep from the most sublime human impulses, so imbued by the richness of Lebanese culture and hospitality, so constant through diverse circumstances and yet so multifarious in its everyday manifestation. The fact is one has to be part of the expansive social dynamics of south Lebanon, like UNIFIL is, to appreciate this unique relationship in its full dimensions.

Through the many years of wars and destruction, the peacekeepers have stood by the people, protected them and provided all possible assistance within their means. Many have gone beyond their calling to help their welcoming hosts, even at grave personal risk, several making the ultimate sacrifice – as many as 293 UNIFIL peacekeepers have laid down their lives in the line of duty, the highest number for any UN peacekeeping mission anywhere in the world.

Far from being hindered by conflicts, sharing in adversity has brought forth the most noble of human impulses in both the peacekeepers and the southerners. The people appreciate and acknowledge the zeal that brings the peacekeepers here, thousands of miles away from their homes, to serve the cause of peace. And such is their welcome, so warm the southern hospitality that very often I have seen peacekeepers cry when it is time for them to return to their countries. Most want to come back, many do: as part of UNIFIL again, or as tourists; indeed, some have got married in south Lebanon, or chosen to settle down here.

UNIFIL carries out a variety of projects such as refurbishing schools, rehabilitating a water fountain, road repair, providing electricity generators to name just a few. Our community projects address some of the most pressing needs of the people and support local authorities. And these are not just funded projects. There are several where peacekeepers use their personal skills and often their own initiative to benefit the local population. And so you have medical, dental and veterinary assistance provided by peacekeepers; or

Taekwondo, Yoga, languages and computer classes; or pizza making, and so on. There are environmental and reforestation projects, or just simple gestures as helping farmers pick olives. There are times when peacekeepers compete with local youth clubs in football or basketball matches, or join the people in festivities such as the traditional folk dance.

So it is not about material give and take, as some interpret UNIFIL's assistance projects to be, but about sharing towards better life conditions in south Lebanon that we all partake of. It is a relationship 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.

The tumultuous years of conflicts and occupation are past, and 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 needs of the people, the peacekeepers' zeal to help, and the ever growing bonds between UNIFIL and the people of the south.

To be sure there are differences, as there is bound to be in any human interaction. There can be misunderstandings on occasions, not the least due to language or cultural barriers, or even due to unfounded rumours. The people know full well that UNIFIL is here for a job that it must do and yet the resulting disruptions in normal daily life can be an irritant. We make all efforts to minimise disturbances due to our operations, yet they happen. But the fundamentals of our relationship being strong, we are able to address these issues directly with the people or with the help of the Lebanese army, our strategic partners on the ground.

Ultimately, we know that we are here because the people want us here, we could not be otherwise; and the people know that our presence is beneficial for them. Even disagreements or misunderstandings when addressed serve to firm up this relationship. This co-existence that circumstances have bestowed on us manifests in multifarious human interactions that are beneficial to all, whether the people or the peacekeepers.

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Neeraj Singh

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### **Disclaimer**

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**Women peacekeepers honoured**



UNIFIL women peacekeepers were honoured at a ceremony in Tyr that was attended by the Lebanese First Lady. In all, 17 women peacekeepers from Austria, Belgium, China, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Portugal, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey received medals from the Lebanese National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW), which is headed by Mrs. Wafaa Sleiman, with Mrs. Randa Berri and Mrs. May Mikati as vice chairpersons.

Medals also were presented to the Observer Group Lebanon and representatives of the UNIFIL civilian national and international staff unions.

UNIFIL Force Commander Maj.-Gen. Paolo Serra also attended the ceremony at a Tyr cultural centre to mark the International Women's Day.

**Southern youths display poetry talents**



The youths of southern Lebanon got a chance to show their poetry talents in a competition organized by UNIFIL under the UNESCO-proposed theme "The Traditions of my ancestors (or village)". The competition gave southern students the opportunity to think about their parents and grandparents but ultimately about themselves, their future and to take pride in their identity, said Edward Tawil, from UNIFIL's Civil Affairs Office. The competition held at the Saint Coeur School in Marjayoun culminated in three winners. Two students shared the top two slots. Their poems were equally alluring to the judges; Hanan Dakik from Tibnin High School and Mohamad Bzeih from Tyr High School, while Lara Zwayhid from Marjayoun National High School won the third recognition.

**Fun and joy at children's festival**



Nearly 3,000 children from over 20 villages watched UNIFIL peacekeepers perform traditional dance and a local magician play tricks. They also participated in other activities such as soccer games and face painting. All of this is part of the sixth annual children's festival, one of the largest festivals in southern Lebanon which was held at the Liberation Educational Complex in Sultaniyah village in the Tibnin area.

The festival was organized by the Union of Municipalities, in collaboration with Lebanese NGO ALPHA, which is working in the area of human promotion and literacy.

**And roller-skiing to raise mine awareness**



Michael Hands, UNMAST's Programme Manager, wanted to do something unique to raise awareness about the scourge of mines and unexploded remnants of war which continue to claim lives. So he roller-skied on an early spring morning from the city of Tyr to UNIFIL Headquarters in Naqoura, an 18-kilometre, two-hour journey uphill and downhill along the coastal road. The trip's duration is enough time for two people to lose their legs to explosions, Mr. Hands pointed out. At the finish line, he was all smiles but quiet stiff, as he put it. UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Paolo Serra greeted him with an applause and praise. "You did a great job. You were very fast. Well done," the Force Commander said.

