

Thomas and Hermine Schellen of UPF Lebanon form the Beirut Peace Squad

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Unificationist leaders in Lebanon are sharing their gratitude this holiday season as families in Beirut continue recovering from a huge port explosion that tore through the capital city in August.

We shared with you the story of Thomas and Hermine Schellen, heads of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) in Lebanon who held a fundraiser on GoFundMe to help community members impacted by the blast. In the months that followed, the Schellens raised nearly \$6,000 of the \$7,000 goal on their Beirut Recovery Fund. They also distributed food and other necessities around devastated areas, including a public garden in the village of Jal el Dib, near Beirut.



"UPF was able to distribute 70 boxes of food and important hygiene items to 70 families," said Hermine Schellen, secretary general of UPF-Lebanon. "UPF organized the distributions in collaboration with one

of the key Ambassadors for Peace from Tripoli, Mr. Cesar Khat, who created a database of the neediest families."

Schellen said Khat received invaluable support from the town leader of Tripoli District and assistance from the Red Cross. Sponsorship by several organizations affiliated with UPF -- Women's Federation for World Peace International, Women's Federation for World Peace Europe, Women's Federation for World Peace USA, and the International Relief Friendship Foundation of Germany -- made the donation boxes possible.



"We ordered food and supplies from a local supermarket," said Schellen, "and all the boxes contained non-perishable food, such as pasta, rice, oil, and canned tuna, as well as a big package of washing powder."

The Schellens also formed the "Beirut Peace Squad," a team of young volunteers who aided them in relief efforts. The powerful blast, linked to a massive amount of ammonium nitrate stored at the Port of Beirut, left approximately \$5 billion in property damage and an estimated 300,000 people homeless, according to multiple U.S. reports.

"The Peace Squad did a wonderful job in reaching out to the families and helping with the setup of our distribution events," said Schellen. "The manager of the supermarket where we bought the donation boxes was also very supportive of our humanitarian aid and gave us a discount. He even came with the delivery crew to our distribution place to make sure all the boxes arrived well. All the families were truly thankful to receive this very much needed donation."

And the gift of giving hasn't stopped.

Local volunteers and professionals are now working around the clock to rebuild a church that was wrecked by the blast in time for Christmas. With a 30-member team, a local architect has promised to repair the Maronite Christian church in the hard-hit Karantina neighborhood by Christmas Eve.

