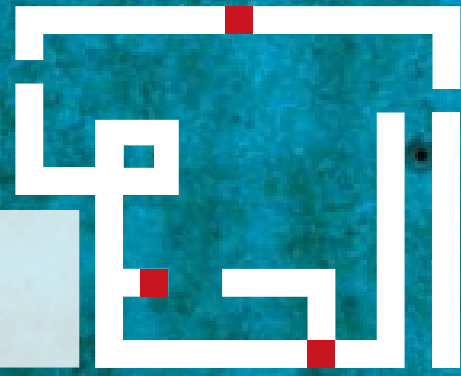


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al-janoub

February 2009 - no.04



Nabih Berri



Jimmy Carter



UNIFIL
magazine

I LIKE PEACE ...

because it is silent, no smoke, no fire

because
it is silent, no
smoke, no fire
no killing, so
everybody
will stay alive

I like peace, because it is silent.



**No smoke, no fire, no
killing, so everybody we
like will stay alive.**

**For people who like to fight
we should tell them not to
fight or to make wars or to
kill, to live in a better way**

Rayan Ayoub

7-year old from South Lebanon

Because peace is silent...

‘Peace’ has many meanings. Based on the context and our own experiences, we each understand ‘peace’ in different ways. It can be a very personal striving for self-fulfilment or it can be a global quest for universal harmony. In whatever sense or form we may seek peace, and we all do, it is achieved by reconciling the conflicts, spiritual or mundane, that we encounter individually or collectively. Rooted in decades of violent strife, the longing for peace among the people of south Lebanon is inevitably conditioned by myriad rights and obligations that must accompany, indeed precede, its fulfilment [see feature on page 10].

In this backdrop, an unqualified invocation of peace by a little boy from south Lebanon came as a powerful reminder that although peace may be a negotiated outcome, ultimately it is worthwhile to pursue peace simply for peace sake. A plain statement from the purity of a child’s mind, it is this sublime tribute to the ‘silent’ virtues of ‘peace’ that inspires this edition of *‘Al Janoub’*.

The ‘Photo Feature’ carries artistic expressions of ‘peace’ as visualised by young painters from south Lebanon. On the International Day of Peace, we invited students from different schools to paint their visions of peace on the walls of the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura. Even as rains begin to fade the wall paintings, we hope to preserve the wondrous depictions of peace in the pages of *‘Al Janoub’*.

Where such higher ideals inspire peacekeepers on mission, check out what motivates a ‘sheep-keeper’ as this man likes to call himself: “the wag of a tail, a lick of gratitude”. In a first-hand account of the veterinary assistance offered by UNIFIL’s Indian Battalion for over 20,000 livestock in nine villages of south Lebanon, we witness the zealous UNIFIL Vet transcend human bounds of peacekeeping.

And then ‘peace’ goes beyond just living beings to include the totality of our surroundings. Mindful of its environmental ‘footprint’ on Lebanese soil, UNIFIL has joined a pilot project for waste recycling in the municipality of Kherbet Selem in collaboration

with the Italian NGO ‘COSV’. Find out how this civic imperative is being made into a productive enterprise for the community.

Former US President Jimmy Carter had a tryst with UNIFIL since the very establishment of the mission in 1978. He has since been engaged in conflict resolution in the Middle East mainly through the work of the ‘Carter Center’. His visit to UNIFIL last month was a befitting realisation of a long awaited appointment. We carry an exclusive interview with President Carter.

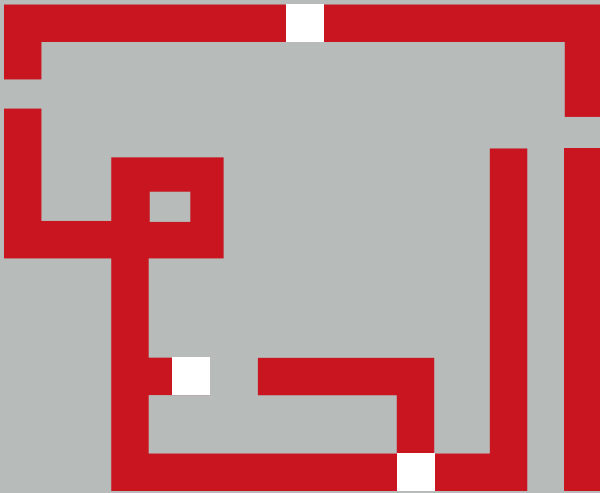
Our special features for the New Year also include articles from the Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Claudio Graziano.

From this edition, we expand our regular column ‘Mayor’s Word’ to include a profile of the same municipality - this time it is the village of Chebaa. In attempting this, we are conscious of the dangers in trying to fill gaps in available records with anecdotal accounts, often disputed and sometimes irreconcilable. Without claims for authenticity of historical research, we present this column merely as information assimilated from varied sources, written or oral. We hope our readers will enjoy this narrative and we welcome comments or factual corrections.

The *‘Al Janoub’* team wishes all its readers a happy and prosperous New Year.

Neeraj Singh
Editor-in-Chief

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Hoping that 2009 will be the year of peace

“UNIFIL has provided educational, health, sports and social services for every town and village within its area of operations.”

On the occasion of the New Year, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Nabih Berri sent the following message to UNIFIL...