**Painting on Porcelain**



Twenty young women from the Tyre district were able to learn a lifelong craft through their participation in the “Painting on Porcelain” workshop. The workshop was a rare opportunity that could lead to financial independence and stability. UNIFIL funded the training, paid for utensils and the women’s transportation. The training was carried out under the auspices of UNIFIL’s Italian contingent and in collaboration with the Southern Women’s Association.

**Time for fun and learning**



School children aged 8 to 10 from eight schools mainly in the Tyr district and a few from Beirut schools as well as some school dropouts spent the day learning the importance of water and the best ways to use it through Nestle’s six-stages water games. The water awareness campaign was organized by UNIFIL Civil Affairs office in collaboration with the Tyr Municipality, Nestle Waters Lebanon and UNIFIL’s Italian battalion.

The festival aimed to draw attention to the importance of fresh water on World Water Day.

**Football to raise mine awareness**



A football match to raise awareness and to draw attention to the suffering of landmine victims was played at the UNIFIL base of the Korean Battalion.

A team comprising land mine survivors faced off a team of UNIFIL personnel in the game, which was organized by UNIFIL Civil Affairs in collaboration with the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped (LWAH) and Lebanese Mine Action Centre (LMAC).

UNIFIL Deputy Force Commander Brigadier-General Patrick Phelan, Head of Tyr Municipality Abdel Mouhssin Hussein, First Lieutenant Patrick Shoufany representing LMAC, the Manager of the LWAH Handicapped Rehabilitation Centre at Sarafand Dr. Maha Shouman Jbaei, Representatives of the National Committee of Mine Victim Assistance and Mine Risk Education, local authorities as well as representatives from various international organizations were among the spectators. LWAH won the game 3-2.

**Top Chef cooks for UNIFIL**



Top chef contestants cooked for around 200 UNIFIL peacekeepers, personnel and local Lebanese authorities in southern Lebanon, adding a different flavor to the renowned cooking show that airs on LBCI TV. Program Director Wissam Succar lauded the cooperation with UNIFIL officials, who were “very organized”, as he stated. The final 10 contestants who had reached this level were faced with a double challenge; to satisfy the judges’ criteria and feed UNIFIL with only three and a half hours time to do all the cooking. Judge Chef, Joe Barza considered it a good challenge to be in the south and a pleasure to be interacting with peacekeepers. Mr. Barza, who is also a chef, pointed out the particular difficulties with this episode. “It is quite a challenge for the contestants to cook in the UNIFIL kitchens and feed a number of military and civilian staff.” As the cameras rolled to a halt, declaring the end of the show, the Top Chef contestants felt proud of their work and a job well done. Also thankful was UNIFIL for the visit and the delicious cooking.



## Ghassan Tueni (1926-2012)

The late Lebanese diplomat and journalist, Ghassan Tueni, had a chequered career at home and as envoy abroad, including in the United States. Tueni was born on 5 January 1926, in Beirut, the eldest of four children of Gibran Tueni, who was a prominent journalist and publisher of the An-Nahar newspaper.

His career in journalism began early. In Grade seven in 1937, he published a weekly newspaper called "Primary". It covered the news in the country as well as about the school and student strikes.

As a freelancer, in 1941, he wrote articles for the "Revue du Liban" newspaper.

After earning a Bachelor's degree from the American University of Beirut in 1945, Tueni travelled to the United States to study political science. While there, he got a job as a press attaché with the Lebanese delegation to the United Nations and also worked as a reporter for his father's An-Nahar newspaper.

Tueni returned to Lebanon on his father's death in 1947 to look after the family. On 5 January 1948, he became the editor-in-chief of An-Nahar. He also covered the news on the ground, entering the Palestinian territories in 1949 with Jordanian troops as a war correspondent amid heavy fighting during the first Arab-Israeli war.

First elected to the Lebanese Parliament in 1951, at 25, he was the youngest member at the time. Tueni's political views shifted between the government and the opposition. He joined the Lebanese Phalange party in his youth, and later belonged to the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in college. Soon after he left the party, he shifted loyalty between support for the President or opposition to his policies. That has led to his arrest on several occasions for opposing the president.

In 1954 he married the poet Nadia Hamade who passed away in 1983, leaving him with their two children, Gebran and Makram. Their daughter Nayla had died at the age of eight.

# A Symbol of national Liberation

Every believer in Lebanon's sovereignty and independence is proud of Ghassan Tueni's diplomatic achievements, especially the great role he played in the liberation of southern Lebanon from Israeli occupation. Ghassan was at the forefront of the struggle by the Lebanese elite. He played a crucial role in Lebanon's progress towards liberation through his crucial role in the adoption of Resolution 425 in the Security Council in 1978.

This resolution was the basis for the establishment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) based in the south of the country, which is now under the mandate of UN Security Council Resolution 1701

The two resolutions and the development of UNIFIL's role confirm how farsighted Ghassan was and how aware he was of the importance of the international community in assisting Lebanon, the small country crushed by regional interests, which manipulated its sovereignty and the fate of its people.

Ghassan Tueni is a true national hero with his famous cry at the UN Security Council: "Let my people live."

Though now deceased, Ghassan Tueni continues to teach us the importance of maintaining this success, whose foundations he established four decades ago. It is an achievement that is still crucial in order to fulfil UN Security Council Resolution 1701, with the assistance of UNIFIL, and restore the full elements of national sovereignty over all Lebanese territory.

