

PRESS RELEASE

PHILIPPINE EMBASSIES IN DAMASCUS AND BEIRUT, IOM CONTINUE TO EVACUATE FILIPINOS FROM SYRIA, ASSISTS ANOTHER GROUP OF 36 FILIPINOS



FIRST ROW LEFT – ATN Officer Junaid Ali (standing 8th from right) and IOM-Damascus personnel pose with the repatriates at the Syrian immigration; **FIRST ROW RIGHT** – (L-R) IOM-Damascus staff Ms. Nour Samma Amini, Damascus PE interpreter Karen Aboud, Vice Consul Dennis John Briones and Damascus PE Vice Consul Meynard Maleon at the Masha'a border; **SECOND ROW LEFT**– Vice Consul Briones poses with IOM-Lebanon personnel at the Masha'a border; **SECOND ROW RIGHT** - Consular Assistant Armando Dimaranan (center) and Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Resource Center (MWOFR) Houseparent Gina Murillo (rightmost) brief the repatriates upon arrival at the Embassy for a few hours rest before going to the Rafik Hariri International Airport; **THIRD ROW LEFT and RIGHT** - Ambassador Leah M. Basinang-Ruiz welcomes the repatriates who listen intently as she imparts to them a brief message; **FOURTH ROW LEFT** – Protocol Officer Antonio Cruz assists the repatriates while lining up before the Qatar Airways check in counters; **FOURTH ROW RIGHT** - Vice Consul Rona Beth Goce guides the repatriates as they board the aircraft at the Rafik Hariri International Airport.

26 September 2013 – The Philippine Embassies in Lebanon and Syria, with the assistance of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has collaborated once again resulting to the successful repatriation to the Philippines via Lebanon of a group of 36 Filipinos from Syria. This is the 34th cross-border operation undertaken by the two Embassies. This particular batch of repatriates left the Rafik Hariri International Airport in Beirut en route to Manila via Qatar Airways flight QR 423 at 0125H today. The IOM shouldered the cost of the airfare of this batch of repatriates, as well as their meals.

In the morning of Wednesday, 25 September 2013, Vice Consul Dennis John Briones and ATN officer Junaid Ali proceeded to the Lebanese immigration at the Masna'a border, where they were joined by IOM-Lebanon personnel in receiving the 36 Filipinos from the Philippine Embassy in Damascus and IOM-Damascus, and assisting them in their entry into Lebanon.

After clearing the Lebanese immigration at the Masna'a border in the afternoon, Vice Consul Briones and ATN officer Ali escorted the group all the way to the Embassy in Beirut, where they spent a few hours to rest in preparation for their flight to the Philippines. A shelter team composed of Consular Assistant Armando Dimaranan and Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Resource Center (MWOFRFC) Houseparent Gina Murillo took care of the repatriates upon their arrival.

Ambassador Leah M. Basinang-Ruiz also welcomed them and assured them that the Philippine Embassy, POLO and OWWA officers and staff in Lebanon are happy to be part of the Philippine Government efforts to get out all OFWs in Syria out of harms way and ensure they are able to travel back to Manila and be reunited with their families.

At 09:30 in the evening of 25 September 2013, the repatriates were brought to the airport to catch their post-midnight departure flight to the Philippines via Doha, Qatar. Vice Consul Rona Beth Goce and Protocol Officer Antonio Cruz assisted the repatriates undergo airline and immigration procedures at the Rafik Hariri International Airport.

The 36 Filipinos from Syria are scheduled to arrive in Manila also on 26 September 2013, at 2305H on board Qatar Airways flight QR 644.

With the departure of this group of 36 Filipinos, a total of **1,835 Filipinos** 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 on 12 December 2012. **END**