“At this time when many speak of the possibility of the issuance of a UN resolution to stop the Israeli war in Gaza, similar to UN Security Council resolution 1701, I find myself recollecting memories of the difficult times we experienced as we were engaging in a political and diplomatic tussle to secure the issuance of a UN Security Council resolution that would lead to full cessation of hostilities and of the Israeli war against Lebanon. This would lead to the return of a million and a half displaced people to their homes and properties and to commencing the efforts for alleviating the effects of the war with the arrival of new UNIFIL forces, in order to implement the provisions of that resolution and particularly to assist the Lebanese Army in deploying up to the Line of Withdrawal.

I remember the pressures and the moments of anxiety we experienced, during which the international, Arab and regional intercommunication were



very rapid, regarding every word, sentence, comma and full stop that had to be worked out in order to arrive at the draft for resolution 1701.

The resistance of the Lebanese population in the face of the Israeli regular Army, which maintains the mightiest and most modern military arsenal in the Middle East, was fundamental in creating the balance that enabled us to reach a fair solution in the course of the negotiations.

Today, at this political moment, with UNIFIL deployed in South Lebanon in pursuance of Resolution 1701, and after three decades, we proudly see the Lebanese Army steadily asserting its strong presence in the southern border area. This reassures Lebanese citizens that the state is now present on both the security and defence levels, notwithstanding its need for reinforcement in number and equipment.

Most important is the level of

awareness as well as the positive and flexible nature of the people south of the Litani river, who have been greatly cooperating with the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL, as they have always done since the first deployment of the UNIFIL forces in March 1978 based on resolutions 425 and 426.

However, the main issue that continues to hinder steps towards the implementation of Resolution 1701, as is widely known by all including the UN forces operating in South Lebanon (UNIFIL), is Israel's violation of Lebanese sovereignty, by air and by sea, daily and continuously, and this goes on despite the Truce Treaty of 1949 and despite the dozens of UN resolutions, of which 1701 was the latest.

At the same time, in violation of this resolution, Israel continues to occupy the Lebanese part of the village of Ghajjar and has not undertaken any steps to hand over to the United Nations the responsibility for the



Speaker Nabih Berri (left) with Former US President Jimmy Carter (centre) and UNIFIL Force Commander Major-General Claudio Graziano in a meeting at the Speaker's Office in Beirut, 10 December 2008

Lebanese Shebaa Farms.

From the above facts it is clear that the work, the role and the mission of the UNIFIL forces in South Lebanon based on resolution 1701, is hindered by Israel, in the exact same way as was the case with resolutions 425 and 426. In contrast, the Lebanese position has been characterized by its endeavour to implement all its commitments regarding the international resolutions.

On the other hand, and in light of the role and missions of the UNIFIL forces throughout the thirty years of its presence on Lebanese soil, we must commend its humanitarian role and good deeds for the residents of South Lebanon. During the Israeli occupation (1978 - 2000), it has contributed to easing the Israeli army's restrictions and its provocative and arbitrary practices and measures. Furthermore, UNIFIL has provided educational, health, sports and social services for every town and village within its area of operations.

Here I would like to recall that UNIFIL, since it first assumed its duties in South Lebanon on 21 March 1978, has made the ultimate sacrifice of 280 peacekeepers, from the best of its officers and soldiers who fell victims for the sake of the peacekeeping operation in South Lebanon. Additionally, since their deployment under resolution 1701 peacekeepers have been killed from the Spanish Unit working with UNIFIL, who were the target of a terrorist attack, besides a number of others conducting mines and cluster bombs clearance operations.

Today, we are attentively following up on the humanitarian interaction and the civic services provided by UNIFIL in the areas of its deployment. We are confident that the humane texture represented by the friendship between the people of the South and UNIFIL, represented by the ongoing relations with Liaison Offices of the Lebanese Army, local authorities in

the municipalities, Mokhtars, Civil Society institutions, parliamentarians and political leaders represents an ethical and humanitarian model of peacekeeping operations in the world.

On the occasions of Adha festivities, Christmas, New Year and the first day of the Hijri Calendar, I have great pleasure in extending my warmest congratulations to the UNIFIL forces, its Force Commander General Claudio Graziano and all officers, soldiers and civilian personnel, both international and local, working with UNIFIL.

I ask God, despite the persistent Israeli violations, that 2009 be the year of comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East, so that the peacekeepers of UNIFIL, as well as the truce observers team (UNTSO) and UNDOF in the Golan Heights, return to their homes and families and the area thrives in stability and prosperity.”

Nabih Berri
Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament

Carter:

Prospects of peace
in southern Lebanon

Having briefly visited southern Lebanon, what is your impression of the area?

With peace, southern Lebanon would have additional potential for development. I believe that UN Security Council Resolution 1701 offers the best process for achieving peace and stability, as long as all parties carry out their obligations.

I was impressed by the natural beauty of southern Lebanon and am confident that this could become an attraction for tourists. I also saw the scars of the 2006 conflict. Rebuilding of villages and replacement of infrastructure are needed. The lands contain unexploded munitions that continue to maim and kill civilians, and these must be removed.

The special problem in Lebanon of dealing with unexploded cluster bombs inspires me to point out the promise and importance of the treaty banning cluster munitions, signed by 120 nations last week in Oslo. I hope to see more nations add their signatures, including my own.

UNIFIL was first established following the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon during your Presidency in 1978. What effect did Israel's invasion have on the Camp David talks?

In early 1977, I began working with President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and the Israelis to achieve peace in the area. This process was threatened in March 1978 when commandos of the Palestine Liberation Organization from Lebanon attacked Israel, killing thirty-three civilians and two soldiers. Israel retaliated by invading southern Lebanon. Many non-combatants died and suffered.

