

PRESS RELEASE

PHILIPPINE EMBASSIES IN DAMASCUS AND BEIRUT, WITH IOM, REPATRIATE 92 FILIPINOS IN TWO BATCHES



PHOTOS:

FIRST ROW LEFT – Border Team leader Vice Consul Dennis John Briones and the IOM staff pose with the repatriates inside the bus at the Masna'a border on 12 November 2013; **FIRST ROW MIDDLE** – The 28 OFWs line up before the airline staff to check in for their flight to Manila at the Rafik Hariri International Airport; **FIRST ROW RIGHT** – Airport Team leader Vice Consul Rona Beth Goce guides the 28 repatriates as they board their flight to Manila on 12 November 2013; **SECOND ROW LEFT** – ATN Officer Dexter Macaraeg (leftmost, standing), Damascus PE ATN officer Marianne Vida Carra (leftmost, seated) and Border Team leader Vice Consul Goce (rightmost, seated) pose with IOM staff at the General Security in Masna'a on 13 November 2013; **SECOND ROW MIDDLE** – The repatriates pose inside one of the buses in Masna'a on 13 November 2013; **SECOND ROW RIGHT** – Airport Team leader Vice Consul Briones pose with the 64 repatriates at the boarding area of the Rafik Hariri International Airport before they boarded their flight out of Beirut in the early morning of 14 November 2013.

15 November 2013 – The Philippine Embassies in Damascus, Syria and Beirut, Lebanon with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) once again facilitated the successful repatriation to the Philippines of a total of 92 Filipinos from Syria. The IOM provided the airfare, land transportation and meals of the repatriates, who were crossed into Lebanon in two batches: the group of 28 on 12 November 2013 and the group of 64 on 13 November 2013.

In these two separate cross-border repatriation operations, Embassy teams along with representatives of IOM were on hand at the General Security in Masna'a where they received the repatriates from the teams of Damascus PE and IOM-Damascus. Vice Consul Dennis John Briones and Labor Attaché Bulyok Nilong composed the Embassy team, which assisted the first batch of 28 Filipinos who crossed the Syrian-Lebanese border on 12 November 2013, while Vice Consul Rona Beth Goce and ATN officer Dexter Macaraeg assisted the second batch at the Masna'a border on 13 November 2013.

From the Masna'a border, the first batch of OFWs made a brief stop at the Embassy before proceeding to the airport. Cultural Officer Gladys Perey and Embassy GUM Khalaf Hussein assisted the airports at the Embassy. The second batch of 64 OFWs were brought straight from the border to the airport.

Separate teams from the Embassy and IOM assisted the two batches of repatriates at the Rafik Hariri International Airport in Beirut before their respective flights to the Philippines. Vice Consul Goce and Information Officer Edwin Batallones with an IOM staff assisted the 28 OFWs, which left Beirut in the evening of 12 November 2013, while Vice Consul Briones and Protocol Officer Antonio Cruz with an IOM staff assisted the 64 OFWs, who left past midnight on 14 November 2013.

The first batch of 28 Filipinos, which included a minor, were scheduled to arrive in Manila on 13 November 2013, at 4:00 P.M. via Emirates flight EK 332, while the second batch of 64 Filipinos were scheduled to arrive in Manila on 14 November 2013, at 10:15 via Qatar Airways flight QR 924.

These were the 38th and 39th cross-border operations undertaken by the two Embassies. With the departure of the 92 Filipinos, a total of 1,980 Filipinos from Syria have been repatriated from Syria via the Rafik Hariri International Airport in Beirut since the first cross-border operation on 12 December 2012. **END**