

After a difficult repatriation, DFA empties Syria shelter of human trafficking survivors



BY RECTO MERCENE

JUNE 28, 2021

THE Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) repatriated at the weekend 22 survivors of trafficking in persons (TIP) and illegal recruitment scams, following a lengthy stay in Syria.

This historic repatriation, DFA said, is part of its commitment, as an Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (Iacat) member agency, “to arrest, investigate, and prosecute all human traffickers and illegal recruiters, combat the heinous crime of trafficking in persons, and assist the trafficking survivors in granting opportunities for a new life and a new hope, upon their arrival in the Philippines.”

The Philippine embassy in Syria said in a statement, “For the first time in history, the Filipino Workers Resource Center (FWRC) Shelter of Philippine embassy in Syria shall be fully emptied out of all the wards.”

The 22 Filipinos arrived in the Sunday morning (June 27), after lengthy diplomatic negotiations with the Syrian Arab Republic and filing cases against illegal recruiters and human traffickers, under the helm of Philippine Chargé d’affaires, (CDA) to Syria, Vida Soraya S. Verzosa.

One of the FWRC wards said: “Sa wakas, uuwi na po kami. Akala namin wala na kaming pag-asa makauwi pero salamat po sa DFA at sa Philippine Embassy sa Syria [Finally, we are coming home. We had already lost hope that we can go home, but we are thankful to DFA and the Philippine Embassy in Syria].”

The ward recalled that they were in the shelter for nearly three years due to the difficulties in securing their exit visas from the employers and the recruitment agencies.

Before boarding their flight, the wards tearfully expressed their gratitude through CDA Verzosa, for all the help of the DFA Philippines Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA), Sarah Lou Arriola and the Embassy for assisting them.

The DFA, meanwhile, said the difficult repatriation was made possible “through the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, and the Office of the Presidential Advisor of the Syrian Arab Republic.”

The DFA has referred the cases of the trafficked Filipinas to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (Owwa) head, Hans Leo J. Cacdac, as part of the community reintegration program once they arrive at their local government units after their quarantine period.