When **Former US President Jimmy Carter** visited UNIFIL on 10 December, *Al Janoub's Toby Harward* took the opportunity to get his impressions on the prospects of peace in southern Lebanon -from the historical, regional and global perspective- and specifically in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and UNIFIL's mission.

I put great pressure on Israel. UNIFIL was established. This helped to create a climate in which I could bring Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel together for peace talks at Camp David in September.

"The special problem in Lebanon of dealing with unexploded cluster bombs inspires me to point out the promise and importance of the treaty banning cluster munitions, signed by 120 nations last week in Oslo. I hope to see more nations add their signatures, including my own."

There has been some criticism of the UN for being too costly and doing too little. In this context, having seen the situation on the ground, how do you view UNIFIL?

UNIFIL, together with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has helped to establish a new level of security in southern Lebanon. There are significant costs associated with such a complex operation, but the cost of the periodic conflicts that we have had in this area far exceeds that of peacekeeping.

The presence of UNIFIL has created a window of opportunity to enhance political and diplomatic efforts to achieve

a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the conflict. I strongly encourage all parties to seize this opportunity to work towards peace.

How optimistic are you that Resolution 1701 (2006) can be fully implemented and a permanent cease-fire and a long-term solution reached in the current political environment?

UNIFIL is doing a very important job on the ground. The mission has the strong support of the international community and this must continue. However, it is the parties to the conflict that have the primary responsibility for implementing Resolution 1701.

I believe that the resolution can be implemented successfully and I hope to encourage the sustained commitment, both of the international community and of the parties, to achieve enduring peace in southern Lebanon.

As a new American President prepares to take office, how hopeful are you that tangible progress can be achieved in the Middle East peace process in the short to medium-term future?

I am definitely hopeful. President-elect Obama has said that he will begin to pursue peace early in his term. Unlike the situation during the previous 16 years, to start dealing with this difficult process when he has a maximum amount of influence and popularity is a very wise move. I believe President Obama understands the importance of bringing peace to the Middle East and that he will provide leadership for a new and better approach.

A window of opportunity for sustainable peace



Major-General Graziano conducting President Michel Suleiman during his visit to UNIFIL headquarters on 27 December 2008. President Suleiman was accompanied by Defence Minister Elias Murr, Lebanese Army Commander General Jean Kahwagi and Director of the Sureté General Major General Wafic Jezzini.

Since its establishment by the Security Council on 19 March 1978, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has faced some difficult and demanding challenges. Let me recall, in particular, the Mission's key role in contributing to overall stability and protecting the local population during Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon from 1982 until 2000.

Following the July-August 2006 crisis, on 11 August 2006 the Security Council adopted resolution 1701, which significantly enhanced UNIFIL's mandate to respond to the changed situation on the ground. Under the new mandate UNIFIL, in addition to carrying out its original functions, was tasked with monitoring the cessation of hostilities and the Israeli withdrawal as well as supporting the Lebanese Armed Forces as they deployed throughout southern Lebanon to be the legal entity in charge of security, law and order in the region. UNIFIL also assisted in ensuring humanitarian access to civilians in need and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.

Today, UNIFIL comprises about 12,500

soldiers from 30 troop contributing countries and is supported by 1,150 civilian international and local staff. This includes military personnel serving as part of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, the first naval component that has ever been established in support of a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

In close coordination and cooperation with the Lebanese army, UNIFIL is doing its utmost to ensure security and stability in the area at all times. UNIFIL troops actively monitor developments in the area of operations from permanent positions, by conducting ground patrols on a daily basis as well as through regular air patrols. UNIFIL troops also perform important liaison and investigation functions with

a view to preventing and/or verifying the facts of any violations of resolution 1701 that are important for maintaining the cessation of hostilities agreement. In addition, UNIFIL engages in a number of CIMIC and humanitarian activities in support of the local population.

At sea, the deployment of the Maritime Task Force along the Lebanese coast at the request of the Government of Lebanon has proved a valuable tool for the implementation of relevant provisions of resolution 1701, assisting the Lebanese navy in preventing illegal transfers of arms or related material into the country. Further, the Force has been providing extensive training to the Lebanese Navy in order to enhance its operational capabilities in



General Jean Kahwagi, with Major-General Graziano, taking the salute from the UNIFIL Guard of Honour during his visit to Naqoura on 12 September 2008, soon after assuming command of the Lebanese Armed Forces

“Today, UNIFIL is one of the largest UN peacekeeping operations on the ground... With a total annual budget of nearly 700 million dollars, UNIFIL is a tangible proof of the international community’s interest in achieving a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution for peace in southern Lebanon.”

the areas of maritime border security and smuggling prevention.

It is pertinent to mention here that in our activities in the service of peace in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL has had the full cooperation of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and this has been crucial in the implementation of our mandate under resolution 1701. It should be noted, in this context, that the deployment of the Lebanese army throughout the south, for the first time in over three decades, is one of the biggest achievements since the cessation of hostilities in August 2006. Since then, the Lebanese army has assumed primary responsibility for ensuring security in southern Lebanon, as in the rest of the country. UNIFIL is working shoulder to shoulder with the LAF, assisting them in this important and complex endeavour.

Over the past two years, UNIFIL has been working together with the LAF through various joint activities, ranging from the establishment of coordinated checkpoints to the conduct of joint counter-rocket launching operations. I am very pleased with the level of cooperation which UNIFIL and the LAF have enjoyed to date. Significant progress has been achieved, resulting in a constructive relationship based on mutual understanding and trust.