The philosophy of sovereignty and practising its mechanism and commitment to it are what Ghassan Tueni taught fellow Lebanese since the passing of Resolution 425. This remains one of the treasured values left by someone whose greatness was bigger than Lebanon.

**Naila Tueni**

In 1987, his youngest son, Makram, died in a car accident in Paris, at the age of 21, and Gebran, a member of the Lebanese Parliament, was assassinated in 2005.

In 1976, Lebanese President Elias Sarkis named Ghassan Tueni his personal representative and dispatched him on a diplomatic mission to the United States, leading a team of ambassadors. In 1977, he was appointed Lebanon's Ambassador to the United Nations.

Tueni was responsible for drafting UN Security Council Resolution 425.

He recalled in an interview once: "I can't forget the long nights that preceded and

accompanied the voting on Resolution 425 which passed unanimously in the Security Council. The negotiations were very tough, and I had previously discussed with the United States the issue of sending UN troops to Lebanon in return for abstaining from demanding the condemnation of Israel."

Tueni got married again in 1996 to Mrs Shadia El Khazen.

Tueni taught political science at university in many countries. His writings include many research papers and books. Part of his legacy is the An-Nahar newspaper and the Dar An-Nahar Publishing House.

He died in 2012.

# My greatest achievement was resolution 425

**Ghassan Tuéni** (1926 - 2012) was a leading figure in Lebanese journalism and politics and one time publisher of the daily 'An-Nahar'. Mr. Tuéni was Lebanon's Permanent Representative to the United Nations during the establishment of UNIFIL in 1978. Al-Janoub team interviewed him in June 2008 to find out how he negotiated the corridors of diplomacy in New York.

*This interview was first published in Al-Janoub in June 2008*

**AL-JANOUB:** During the establishment of UNIFIL in 1978, you were closely involved in the negotiations in the Security Council. How do you recall the experience?

**TUÉNI:** We had to make a choice between two options - establishment of UNIFIL or condemnation of Israel [for its invasion of South Lebanon]. We could not achieve both in the Security Council. We chose UNIFIL. This was not without apprehension among Lebanese political leaders who were of the opinion that bringing UN troops to Lebanon will not be very popular. My contention was that with UNIFIL, we are not bringing colonial occupation to Lebanon, but peacekeepers and an international guarantee of Lebanon's "territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence".

The Security Council vote on the resolution took place at midnight. I urged quick action. "People were dying in Lebanon every minute of every hour," I told the Council, "as the Israelis were still advancing." We managed to convince the President of the Council to call

for a vote immediately without the customary debate on the subject. The members agreed to relinquish their right to speak until after the vote. Interestingly, the Russians and Chinese went along – the Russians abstained and agreed not to use their veto-power, but the Chinese ambassador actually raised his hand in favour of the resolution. We hadn't even canvassed him to vote. It was an unbelievable sign of universal support. As a result, the peacekeeping forces came down to the south instantly and the Israelis stopped in their tracks.

**Did it happen as smoothly as that?**

Actually no. The wording of the resolution [425] was unprecedented in that it called on Israel to "withdraw forthwith" its forces from all Lebanese territories. Ultimately, Israel gave a schedule for their withdrawal from Lebanon. All went well, or almost, until the last phase of withdrawal on the 13th of June.

We expected the Israelis to hand over to UNIFIL. But as I watched on TV, to my

surprise I saw the Lebanese flag, not the UN flag, go up in Marjayoun on the main barracks of the Lebanese Army that had been occupied by the Israeli Army. I knew there was something fishy going on. Indeed, the Israelis did physically withdraw, but they turned over their positions in the vicinity of the border not to UNIFIL but to the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

**So then did you think resolution 425 was worth your efforts?**

Yes, my greatest achievement was resolution 425, particularly the paragraph that restored the sovereignty of Lebanon. But it did not mention Sheba'a, since Israel and the US argued that we were only discussing territories occupied by the March 1978 invasion.

There were several draft resolutions that we worked on. But it was difficult to attribute with any precision, prerogatives to UNIFIL enabling it to "use force in self-defence, including resistance to attempts





by forceful means to prevent it from discharging its duties." I had endeavoured to include in the various resolutions extending the mandate of UNIFIL, clauses allowing prerogatives and the capability to use force officially without moving from the "defensive" character of "peace-keeping", as stated in Chapter VI [of the UN Charter], to the "offensive" character of "peace-enforcing" as authorized by Chapter VII.

This whole phenomenon was described as Chapter 'six-and-a-half'. We finally "formed" the proper wording that described the right of self-defence "with muscles and teeth" in resolution 501 (February 1982). But it all stopped there, until this same debate came up most recently while resolution 1701 was being negotiated.

#### **How do you recall your negotiations around these developments with your interlocutors in the UN?**

In fact the most difficult Ambassador was not the Palestinian as one would expect, but the Syrian. Once, as we were getting Israeli rockets on Lebanese villages in retaliation of Palestinian fire from an area called the 'Pan Handle' - a strip of land adjacent to UNIFIL's area of operations- I proposed that we deploy the UN in that "no man's land". The US, UK, France and even China, I believed, agreed. But the Soviet Ambassador told me to go talk to the Syrian Ambassador first: "If he is convinced by the plea, I'll go for it," he said.

