

# **A Successful "Joint Venture"**

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**Demir Kapija, FYROM** (1)

In the Southeast of F.Y.R of Macedonia, at Demir Kapija, there is a special institute for mentally and physically disabled patients. Less than 10% of the patients get visits from family and friends, and a lot of them never leave their rooms. But this day was different; it was a celebration day.

The institute at Demir Kapija was transformed into a place of happiness and joy. Among those who made it possible were soldiers from FYROM and KFOR soldiers from the United States and Sweden, along with "Musicians without Borders" and children from the Balkan Sunflower Foundation.

## **Equipment supply**

The first ones to arrive were the KFOR American soldiers. Two trucks and a bus from Camp Able Sentry arrived at the institute. They brought a truck full of mattresses and more than 300 pillows and blankets.

But the most important load was a bus full of soldiers. Their friendly smiles, warm hearts and loving care were the best things the children could get. It is also the biggest needs in Demir Kapija. During the day, FYROM and Swedish soldiers also arrived at the institute.

## **Music and ice cream**

The "Musicians without Borders" played their way through the whole building, performing local and international songs on every single floor level. Staff, patients and KFOR-soldiers were dancing and enjoying the music together.

The FYROM Prime Minister's wife visited all the patients, giving them lots of love. The Balkan Sunflowers Organisation, which volunteers for social reconstruction in the Balkans, had young children performing a play in the garden. Later on, FYROM soldiers distributed ice cream provided by the FYROM Prime Minister's wife.

## **Big success**

This day was an excellent example of a successful "Joint Venture" between local authorities, KFOR and civilian organisations. "A few things are still needed; first of all money to create small group homes and day care centres for the patients, which will increase their life standards. And last but not least; we need people visiting the institute. It is the handshake, the simple touch or smile, that makes the light in their eyes glow brighter," said Mrs. Dickinson, the UK Ambassador's wife.