The commitment of all the parties to the cessation of hostilities is a precondition for our ability to accomplish our mandated tasks. To date, the parties have maintained their commitment to resolution 1701, enabling UNIFIL to carry out its mission as mandated by the Security Council, with the agreement of all the parties.

The international community’s commitment to UNIFIL and to Lebanon also remains strong. Today, UNIFIL is one of the largest UN peacekeeping operations on the ground, second only to MONUC which, deployed across the entire Democratic Republic of Congo, covers an area of the size of Western Europe. With a total annual budget of nearly 700 million dollars, UNIFIL is a tangible proof of the international community’s interest in achieving a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution for peace in southern Lebanon.

Over the past two years, this commitment has borne fruits. In cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL has achieved significant progress towards the implementation of several key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). Yet more remains to be done. While UNIFIL will continue to

strive with determination to address the challenges that may lie ahead, our role as a peacekeeping force is to maintain and support a peace that all the parties that agreed to resolution 1701 can adhere to over the long term.

The former head of UN peacekeeping, Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno, said: “We, the peacekeepers, provide a window of opportunity. We stabilize a situation. We create an environment in which a political process can be consolidated, but that window at some point closes if it’s not used to solidify the politics and also to make a difference in terms of the lives of the people.”

I believe that, in assisting the LAF restore stability in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL has successfully created a window of opportunity for the process towards achieving a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution; but this opportunity will not last forever. It is now up to all the parties concerned to take advantage of this window of opportunity to achieve the long-term solution envisaged in resolution 1701.

I strongly believe that sustainable peace and security is achievable in southern Lebanon. The road ahead may not always be easy but I am confident that with the support of the people of southern Lebanon and the continued commitment of the parties concerned, UNIFIL together with the Lebanese Armed Forces, shall succeed in overcoming the obstacles on the way.

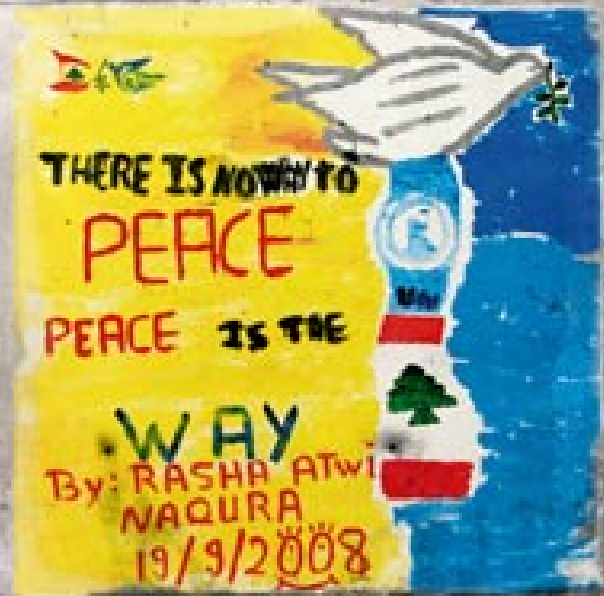
Major General Claudio Graziano
Force Commander, UNIFIL

Painting

UNIFIL's Walls

On the International Day of Peace, 21 September 2008, we invited students from different schools of south Lebanon to paint their visions of peace on the walls of the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura. Girls and boys from the following schools participated:

- Lebanese Evangelical School
- Yarine Intermediate Governmental School
- Alma Chaab Governmental High-School
- Imam Sadr Foundation







International Peace Day

Voices of peace from south Lebanon

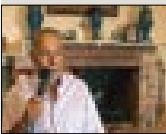
On the occasion of International Day of Peace last September 21st, UNIFIL's Civil Affairs Officer **Sultan Sleiman** travelled around south Lebanon, recording spontaneous messages of peace from various political and media personalities. And then just on impulse he put the mike to a seven year old boy, a clincher...

Member of Parliament from El Kham Ali Hassan El Khalil:



"We aspire for the moment when peace will prevail, based on the right of people to live under the framework of respect for international laws. We aspire for a peace that preserves the rights of the people in our area: their right to liberate their land, to defend it and to remain in it. We look forward to an active role of the United Nations, based on uniform standards in dealing with nations, regardless of their relations, sizes and capabilities."

Head of the Municipality of Marjeyoun Fouad Hamra:



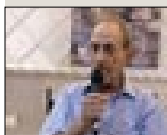
"All human kind living on this earth must remember that there exists something in this world called peace. We have suffered much from the absence of peace in our area. So we say that we are thirsty for peace, for it gives us tranquillity, security and better life to be more productive."

Yehya El Ali, Principal of the School in Chebaa:



"Peace for us means that people of all nations on this earth live in security and stability, without any nation controlling another. It is about a man acknowledging the existence of his brother in humanity, and it is about nations and societies accepting each other. Peace is civilizations and cultures coming together and conversing among each other, whatever their differences of views."

Head of the Municipality of Tyre Abdul Mohsen Al Hussein:



"Every person who believes in God, his land and his people loves peace. We love peace, but a just and honourable peace, a peace that preserves our rights and deters aggressions against us."

Head of the Municipality of Teir Debba Hussein Saad:



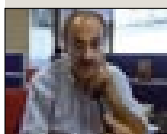
"Our country suffered a lot from the misfortunes and wars extending over thirty years, so peace is important for Lebanese in general and southerners in particular. We see no peace that could be achieved without the implementation of the international resolutions."