The US delegation as a whole was very supportive in the UN at the time. They went as far as offering to sponsor resolution 425 and actively persuaded members of the Security Council to vote for it. This shows that if you talk to the US delegation rationally, not merely seeking condemnation

at every moment, you can expect a better response from them. But then I was taken by surprise when, without my knowledge, Washington negotiated an agreement with the Lebanese Government to deploy a Multi-National Force (MNF) later in 1982.

I could not understand what would be the relationship between the MNF and UNIFIL: why we were not developing the role of UNIFIL, instead of creating a new international force outside the UN framework, with similar terms of reference, but totally independent from the original force which we had had no reason to thus condemn.

The first Israeli Ambassador I had to deal with -but never talking to each other except across the Council table- went on to become President of Israel. In the first debate in the Security Council, he claimed that the Lebanese Ambassador was not speaking for the Lebanese but for the Palestinians.

To support his argument, he showed a number of cables allegedly received from residents of Marjayoun stating that they did not agree with me. I brandished a photograph printed in the morning's New York Times that showed young men from Marjayoun thrown around a tree, blindfolded and hands tied behind their backs, while Israeli soldiers stood around them playing violin. I asked him whether these were the same people who signed the cables. His only reply was that "he had not seen that photograph".

#### **Is there a recipe for a successful Security Council resolution?**

You see, the UN is a very useful and effective instrument. If you want to be able to use it you have to work constantly in a spirit of conciliation, and never seek an

absolute "victory". Sometimes it is better not to get bogged down by too much detail, nor reject harmless concessions, to salvage the essence of your case.

For example in August 1982 when there were intensified clashes between Israel and different armed groups in Lebanon, the Security Council adopted a resolution

[516] demanding immediate ceasefire in Lebanon and across the Lebanese-Israeli border.

This was one of the shortest resolutions in UN history. The British Ambassador, who drafted it, said: "If you are asking for a resolution that would settle all that is at stake between this and that party, it simply won't work. What you need is just a ceasefire. We will address the other issues later, hopefully with a functioning ceasefire on the ground."

On the other hand, I remember the difficulties of negotiating with the Soviet delegation. They had a specialist who would run around carrying a bag full of documents. "I have here not only every resolution, but every line we have ever approved," he said, "We will not agree to any new document that so much as adds a comma to any past resolution that we have accepted. If you insert any innovation, it shall have to go to Moscow for approval (ad referendum). Even if we approve it here"

So you have to work through complex dynamics: For instance, whereas the Arab ambassadors were intent on inserting a phrase condemning Israel, for the US anything that read like a clear condemnation of Israel was taboo. Such were, and probably still are, the complexities of UN daily life.



# UNIFIL in the Heart

## General Graziano revisits his years as UNIFIL Commander

UNIFIL in the Heart – that’s how fondly Lieutenant-General Claudio Graziano speaks of the peacekeeping force he led for three years. Just as when he was Force Commander and Head of Mission from 2007 to 2010 he remains supportive of UNIFIL and its mission and he’s willing to help in whichever way he can.

The General in-charge of the Italian Army returned to familiar ground in southern Lebanon three times in 2012, visiting UNIFIL Headquarters for discussions with the current Force Commander, Major-General Paolo Serra, and the Mission Leadership.

“I am delighted to be here in southern Lebanon that was my home for three years,” he said in an interview.

“I am now coming as Chief of Staff of the Italian Army. So the first task I have is to confirm the commitment of the Italian Armed Forces to peace and to support UNIFIL in carrying on its fundamental task which is very important for the region, Lebanon and the peace in the area.”

Speaking after his briefings, he went on to describe the former colleagues he worked with and how appreciative he remains for their contribution. But he quickly adds: “Of course, now I am getting maybe older, I am doing other things. From my position I will try my best to help them and always it will remain in my heart.”

His visits are significant that they came after Major-General Serra, a fellow Italian, took charge of UNIFIL on 28 January 2012. Italy last year reduced its troops by one battalion, to the current number of about 1,000.

General Graziano, who many in Lebanon and particularly in the south remember too well, noted the development and the changes since he last was in command in southern Lebanon.

“Looking around, and from the briefing I have received from the Force Commander, from senior leaders from the same people who were helping me when I was Force Commander I was delighted to understand

that UNIFIL has been able so far to keep on with its main job, that is keep on the cessation of hostilities and to improve and contribute to improve the situation in southern Lebanon.”

He attributed that to the efforts of UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces as well as the liaison and coordination mechanism he set up under his Command which is known as the Tripartite forum.

The progress, he said, “was possible because of the good cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, because of improvements, the real improvements went from the tripartite meetings.”

There were stark changes from when he first arrived in UNIFIL in 2007 and after he left in January 2010.

“Coming here from the airport it was for me clear to see that also the condition of living of the population has improved, that the Lebanese population is getting better, and I think this result is also due to the effort, the common efforts of UNIFIL and LAF working together in strategic partnership and being able to create a new strategic environment in the south that is feasible to keep the cessation of hostilities,” Lieutenant-General Graziano added.

His views of UNIFIL have not changed since he was Force Commander. “UNIFIL has a very important job, to keep the cessation of hostilities and to keep open the door, the window of opportunity,” as he put it.

He said: “It is up to the parties to take advantage of this window of opportunity and to take advantage of what UNIFIL can do on the field in this moment that even more

than before require a strong, and committed presence of the United Nations on the field.”

Looking back at his tenure, General Graziano was quick to let out his feelings.

