

Victory in 'Soccer for Peace' Match During Official San Marino Visit

Ken Doo
August 29, 2026



SAN MARINO - On the pitch of the San Marino Football Federation, eighteen young athletes aged twelve to thirteen took to the field in matching uniforms, passing the ball in seamless unison. Representing Jewish, Muslim, and Christian communities from across Israel, the young players recently completed a transformative six-day peacebuilding initiative from August 23 to 29, 2026, marking the official revival of the "Soccer for Peace" program following a six-year hiatus.

Comprising nine Jewish and nine Arab children, the delegation was accompanied by four community mentors, coaches, civics educators, and UPF-Israel Chair Hod Ben Zvi. Each day began with rigorous two-hour training sessions at the San Marino Football Federation (FSGC) pitch, designed to blend athletic development with teamwork. The sports component culminated in a memorable friendly match against the San Marino Academy U14 squad, with all eighteen visiting delegation members playing together as a single, unified team in shared kit - demonstrating how athletic collaboration can bridge deeply entrenched societal divides.

Off the pitch, the initiative prioritized personal connection away from the immediate shadow of regional conflict. Structured evening dialogue workshops provided a neutral, safe environment for the youth to engage in honest reflection, build interpersonal trust, and forge lasting cross-cultural friendships. This holistic approach was made possible through joint organization by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) chapters of San Marino and Israel, with institutional sponsorship provided by San Marino's Secretariats of State for Sport, Foreign Affairs, and Tourism, along with the FSGC.

The delegation's itinerary also featured prominent civic engagements across the republic. The players attended formal institutional receptions at the Casa del Calcio and the Parva Domus, culminating in a

final-day audience with San Marino's Captains Regent at the Parliament Building alongside MP Gerardo Giovagnoli. National broadcaster San Marino RTV featured the visit prominently across its programming, highlighting the vital role youth athletics can play in international diplomacy.



Originally conceived as a joint venture between UPF chapters in Italy, Israel, and San Marino, "Soccer for Peace" debuted in Turin in 2015 and ran annually in San Marino from 2016 through 2019. Though temporarily halted by the COVID-19 pandemic and heightened regional hostilities, its successful return in August 2026 reaffirms the enduring power of sport as a universal language for peace among the next generation.