



## Jean-Philippe Laberge

1974 – 2010

Jean-Philippe Laberge, a national of Canada, was a Civil/Military Coordination Officer with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since 2005.

He held a Bachelor's degree in International Relations and Political Analysis from Université du Québec in Montréal and later a Master's in European Politics and Policy from the London School of Economics.

Since early 2000, Jean-Philippe, always eager to transmit his knowledge and share his working experience, regularly gave briefings to students at the prestigious Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris. He was also sought after to prepare various case studies for the school.

After his first job as a parliamentary assistant at the Parliament of Canada, he worked for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) in Europe from 1999 to 2000 in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Human Rights Officer and Project Manager, and later with the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as a Returns and Minority Affairs Officer.

In Kosovo, Jean-Philippe was a "tireless advocate for the most downtrodden of the territory's ethnic minorities, its large Roma population, many of whom fled to neighbouring states during the NATO bombing campaign," said his former supervisor there, adding "his passionate enthusiasm for their cause and the links of personal trust he built with Roma representatives were critical in overcoming suspicions of the UN, encouraging them to return to their homes in Kosovo and rebuild their lives."

Jean-Philippe worked in Kosovo for over three years during the reconstruction phase after the war. It was there that he met his future wife, Victoria, who was also working with UNMIK.

After Kosovo, he took up a position with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as an Operations Support Officer in the Gaza Strip. Victoria followed him there, later taking up a position with the World Food Programme (WFP) in Jerusalem.

Jean-Philippe's "kindness and generosity were unique and made him a wonderful human being and friend," said his UNRWA colleagues in a letter signed, among others, by the agency's Commissioner-General Karen Abu-Zayd. He was a "true leader, taking the right decisions particularly in difficult situations – as was often the case in Gaza."

"I can not forget Jean-Philippe's sense of humour even in very difficult and dangerous situations, especially in the village of Beit Hanoun where we had to facilitate UNRWA's medical staff access," remembered another colleague who also described Jean-Philippe's long hours of hard work during tough negotiations.

Jean-Philippe left UNRWA to follow Victoria to Haiti. "They had a tacit agreement to follow each other by turn," said a close friend. "They traveled a lot together, always had new ideas and plans, and were extremely respectful of one another. To their friends, they were the most beautiful, lovely couple. Everybody admired them as friends, humanitarian professionals, a couple, and, of course, parents."

A memorial service took place in Montreal on 10 February.

Jean-Philippe is survived by his wife Victoria, their two children, Emilie, 2, and Maxime Antoine, 1, his mother Marjolaine Lord and father Jocelyn Laberge.