“It’s very emotional. I know we already have a new Italian Force Commander. I really have strong feeling of emotion for what he is going to do, that is the best job, the best experience I had in my life being Head of Mission and Force Commander working with exceptional professionals, both military and civilian, my Director of Political Affairs, my Director of Mission Support were really the best professionals that I could have had in my life. And through their support it was possible to build something important I think.”

The most important, he stressed, “is that for more than five years UNIFIL has played a strategic role keeping the cessation of hostilities.”

His advice for the Mission is simple: “Keep on with what you are doing now, keep on working very close with the Lebanese Armed Forces, working with Israeli Defence Forces, running the tripartite meetings that still remain the only open forum for discussions with the two parties, following the new issues that are coming, trying to solve tactical problems that can become strategic problems.”

General Graziano singled out among other things the visible marking of the Blue Line, also a pilot project that started under his tenure and has continued since.

“When it is completed it could really be a change for the situation,” he said of the ongoing process of visibly marking the Blue Line.

**Samir F. Ghattas** UNIFIL Public Information





# UNIFIL-LAF Cooperation key to South Lebanon Peace - UNIFIL General

Brigadier-General Olivier Pougin had no qualms about the advice he left for his successor as UNIFIL Chief of Staff: continue the close cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) that is key to stability in southern Lebanon and to the success of the Mission.

In an interview with 'Al-Janoub', the General looked back at his one-year tenure that ended in July 2012 with satisfaction. And he has reasons for that: there were very few security incidents, cooperation between UNIFIL and Lebanese authorities was good and there's been unprecedented number of countries contributing to the peacekeeping force.

"When I look back at my tenure as UNIFIL Chief of Staff, I would say that the main achievement has been that there were no major incidents during the period," he said. "I also consider myself very lucky to have had the opportunity to work with 39 different nationalities ... It shows clearly the will of the international community to stay here and to participate in ensuring calm and stability in the region."

Cooperation between UNIFIL and LAF has been a cornerstone of efforts to implement the relevant provisions of UN Security Council resolution 1701, and raising the scope of that relationship is a priority for UNIFIL, he said.

Currently, the two sides jointly conduct numerous command activities, undertake joint operational tasks such as patrols and meet frequently to try to improve cooperation at the staff level as well as train together.

The General adds that UNIFIL tries to jointly work with LAF on every activity. He acknowledges that there remain a few challenges but he is confident that "we will find a good way to conduct those activities".

"We have done a lot of other things, we worked on the Strategic Review and the military capability study to enable us to work better and also to keep the same level of troops deployed on the ground while reducing the logistical footprints, for example," he said.

Strategic Review provided an opportunity to present proposals for a more robust strategy for LAF-UNIFIL cooperation and proposed greater capacity building strategies for the LAF, he added.

"We worked very hard during the Strategic Dialogue process that aims to establish a LAF-UNIFIL plan to increase the capability of the South Litani Sector troops in southern Lebanon. And for that we worked together and this helped to increase confidence between us. It was very interesting," the French General said.

"The first topic we dealt with during the review was building a command UNIFIL-LAF plan, to increase the capabilities of the South Litani Sector troops. We looked at how to establish this reinforcement in order to be able to take our operational task in the framework of resolution 1701. So to do that, it necessitated a lot of work, we had to describe all the operational tasks we are conducting, all the troops we need and capabilities to perform those tasks and to compare with the LAF and difference between both, how to request with the international community the help to fill the gap."

The Command Plan produced in five months of discussions is only a first step, said Brigadier-General Pougin. "There are a lot of other proposals that we can implement with that tool including how to go further with the plan, how to solve some difficulties or hot spots on the ground and adopting a bilateral approach."

On relationship with the local population, UNIFIL is making many efforts to ensure respect for the local population and to show that the peacekeepers are in the south for the people.

"This is one of the reasons why we try to increase cooperation with the LAF because

the population is looking forward to seeing a common approach between UNIFIL and LAF," Brigadier-General Pougin said, adding: "We receive a lot of requests from the population for greater cooperation and it is also our will and aim."

On security issues and the regular concerns about a possible war in southern Lebanon, he said none of the parties wants a conflict and would like to maintain calm.

Regarding the numerous patrols that UNIFIL conducts on a daily basis in the Area of Operation in the south, the General said the guiding principle is to keep the situation calm, respect the people and ensure they live in better conditions.

"We have to adapt our patrols to the situation and conditions in the Area of Operation," he said. "We can achieve this operational task with a lot of cooperation with the LAF because we are working together to implement peace and calm in the AO. We have to adapt the number of patrols to the situation, and the more we can perform jointly with the LAF, the better."

He added: "We are doing a lot to try and avoid any misunderstanding and develop the local capacity because we come from different countries. We also try to educate our troops on the Lebanese culture and the importance of adopting a friendly approach when they are conducting some patrols. It is very important for the population and for us."

As for whether there will be reduction of troops in UNIFIL, the General said there is a military capability study underway and the question is not decreasing the number of troops deployed on the ground but rather to reduce the logistical footprint.

"The focus is on more efficiency and not necessarily the number of troops."

**Andrea Tenenti** UNIFIL Public Information









The Indian battalion (INDBATT) was first deployed with UNIFIL in 1998. Its area of responsibility is covering a sensitive region in UNIFIL's Area of Operations called the "Arkoub area", which is characterized by its mountainous terrain.

The Indian battalion mans the highest number of UN positions among the battalions deployed in South Lebanon. It currently has a total of 850 soldiers with officers deployed in nine UN positions in addition to manning nine temporary observation posts along the Blue Line.

