

Fourteen Israeli Children of Different Faiths Play Soccer for Peace in San Marino

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September 8, 2016



San Marino, San Marino -- Fourteen Israeli children of different faiths visited San Marino for a special project of Soccer for Peace.

The delegation from Israel visited San Marino, a microstate that is enclaved by Italy, from September 1 to 8, 2016. The team included 14 children from Christian, Muslim and Jewish backgrounds as well as three coaches: a Christian, a Muslim and a Jew.

Headed by Mr. Hod Ben Zvi, the president of UPF-Israel, the delegation was accompanied by Member of the Knesset Zouheir Bahloul, an Israeli Arab who is a sports broadcaster and journalist. Prior to their trip, the delegation was hosted by Shimon Lankri, the mayor of their city, Acre, who greeted the children and gave his support to the project.



The delegation was invited by UPF-San Marino and organized by Mr. Giorgio Gasperoni, the president of UPF-San Marino.

Soccer for Peace is a joint project of UPF-Israel and UPF-San Marino together with the Israel chapter of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an affiliated organization.

San Marino's two captains regent, or heads of state, Massimo Andrea Ugolini and Gian Nicola Berti, officially welcomed the delegation. Secretary for Foreign Affairs Pasquale Valentini, who found great hope in youth striving for peace, also spoke words of encouragement. Secretary of State Giuseppe Morganti introduced the group to the captains regent, inspired by many stories of the recent Olympic Games to show the beauty of the human spirit.

The major hosts were San Marino's soccer association, which provided a week full of excitement to the children from the Middle East, including soccer training by the national coach and having the honor of going on the field hand in hand with the national teams of San Marino and Azerbaijan on their qualifying game toward World Cup 2018.

Mrs. Adi Sasaki, president of WFWP-Israel, who was the director of the project from the Israeli side, reported that the children -- who didn't know each other, came from different traditions and even spoke different languages (Hebrew and Arabic) -- returned home as friends who had shared an uplifting life experience.