

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **PHILIPPINE EMBASSIES IN DAMASCUS AND BEIRUT REPATRIATE 28 OFWs FROM SYRIA**



**FIRST ROW LEFT** – (L-R) Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC) Social Worker Jeanne d’Arc Hobeika assists Vice Consul Dennis John Briones in preparing the passports and travel documents of the repatriates at the Masna’a border; **FIRST ROW RIGHT** – (L-R) Collecting officer Lilia Pangilinan and ATN officer Dexter Macaraeg welcome and brief the 28 Filipinos upon arrival in the Embassy; **SECOND ROW** – Ambassador Leah M. Basinang-Ruiz (center, standing) with ATN officer Junaid Ali (leftmost) and Vice Consul Dennis John Briones (8<sup>th</sup> from left) pose with the 28 Filipinos at the Embassy showroom before proceeding to the airport.

**20 September 2013** – Twenty-eight (28) Filipinos from Syria were repatriated to the Philippines through Lebanon on Thursday, 19 September 2013. They left Beirut via the Rafik Hariri International Airport at 1340H on board Gulf Air flight GF 910.

This batch of Filipino nationals crossed the borders of Syria and Lebanon in the afternoon of 18 September 2013. This group was received at the Masna’a border (Lebanese immigration) by Vice Consul Dennis John Briones and Information Officer Edwin Batallones, with the assistance of Caritas staff Ms. Jeanne D’Arc Hobeika. After being granted transit visas by the Lebanese immigration authorities, the 28 Filipinos entered the Lebanese territory around 1500H and were brought directly to the Embassy.

At the Embassy, where they stayed overnight, they were provided with hot meals, which includes dinner and breakfast prepared by the Embassy’s Finance officer Dorotea Apostol and Consular staff Melissa Mancenido. Several Embassy personnel, including Cultural Officer Galdys Perey, ATN officer Dexter Macaraeg, Collecting Officer Lilia Pangilinan, Property Officer/Administrative Assistant Ma. Chloe Silverio, Protocol officer Antonio Cruz and Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Resource Center (MWOFRFC) Houseparent Gina Murillo took turns to look after them during their overnight stay in the Embassy. Before leaving for the airport the next day, 19 September 2013, Ambassador Leah M. Basinang-Ruiz spent time with the repatriates and wished them a happy and safe trip back to their families in the Philippines.

At exactly 1000H, Vice Consul Briones and ATN officer Juanid Ali escorted the repatriates on their way to the airport and assisted the group undergo formalities at the Rafik Hariri International Airport. At 1340H, all of the 28 OFWs boarded their flight to Manila via Manama, Bahrain. This batch of repatriates is scheduled to arrive in Manila on Friday, 20 September 2013, at 1055H on board GF 154.

To date, a total of **1,799 Filipinos**, including this group of 28, has been repatriated 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 in December 2012. **END**