Dentist from Maroun El Rass Wissam Hamadi:



"Unfortunately the concept of peace has become vaguely defined, but there remains a major role for the UN to preserve peace and develop it. The role of the international organization must be activated to achieve world peace, and it must be given wider powers in this domain."

Ibrahim Bayram, a writer for 'An Nahar' newspaper:



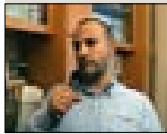
"We look at the International forces operating in South Lebanon hoping that it would be a factor of stability and peace for us, for peace is a basic and constant imperative for us southerners because we have suffered the most from wars."

Mariam El Bassam, Director of News and Political Programs for 'New TV':



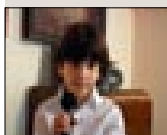
"We want that our people live without being assaulted for they assault no one, and every person gets what is rightfully his, for peace shall not be without our rights."

Hussein Ayoub, journalist with 'As Safir' newspaper:



"We in Lebanon yearn for peace... but it would be futile to seek peace that is specific to any individual, family, city or country, apart from peace sought for the entire world."

Rayan Ayoub, a seven year old boy from Aynata :



"I like peace, because it is silent... no smoke, no fire, no killing... For people who like to fight we should tell them not to fight, or to make wars or to kill... to live in a better way."

UNIFIL supports environment friendly initiatives

‘Waste’ is a natural by-product of human activity: it is estimated that every person generates on an average between 0.5 and 1 kg of garbage every day. However, not every item we throw in the bins is garbage that should necessarily be destroyed. Some of these can be re-cycled and utilised again in many useful ways. Effective waste-management is an important civic responsibility, but also a productive enterprise that brings multiple economic and environmental benefits to society. UNIFIL has joined such an endeavour in the municipality of Kherbet Selem in collaboration with ‘COSV’, an Italian NGO.

UNIFIL military camps and posts with their approximately 12,500 troops, supported by international and local civilian staff, also produce waste and, due to the nature of their consumption, the waste stream consists mainly of plastic, aluminium and glass. These are items that can mostly be re-cycled for use and can therefore also serve as a source of income for the re-cycling agency. It is with this aim that UNIFIL has joined the waste management project in Kherbet Selem as a pilot initiative.

COSV has been supporting the waste treatment facility in the municipality of Kherbet Selem since 2007 through a project funded by the Italian Cooperation ‘ROSS’ Program. The municipality runs the small scale garbage treatment plant, built back in 2000, with managerial assistance and equipment provided by COSV. The project would be sustainable in the long term if the municipality could generate sufficient revenue from re-cycled products in order to cover the running cost of the treatment facility. However, this has not been possible due to the relatively small waste volume and because of lack of taxation.

To address this problem, as also to further improve the waste treatment cycle, COSV worked together with the Municipality

in setting up a “sorting at the source” pilot activity. The idea was supported by an awareness campaign as well as a collection scheme and COSV also supplied appropriate bins for segregating the garbage. It is at this stage that the involvement of UNIFIL in the “sorting at the source” activity was considered useful in view of the nature of its waste generation, which has a high volume of waste products that could be re-cycled to provide income for the project.

The UNIFIL base in Tibnin was identified as the perfect location to start from, given its proximity to the Kherbet Selem garbage facility and its manageable size for a pilot project. The pilot project began in December 2007 when the Municipality of Kherbet Selem, with the assistance of COSV, placed specially marked bins outside the dining facilities of the UNIFIL base, where non-organic recyclable items could be disposed. After finishing their meals, UNIFIL soldiers put the plastic bottles, metallic cans and glass items into the special bins kept for the purpose. The sorted material is then collected, processed in the waste treatment facility and eventually sold in the market by the municipality of Kherbet Selem.

With a clear win-win strategy, the project



"With a clear win-win strategy, the project assists the UNIFIL base in Tibnin in reducing its environmental "footprint" (impact) on Lebanese soil, while providing the municipality with an additional source of income through the sale of the recyclable material."

assists the UNIFIL base in Tibnin in reducing its environmental “footprint” (impact) on Lebanese soil, while providing the municipality with an additional source of income through the sale of the recyclable material. This will help the project in becoming financially self-sustaining.

As the project progresses COSV, in coordination with UNIFIL, is assessing the possibility of extending the experience to other UNIFIL bases across south Lebanon.

Federico De Nada - COSV Project Officer
& Thomas Kontogeorgos - UNIFIL Civil Affairs



Chebaa: A timeless abode in the mountains of south Lebanon

The village of Chebaa is located on the rocky base of Mount El Sheikh (Haramon), 135 km south-east of Beirut. Being 1400 m above sea level, Chebaa experiences snowy winters and mild dry summers with a touch of humidity from its abundant springs, prominent being ‘Ain El Jawze’ and ‘Al Maghara’. The village is famous for its cherry, apple, plum, pear, berries and walnuts, as also for its mountain honey and dairy products.

The Lebanese Ministry of Interior lists 30,000 inhabitants in Chebaa, of which 20,000 have left the village. As the political, social and economic centre of the Arkoub area, Chebaa boasts of one of its sons making it to the Parliament every election, including the current Member Dr. Kassem Hashem.

With no other inhabited area in a 12 km radius, a trip to Chebaa is like travelling into an altogether different time and space. An inquiry into its origins is a natural impulse.

Villagers claim that the word “Chebaa” (‘Shabaa’ in Arabic) in the Aramaic language means “to fill oneself with the abundance of water”. In the Syriac language it means ‘Seven’, an allusion to the belief that seven major springs existed here, of which only three remain.