More than 15,000 peacekeepers have been deployed as part of the Indian battalion over the last decade. During this time the Indian peacekeepers have made great efforts to forge a strong and long lasting relationship with the people of south Lebanon.

The local population is heavily relying on livestock for their lively hood and the Indian battalion has made sure to always deploy a veterinary doctor with each battalion rotation. The vet has always been ready to provide medical services for thousands of goats, sheep, and cows, and perform emergency surgeries whenever necessary. This, increasingly popular veterinary service by the Indian battalion has not only strengthened the ties between the local population and the Indians, but has directly contributed to shepherds paying greater attention to the Indian peacekeepers, who on a daily basis patrol the Blue Line. In carrying out this activity they help preventing Blue Line violations in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces.

INDBATT also extends medical services to the people of South Lebanon by running a clinic in the town of Chebaa and carrying out medical checkups in Social Ministry clinics located in several towns like Hebbriye, Kafarshuba, Kfarhamam, and others. One of the INDBATT doctors explained that they work seven days a week, eight hours per day and provide the population with free medication.

And it doesn't stop there. The Indian battalion also conducts dental awareness campaigns in schools, provides yoga classes, and organizes football games in several villages. An Indian officer elaborated, that "we feel as if we are living among our families, so we can easily say that the locals treat us as their children and rarely any problems occur between us."

# When peacekeepers become family

Eleven years of age was Ali Saad when the Israeli army invaded his Southern town Tibnin in March of 1978, in what later was known as the “Litani operation”. He witnessed at that young age the scourge of war and the massive destruction all around. Only days later, he heard on the news the announcement of the Security Council Resolution 425 that called for the deployment of peacekeepers in South Lebanon. Ali soon started recognizing blue helmet soldiers replacing the Israelis at their military post only a few metres from his home.

Ali recalled how at first there were Irish soldiers, kind but cautious. He said: “they were trying to adjust to their new surroundings, mingling with people with whom they don’t share the same culture, tradition, and language. And due to the closeness of our home to their post the soldier’s initial contact was with my parents.”

The communication between the Irish and Ali Saad’s parents was difficult at first. The soldiers spoke the English language whereas his parents, as most of the townspeople knew some French as their second language. And so Ali started to pick up a few words, and soon enough he grasped enough English vocabulary to enable him to act as the mediator between the soldiers and the townspeople.

Time flew by, said Saad while he was learning a wide range of new English words, thus becoming a necessity to the Irish battalion serving under UNIFIL. From time to time he was asked to escort them in their visits to help in the translation with the townspeople and the local community, and also at night.

Saad’s family was very humble. They used to live on what their land produced from agriculture, which was barely enough to cover their survival needs. The Irish soldiers were aware of that, and so they started to share the family’s worries and difficulties. The soldiers offered the family a helping hand, in terms of food and supplies, which strengthened the relation between the two.

That wasn’t enough for the Irish soldiers, who took matters in their own hands.

“I was still underage when I was translating for the Irish soldiers, therefore I couldn’t apply for a job at the United Nations. So they decided to collect money among themselves and provide me with an unofficial monthly salary that managed to support my family and I in order to complete my studies. They used to take me every day to school and wait for me at 2 pm to take me back home. When I finished my high school they provided me with a scholarship to study in a university in Ireland. However



the death of my father prohibited me from going, so I completed my studies in a university in Lebanon with their help.”

Saad’s relationship with the Irish peacekeepers resulted in an academic and professional success story. He said: “I am today the manager of a Bank branch in Bint Jbeil thanks to them.”

And in return Ali wrote his thesis on UNIFIL’s economic impact in South Lebanon.

Saad never forgets how General Tony Roo, the Irish battalion commander back then, stood by the family’s side accepting condolences for the death of Ali’s father in the early eighties.

“In fact Roo was a member of my family, he continued visiting us in Lebanon regardless his retirement and age. His last visit was last September.”

Ali Saad’s family relation with the peacekeepers is nothing but an example of what joins the townspeople of Tibnin with the peacekeepers.

The Irish soldiers who were mainly a military logistics and maintenance unit often used the available equipments to help the townspeople in any accident that occurs.

They aided them in recovering the injured and transporting them to the hospitals, and removing the damaged vehicles.

“I helped the Irish more than once in recovering the injured and lifting the damaged cars. I used to translate for them and the townspeople during these operations” He said.

Ali remembered how the Irish peacekeepers lifted the UN flag on the Tibnin Hospital and orphanage during the Israeli attacks between 1993 and 1996, to prevent it from getting attacked. The Irish soldiers offered all the possible help to both of these organizations.

Saad concluded saying: “the humanitarian relation that I shared with the Irish soldiers propelled me to get involved mainly in humanitarian and voluntary work. And so I joined the Lebanese Red Cross association where I became its coordinator in South Lebanon, and its representative in regional and international forums. I also joined the world society for Orphanage care that deals with the Tibnin orphanage. Briefly I can say that the relation with the Irish peacekeepers made me the person I am today.”

**Sultan Sleiman** UNIFIL Civil Affairs



# Saffad Al Battikh



## A southern town booming into modernity

Saffad AL Battikh is no longer the town it once was. Long after the liberation in the year 2000, this southern town has lost some of its tranquillity. The town's features changed and its rhythm boosted as the construction progressively invaded its streets.

It sits on a hill 680 metres above sea level with the towns of Braashit to its south, Jmayjme in the north, Shaqra in the east and Tibnin in the west.

