



SUCCESS STORY

Music and Song Urge Lebanese To Take a Stand



OTI/Lebanon

Nehna Kelna's convoy tours Beirut's seaside communities during the April 13 public appeal urging Lebanese civil society to "take a stand" for peace.

"Take a stand right now. Take a wise stand. Take a stand that makes me happy. Take a stand that gives me hope."

—Lyrics from Nehna Kelna's song, "Take a Stand"

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April 2008 – Music was the language of choice for Nehna Kelna's public appeal for peace and unity on the 33rd anniversary of the start of Lebanon's civil war.

With OTI support, the activist youth group, whose name means All of Us in Arabic, recorded and broadcast a song, "Take a Stand," from a convoy of cars during a 14-hour musical advocacy tour of Beirut and the southern city of Saida. The song's moving lyrics hint at Lebanon's political instability and urge the Lebanese people to come together and "take a stand" against divisiveness and violence.

Thousands of spectators gathered on balconies, congregated at intersections, and lined the convoy route to listen to the group's plea to work toward permanent civil peace. At one point, said organizer Omar Kabboul, a taxi driver stopped his car to voice his support and then joined the procession. More than 10,000 brochures distributed throughout the day called on readers to open their minds, find strength in solidarity, and learn from the horrors of the past to avoid renewed conflict.

Drawn from Lebanon's complex mosaic of confessional groups, Nehna Kelna's members and volunteers are university students who share a commitment to a nonsectarian, democratic Lebanon. Together, they exemplify grassroots youth activism and the unity that can come from transcending sectarian divisions.

Achieving this unity within the group was no easy task, said Kabboul, adding that the organization went through its own growing pains before finding the shared foundation needed to reach out to others.

Energized by the spirited response to their April 13 activity, Nehna Kelna activists are determined to play an ongoing role in shaping Lebanon's future. The group plans to run a series of Take-a-Stand workshops in schools and universities and to record a video clip to be aired on television.

Kabboul said he hopes these efforts will inspire people "to resolve their differences and find a common ground for civil peace and democracy," just as Nehna Kelna's members have done.