As to the origin of Chebaa’s inhabitants, the absence of reliable evidence has generated multiple local legends – from links to the Tatar and Mongol raids, to immigrations from Syria, Egypt and Palestine: some say of people wanting to avoid conscription by the Turks; others that they were highway robbers who found refuge in the mountainous terrain with abundant water.

Fuelling the myths are the many

archaeological sites, particularly along the trails and valleys of Mount Hermon. A farm called “Mash’had Al Tayr” (bird’s view) near Chebaa has an archaic shrine with lofty arches, accurately engineered and surrounded by huge oak trees perhaps of the same age. This place is sacred for all religious sects, for villagers believe that Prophet Abraham was born in the cave over which this shrine was built. To the north of Chebaa are ruins, known to the peasant as “Shbib El Tabaii Castle” or “Antara Castle”, that is believed to have been a pagan temple for ancient worshippers of the Sun and the Moon. Prince Najem of the Shehabi dynasty renovated the castle in the late 12th century.

In the late 1960s, Chebaa’s strategic location brought it centre-stage in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is said to have established base here following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The Cairo Agreement of 1969 between Lebanon and the PLO affirmed the presence of PLO fighters in Chebaa and neighbouring towns in the Al Arkoub area, which got the sobriquet “Fateh Land”.

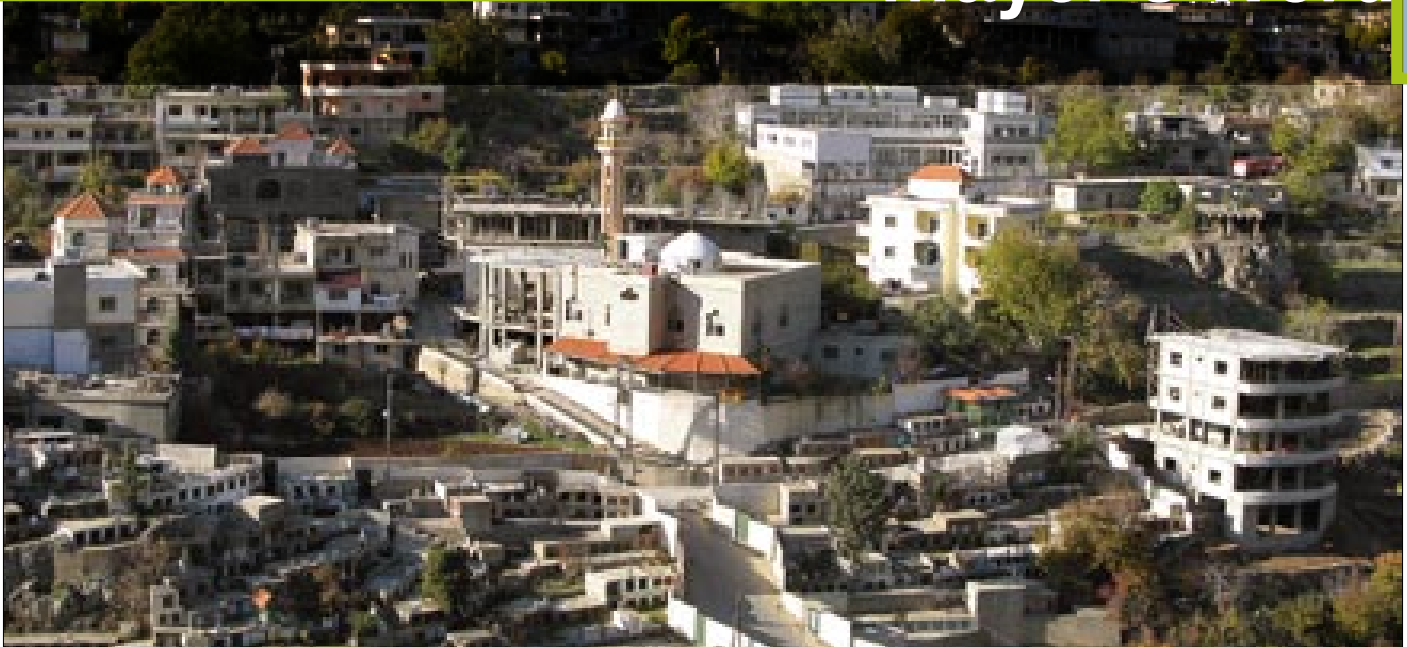
In March 1978, when Israel invaded South Lebanon, the advance guard of the Israeli Army reached the outskirts of

Chebaa. But following the UN Security Council Resolution 425 (1978), a Norwegian military unit of UNIFIL was deployed at the peripheries.

Ousama El Zohairi, a resident of Chebaa who was ten years old at the time, relates their first acquaintance with the Norwegian Unit: “On a Sunday morning in 1978, residents woke up to the presence of soldiers wearing blue helmets in white vehicles. Realising those were UN soldiers, the Mukhtar headed with a group of eminent villagers towards the guests, carrying food for them. At first the Norwegians were surprised by this behaviour and assumed defensive positions. But after the Mukhtar talked to them through a translator, a relationship was established that has since continued with UNIFIL peacekeepers - the Norwegian Battalion, which left Chebaa in 1998 to be replaced by the Indian Battalion.”

Chebaa came under Israeli occupation in 1982. Stories abound about numerous confrontations with the Israeli army and the large scale migrations that resulted. This led to a slow down in construction projects and the economy became confined to agriculture and livestock rearing.