It is 110 kms away from the capital Beirut. Most of Saffad Al Battikh's townspeople immigrated to Australia and America, with only around 2,000 remaining permanent residents in the town. Its townspeople tend to grow olives, figs and tobacco in addition to relying on commerce and trade for a living. Saffad Al Battikh has 2 water

springs, in Ain Hammam and Ain el Bakkar, used for irrigation and drinking in times of scarce supplies.

As all southerners, Saffad Al Battikh's townspeople are warm hospitable people who love to gather up especially the youngsters around the town's landmark. A 200-year-old hackberry tree sits in the middle of town and acts as a prominent gathering spot.

Recently, in 2011, the town's municipality established the first public clinic that tends to the sick people's needs. Although Saffad Al Battikh has one public school and another private one, it lacks cultural clubs and public parks. Saffad Al Battikh is characterized by its religious coexistence and is home to a church, Saint Mary's, two Husseiniyehs and two mosques.



**Suhad Zeineddine**  
Mayor of Saffad Al Battikh

Mayor of Saffad Al Battikh Souhad Zeineddine is quick to point out that his town carries a message of coexistence between Muslims and Christians. In an interview with 'Al Janoub', he noted the good relationship between Saffad Al Battikh and UNIFIL especially since

May 2010, with the start of cooperation with the French battalion in the area. Mr. Zeineddine pointed out to the monthly visits that UNIFIL makes to Saffad Al Battikh, which produced a number of projects that were beneficial for the town. The Mayor thanked UNIFIL for its constant cooperation with the town, stating some of the implemented projects already which he said included a French-language course for the town's

public school children by the French battalion, "A free health day" by the Malaysian contingent at the town's clinic, a generator from the French contingent to the town's municipality. The town's latest project with UNIFIL is a landfill project and its transformation into a forest, which will be named "Forest of Friendship between UNIFIL and Saffad Al Battikh municipality."

**Ghinwa EL Deek** UNIFIL Public Information





# Back to school... equipped with practical experience

Back to school with a lot more than just summer fun! 12 Technical School students returned to their school this fall equipped with real practical and field experience to add to the theoretical schooling they are receiving at Bint Jbeil Public Technical School in southern Lebanon.

The two-month vocational training programme, which was initiated by UNIFIL's Civil Affairs section, and aimed to build the capacity of 12 Technical School students, came to an end on Tuesday 28 August. The students were distributed in 4 groups, 3 in engineering units focusing on generator, warm and cold (AC units), and electrical units, and a fourth group in the vehicle transport unit.

Halfway through the training programme, the students' progress was highly noted

and so the teachers' enthusiasm. In a visit to the generator unit, David Hatoum and Hussein Milhem showed how far they had come in these few weeks in gaining the essential practical expertise needed. Tony Hajj, UNIFIL's generator foreman, spoke of his trainees with pride. "We have reached together the dismantling and assembling phase of the generators, they have learned to put their knowledge into real work. They are operating according to the right specifications, measurements, and limits," he said.

**"They have learned to put their knowledge into real work."**

**UNIFIL's generator foreman**

Over in UNIFIL's transport section, Hussein Daher and Elias Mikhael have finished their training in the heavy vehicles



**“We thank UNIFIL for this exceptional opportunity and the knowlege we gained”**

**Trainee Rida Hamze**

department and are just starting in the light vehicles section. They believe in the quality of time they are spending here, being coached and taught skills that require years of experience to attain.

Philip Scarr, UNIFIL's road safety, inspection and training officer, explained that the trainees are benefitting from hands on experience. “This vocational training has proved to be a great partnership so far and I am very delighted and impressed from the trainees’ attitude and work”.

On their last day in Naqoura, UNIFIL's Force Commander Major-General Paolo Serra visited the trainees in the generator, warm and cold, transport, and electrical units. In every unit, the Force Commander insisted on observing the trainees at work, pausing to listen and watch, lauding their efforts and commending them on their will and determination to learn so much in such a short time period.

In the generator unit he applauded David Hatoum and Hussein Milhem for their newly gained knowledge of repairing a damaged generator and bringing it back to life. The trainees not only gained practical knowledge, but they were also able to overcome their fear, as Mario Chaaya from the warm and cold unit explained.

All the students were also very grateful to their patient teachers. Bassam Abass expressed openly his enthusiasm for being able to fix an air conditioning unit, thanks to his trainers.

The feeling was shared by Mohamad Salame, an electrical unit trainee, who was grateful for the in-depth training where they “not only scratched the surface but learned the details”.

The vocational training was concluded in a celebratory closing ceremony in the presence of UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Serra, the director of the Bint Jbeil Technical School and representative of the director general of the directorate of technical



**“Your performance will serve as a stellar example for generations to come.”**

**UNIFIL's Force Commander**



and vocational training Mr. Ghassan Bazzi, representatives of the Bint Jbeil municipality, and UNIFIL officials.

UNIFIL's Force Commander was heartened by the trainees’ “remarkable professional skills and tremendous enthusiasm”. He congratulated each and every one of them for having seized this opportunity stating that “Your performance will serve as a stellar example for generations to come.”

Mr. Bazzi thanked UNIFIL for its care, follow-up, support, and enthusiasm towards the trainees, especially since it wasn't the first time that UNIFIL had participated in a humanitarian activity at their school.

The training's end result was voiced by Rida Hamze, one of the twelve attendees, who spoke on behalf of his colleagues.

