

PRESS RELEASE

21 OFWs FROM SYRIA GO HOME TO THE PHILIPPINES VIA LEBANON



FIRST ROW LEFT – Vice Consul Dennis John Briones(second from right with (L-R) Ms. Marianne Vida Cara, Damascus PE ATN Officer, Vice Consul Maynard Maleon (Damascus PE) and Mr. Fady Ruckus, Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center (CLMC) staff at the Lebanese immigration at the Masna'a border, Saturday;**FIRST ROW RIGHT** – ATN officer Dexter Macaraegposes with the repatriates inside the bus as it travels towards Beirut from the Masna'a border; **SECOND ROW LEFT** – Cultural Officer Gladys Perey briefs the repatriates upon arrival at the Embassy in Hadath; **SECOND ROW, RIGHT** – At dinner time, Consular staff Melissa Mancenido distributes food to the 21 OFWs; **MIDDLE PICTURE** – Ambassador Leah Basinang-Ruiz (standing, center) chats with the repatriates at the Embassy as they finish their dinner; **FOURTH ROW LEFT** – Property Officer/ Administrative assistant Ma. Chloe Silverio (leftmost) and ATN officer Junaid Ali (rightmost) pose with the 21 OFWs before leaving the Embassy the next morning, Sunday; **FOURTHROW RIGHT** – Vice Consul Rona Beth Goce(rightmost) guides the 21 OFWs at the Emirates check in counters at the Rafik Hariri International Airport.

16 September 2013 – The Philippine Embassies in Lebanon and Syria have once again successfully repatriated to the Philippines another batch of twenty-one (21) OFWs who were crossed from the Syrian border to Lebanon during the 32nd cross-border operation conducted by the two Embassies. This particular group left Beirut via the Rafik Hariri International Airport on 15 September 2013 at 1150H on board Emirates flight EK 958.

Vice Consul Dennis John Briones and ATN officer Dexter Macaraeg, with the most valuable assistance of Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC) staff, were at Masna'a border before lunchtime on 14 September 2013 to receive the 21 OFWs from the Philippine Embassy in Damascus. After clearing immigration procedures at Lebanese immigration at the Masna'a border, the repatriates were brought directly to the Philippine Embassy in Beirut where they would be staying overnight.

Ambassador Leah M. Basinang-Ruiz, together with her husband Ricardo Ruiz, chatted with the repatriates and updated them on the latest developments in the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao. She informed them that the Philippine Embassy in Lebanon is happy to have the opportunity to participate in the task of repatriating Filipino workers from Syria. She also wished them a safe journey home to their loved ones in the Philippines.

Four (4) Embassy personnel namely: Cultural Officer Gladys Perey; Property officer/Administrative assistant Ma. Chloe Silverio; ATN officer Junaid Ali; and Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Resource Center Houseparent Gina Murillo, were on shifts to assist the repatriates from the time the repatriates arrived in the Embassy until they left for the airport the next morning. During their stay in the Embassy, the repatriates were served dinner and breakfast, which were prepared by Embassy personnel.

At 0800H of Sunday, 15 September 2013, the repatriates, assisted by Vice Consul Rona Beth Goce and ATN officer Dexter Macaraeg, left the Embassy for the airport. After undergoing immigration, airline and boarding formalities at the Rafik Hariri International Airport, this batch of 21 OFWs left Beirut at exactly 1150H. They are scheduled to arrive in Manila on Monday, 16 September 2013, at 1815H on board Emirates flight EK 336.

With the departure of the 21 OFWs yesterday, the Embassy has repatriated a total of **1,771** Filipinos from Syria via the Rafik Hariri International Airport in Beirut since the first cross-border operations jointly undertaken by the Philippine Embassies in Syria and Lebanon began on 12 December 2012. **END**