Sultan Sleiman - UNIFIL Civil Affairs



UNIFIL brings many benefits to the municipality of Chebaa



Following the Israeli invasion of south Lebanon in 1978, the United Nations established UNIFIL as a peacekeeping force made up of several nationalities that was deployed in the south of Lebanon. It gave UNIFIL the task of observing the situation between Lebanon and Israel in addition to maintaining peace and security in this area.

In the same year, UNIFIL's Norwegian contingent was given the task of observing the area between the Chebaa town and its occupied farms.

In the year 1998, the Norwegian battalion was replaced by the Indian battalion of UNIFIL.

Despite their main mission being the maintenance of peace and security in the area, the peacekeepers also reached out to the people of Chebaa and engaged them with complete open mindedness, especially with the mayor of the town at the time (1978), Mohammad al Zahiri, who welcomed the force and expressed a genuine desire to facilitate its work. There was a positive response from UNIFIL, as evident from its humanitarian assistance and services to the people of Chebaa.

Chebaa has suffered severe deprivation in services and infrastructure for long decades because of Israeli occupation and lack of Lebanese State authority in the area. Consequently, Chebaa has lagged far behind other parts of Lebanon in the development these areas witnessed, and direly lacks some of the basic living conditions with respect to health, environmental, developmental and social needs.

We hope that the United Nations,

represented by the UNIFIL forces in our town, will continue to undertake some basic projects for the town, the requirements for which are too many to list here.

UNIFIL has been offering a range of humanitarian, social and developmental services to the people of Chebaa. These include medical and veterinary services; dental care; distribution of medicines especially to those with chronic illnesses; computer and English language classes for school children and interested adults; field trips for school children; varied assistance to schools, both public and private; and establishment of a park for recreation of local children. All the projects and services were funded by the United Nations at the request of the Norwegian, Indian and Spanish battalions working within UNIFIL.

The productive cooperation between UNIFIL and Chebaa that was first established in 1978, has since remained on a firm footing and continues during my tenure since 2001.

On behalf of Chebaa Municipality, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the United Nations, the Security Council and the UN Force working in our area. We highly appreciate the sacrifices made

"The productive cooperation between UNIFIL and Chebaa that was first established in 1978, has since remained on a firm footing and continues during my tenure since 2001."

by UNIFIL peacekeepers while carrying out their peace and security mission in the south and also for all the humanitarian and social services offered by UNIFIL, especially those that Chebaa in particular has benefited from.

We hope for the continuation of this solid cooperation between the Chebaa Municipality and the civilian society on the one hand, and the UNIFIL forces on the other, for the sake of peace and security for Lebanon and its people.

Omar al Zahiri
Mayor of Chebaa Municipality

A 'sheep-keeper' amidst peacekeepers

A year ago, on 15 January 2008, I joined UNIFIL's Indian Battalion (INDBATT) in southern Lebanon as a veterinarian. Some would say an odd assignment in a peacekeeping mission, but I was well aware of the significance and enormity of the responsibility that awaited me.



I had been briefed that veterinary aid is an important element of the assistance offered by INDBATT to the local population residing within its area of responsibility. With nine villages to cover, in not the most hospitable of terrains and no local veterinary doctors or facilities to rely on, I had my job cut out for me. But the true magnitude of my task was yet to dawn on me, and with it the satisfaction of treating animals that could not express themselves except by the wag of a tail, a lick of gratitude or an affectionate rub against you.

It was winter time when I arrived in the Mission and there was heavy snowfall in the area. However, the Commander's orders were clear: "No operational or humanitarian assistance activity will be curtailed due to weather conditions."

"There are approximately 20,000 livestock in INDBATT's area of responsibility. The terrain being mountainous, people mostly rear goats, but also cows, hunting dogs, mules, poultry, cats and a few sheep."

I was reminded of my instructor in the war academy who so very often used to stress to us the importance of "mind over matter".

It came as a distress call from a shepherd in the village of Chebaa. As I set out for his home with my interpreter Ousama, people on the road stopped and greeted me. Ousama told me I needed no introduction as the new veterinary doctor because people recognized my vehicle by its registration 'UNIFIL 1212', locally famous as the vet's car. I was told the shepherd's home was "just a little away from the main village road". That turned out to be 'just a little over one kilometre of walk in just about 1012- inches of snow'. 30 minutes later we were there: a lone house amidst a white blanket of snow.

Khalil, the shepherd, explained that he had a few goats suffering from cold and one with a fractured foreleg. Treating the cold was routine, but the fracture was another matter. Due to the weather condition and the pain the goat was in, it would not allow me to set the fractured bone right. After some hard labour and a lot of persuasion with the animal, I was finally able to fix the bone and put it in a plaster. The goat limped up to me and rubbed its forehead on my arms. Khalil remarked: "Sir, it says thank you and welcome to Lebanon".

There are approximately 20,000 livestock in INDBATT's area of responsibility. The

terrain being mountainous, people mostly rear goats, but also cows, hunting dogs, mules, poultry, cats and a few sheep. The goats are mostly of the 'Baladi' breed, but some high milk yielding breeds like 'Shami' and 'Damascus', native of Egypt and Syria, are also reared. Cows are generally the high milk yielding varieties of 'Holstein Friesian' breed, whereas the dogs are mostly 'Pointers'.

Despite the high livestock population, no veterinary or animal husbandry infrastructure exists in this area. Consequently in November 1998, since its first deployment with UNIFIL, INDBATT introduced veterinary services as part of its humanitarian assistance programme. The people heavily rely on the INDBATT vet, and many from even outside our area of responsibility approach for help.

