



PRESS RELEASE

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## **EUROPEAN PEACEKEEPERS' LACK OF LOCAL INTEGRATION UNDERMINES THE UNIFIL'S PRESENCE IN LEBANON**

*According to Sine Qua Non's latest analysis report, the lack of local integration of European peacekeepers, who account for one-thirds of the UNIFIL personnel, is an obstacle to the objectives of the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon.*

Alex Issa examined for Sine Qua Non several interviews and surveys of the Lebanese population, which revealed cases of malpractice by the UNIFIL's European soldiers. The interviews mostly point at **“excessively military practices” that seem to be at odds with the focus of the mission's mandate on humanitarian assistance.**

The report also denounces the preferential treatment of certain communities based on their religion. For example, the Lebanese Muslim populations accuse the Spanish soldiers of having privileged links to the Catholic and Maronite communities.

**These types of behavior are fueling tensions and misperceptions between Blue Berets and the Lebanese, thereby undermining the ability of the UNIFIL to achieve its Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) activities.** These missions, in which the European battalions play a prominent role, represent a unique factor of stability and development for Lebanon, and so far they have had a positive socioeconomic impact on the Lebanese society.

**But to better ensure their effectiveness and improve their results, Alex Issa argues that the UNIFIL's European peacekeepers should receive a specific and adapted training that would help them get acquainted with Lebanon's political and cultural specificities.** At a minimum, an explanation of the role Hezbollah plays within the Lebanese society seems necessary to keep a climate of fear from prevailing between Hezbollah fighters and UNIFIL personnel.

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