He noted the importance of the knowledge they gained as a result of this exceptional opportunity, thus thanking UNIFIL for their contribution and training.

At the end of the ceremony the Force Commander, Mr. Bazzi, and UNIFIL officials presented the trainees with certificates and technical kits.

Focusing on education and employment, this vocational training aligned with the objectives of the International Youth Day which will be celebrated on 12 August 2012 under the theme - Building a Better World: Partnering with Youth in relation to employment, entrepreneurship, education, including on sexual and reproductive health; political inclusion, citizenship, and protection of rights.

**Ghinwa El Deek** Public Information office

# THE CHALLENGE

UNIFIL's new TV and Web series



Suzane Jaber



Farah Amer



Sana Seblani



Zeina Islambouli



Hussein Alayyan



Layal Hamze



Manoella Msheik



Gadir Hamed

**“The Challenge”** airs on Lebanese TV stations NBN, New TV, OTV & TL

To watch all episodes visit our **YouTube** channels:

**English version:** [www.youtube.com/UNIFILVIDEOUNIT](http://www.youtube.com/UNIFILVIDEOUNIT)

**Arabic version:** [www.youtube.com/UNIFILARABIC](http://www.youtube.com/UNIFILARABIC)

**“Like” our facebook page: UNIFIL-PIO**  
to be up to date with all upcoming episodes





It wasn't like any other day in their lives. It was a day spent with UNIFIL peacekeepers, as if they were one of them. A day recorded on film and engraved in their hearts.

Recently graduated from the school of journalism in the Lebanese University (LU) in Beirut, Hussein Alayyan, Farah Amer, Gadir Hamed, Loyal Hamze, Zeina Islambouli, Suzane Jaber, Manoella Msheik and Sana Seblani showed utmost interest to discover UNIFIL and take part in its new television production capacity building project.

Each student was chosen and prepped to host two episodes of this new TV Series, by spending one day with a UNIFIL contingent to discover what their responsibilities are in relation to the mandate and activities of the peacekeeping mission. Each student effectively became the host and journalist, revealing not only the operational side of UNIFIL but who they are and where they come from.

Mr. Ramin Francis Assadi, UNIFIL's TV Producer of the Public Information Office, who came up with the concept and directed the films, auditioned the students and directed them every step of the way. "I was overwhelmed with the professionalism, dedication and interest that came from the students." Mr. Assadi said in conclusion of the project.

Each student spent one day with one of UNIFIL's contingents, including the Brazilian, Cambodian, Chinese, French, Ghanaian, Indian, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Korean, Malaysian, Nepalese, Spanish, Turkish, and the Observer Group Lebanon to better grasp what kind of responsibilities they were tasked with.

Hussein said that as a child, he would wave

at UNIFIL peacekeepers as they passed by, but was unaware of what they were doing. Thanks to this project however, he has seen first-hand what UNIFIL is doing to achieve peace and maintain security in southern Lebanon.

Although the series is called "The Challenge" in its English version, Mr. Assadi explained that the idea behind the Arabic version "Bread and Salt" was fitting to the project as it has a deep rooted, symbolic significance in Lebanon and the region. "So, when you say there is 'Bread and Salt' between us – it means that there is friendship, a bond, a connectedness, loyalty to the point of protection... a symbol of UNIFIL's relationship with the people of South Lebanon for the past three decades and we want to bring this idea back to the people of South Lebanon."

The eight students expressed tremendous gratitude for the unique journalistic experience they had gained during the production, and were pleased to have acquired hands-on knowledge of UNIFIL's mandate and activities on the ground. Sana said that her experience did reflect the title "Bread and Salt", which focused on the importance of shared values, duty and mutual support. Gadir observed that, once her initial fear of being in front of the camera had gone, she enjoyed learning about UNIFIL, in particular the assistance it provides to civilian populations.

Sana, who was embedded with a UNIFIL team patrolling along the Blue Line, caught a glimpse of UNIFIL's role in monitoring the cessation of hostilities and in 'Blue Line' marking. She focused on the cross-cultural interaction amongst soldiers of myriad nationalities and with the local

population. Eating Indian food with the Indian battalion, Sana noted that culinary difference notwithstanding, we shared common values across cultures. Zeina also accompanied a UNIFIL patrol and visited a souk which the Irish peacekeepers visit regularly. She learned that playing the bagpipes was not as easy as it seems. Suzane, who spent much time with women peacekeepers, was overwhelmed by the human aspect of peacekeeping and the hardships associated with spending long periods away from home.

The students not only researched UNIFIL and their assigned contingent but prepared all questions for the interviews they conducted. In particular, they looked at the interaction between LAF and UNIFIL.

"It was the first time I saw the relations between LAF and UNIFIL and how well the people in the villages were treating UNIFIL, as if they were Lebanese," said Manoella.

As for Loyal, she was "impressed with the dedication and work of the (UNIFIL) de-mining team in helping a country that is not theirs." Farah was unprepared to what she was to discover - and how much she would learn not only about UNIFIL but about herself by exploring new cultures.

To mark the launching of "The Challenge" or "Bread and Salt", which will be comprised of at least 16 ten-minute episodes, UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major-General Paolo Serra and Deputy Head of Mission Mr. Milos Strugar held a ceremony on 26 September in UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqura. The Force Commander congratulated the students for their enthusiasm and tenacity and then presented them with certificates.

**Rhithu Rose** Political Affairs office

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