Working to meet this direly felt need of the local population with limited facilities, I have had some enriching personal and professional experiences. One night, a farmer from the village of Al Wazzani came to our veterinary clinic with his pregnant goat that had been in labour since morning but was unable to deliver. We provided manual assistance for two hours, but to no avail. Distressed by the goat's suffering, the shepherd came to me and said, "Hakim please give some injection to my goat so that it dies in peace." I explained to him that a caesarean section could save his goat.



With his consent, we performed the surgery under local anaesthesia and nerve block. Although the foetus was already dead, the goat survived.

Once, while on a round of villages to treat sick animals, I got an urgent call to return to base. A dog from the village of Kleyaa had been brought in considerable pain, with its equally distressed little master. The father told me that out on the grounds the dog had spotted a porcupine and chased after it. In self-defence, the porcupine unleashed its lethal quills on the dog. The owner had managed to remove most quills, but two remained embedded in the body of the dog. I had to sedate the dog with local anaesthesia and remove the spines by aseptic surgery. In treating his dog, it was like treating the little boy at the same time; the father related how the boy never eats himself until he has fed the dog.

There was then this shepherd from Halta village who one night brought seven sheep that had accidentally consumed feed

"Most admirable is the unmatched hospitality of the Lebanese people... you just cannot leave a home without eating or drinking something."

mixed with rat-poison. The sheep were depressed and had shallow respiration with weak pulse. The farmer was unable to specify the type of poison. The sheep were treated symptomatically and with activated charcoal. The next day when I visited Halta to enquire about their health, I was delighted to learn that all but one of them had fully recovered.

In veterinary practice, prevention is always better than cure and more so in herd animals like sheep and goat. If one sheep or goat gets infected there is high possibility of this infection spreading to the larger herd. We have been working with the shepherds to enhance prevention and most of the animals in the area are now worms free.

There have been varied and interesting experiences. On instances people have come asking if I have any medicines to kill snakes, or even to kill the pack of wolves that attack their goats. There are some local practices that are often hard to

"... I needed no introduction as the new veterinary doctor because people recognized my vehicle by its registration 'UNIFIL 1212', locally famous as the vet's car."

change. For example, people like to use an antibiotic called 'oxytetracycline' that they call "yellow medicine". Initially I faced some resistance in using better and broad spectrum antibiotics, but having seen the results over time they increasingly go along with my line of medication. A pleasant and helpful experience has been the ability of shepherds, including their women, to give injection to the animals. This has greatly helped in my work, particularly in times of outbreak of diseases like goat plague or contagious ecthyma.

Most admirable is the unmatched hospitality of the Lebanese people. It seems like tea and coffee is forever ready to serve in their homes. Even when I am called to attend to a sick animal, before taking me to it, they will first offer me tea or coffee. Sometimes it is fresh Lebanese bread, sometimes 'manushe' or yoghurt: you just cannot leave a home without eating or drinking something. And of course, whether it is Chebaa or Halta or Kafr Chouba, the common claim is that the milk from their cattle is the best because they graze on the grass that has medicinal value and is rich in minerals.

I continue my daily rounds of villages, where I am often stopped by children politely asking me to check their animals before moving ahead. You cannot but follow them home.

Lt. Col. Satvir Singh
Veterinary Officer/UNIFIL Indian Battalion

Youth day with UNIFIL



The 'Day with UNIFIL' youth outreach programme continued during last year. On 28 November, UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura was visited by 20 high school students from Marjayoun, Chebaa, Khiam, Kafr Kela, Ebel es Saqi, Debin and Qlayah.

Special briefings on different aspects of UNIFIL's functions combined with practical activities helped the students better understand the role of the UN peacekeeping mission in south Lebanon. The students spent the day with UNIFIL and were briefed

about peacekeeping operations in the field, as well as such diverse activities as demining and audio-visual editing. At the same time, they had exciting experiences like sitting inside a helicopter and Armoured Personnel Carrier, and watching a fire fighting demonstration.

To end the day, a mock press conference was organized. Acting as journalists, the students asked UNIFIL's Chief of Public Information questions emanating from their day's first-hand experience of UNIFIL from the inside.

Equipping the school in Al Duhayayra

The village school in Al Duhayayra received computers, a TV set and a partition to create an indoor play area as part of a UNIFIL Quick Impact Project. The

school hosts around 100 students. Under the same project, the village Mukhtar's office was also provided with a computer, printer and a photocopy machine.

Day Nursery in Ayta ash Shaab



In October 2008 UNIFIL assisted 'The Association for the protection of Children with Special Needs' in Ayta ash Shaab in equipping a new integrated day nursery within an existing school that offers education and care for children and young adults with special needs.

The integrated nursery will provide day care for the children of Ayta ash Shaab and the surrounding area,

including those with special needs. UNIFIL provided funds for educational materials, toys, some electronic equipment and furniture for the nursery.

'The Association for the protection of Children with Special Needs' is a non-profit association comprised of parents of children with special needs and learning difficulties as well as educators, doctors and social workers specialised in the field.

'Community Centre' in Blida



UNIFIL supported the establishment of a 'Community Centre' in Blida, in coordination with the Municipality and the NGO 'INTERSOS'.

This included equipping a public space within the Municipal building with internet access and computer equipment as well

as furnishing a meeting place for local residents.

The project also included capacity building activities and the establishment of a management committee (with the direct support of the Social Development Centre and Municipality) in order to ensure community ownership and sustainability of the project.

