



Office of the Special Coordinator  
for Lebanon

Bureau du Coordinateur Spécial  
pour le Liban

### Press Release

#### **United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Derek Plumbly Visits Akkar**

**Tuesday, 17 April 2012** -- United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Derek Plumbly visited the area of Akkar today.

During his visit, Mr. Plumbly met displaced Syrian families who had sought refuge in the area and UN staff working there. He also met with the local authorities of Wadi Khaled, Mashta Hammoud and Machta Hassan who briefed him on the situation in the area.

Later in the day, Mr. Plumbly had meetings with representatives of the Lebanese Army and with parliamentarians from the Akkar area.

Below is a statement delivered by Mr. Plumbly during his visit to Akkar:

"It is a great pleasure for me to be visiting Akkar today on my first trip to north Lebanon. The objective of my visit is to gain a better understanding of the situation here.

I just had a very good meeting with the mayors and moukhtars of Wadi Khaled, Machta Hamoud and Machta Hassan who kindly took the time to brief me on the area and the problems it faces at the moment.

There are many concerns in Lebanon about the crisis in Syria. But the impact of the crisis is probably most acute here in the north of Lebanon because of the proximity to the Syrian border and because of the displacement here of Syrian citizens who have sought refuge in Lebanon from the violence in their country. Last week, I know all of us were deeply disturbed by the killing of the Al-Jadeed cameramen, Mr. Ali Shabaan, close to the border.

I met earlier today with some of the displaced Syrian families. This was an opportunity to hear directly from them about the many hardships they continue to face, more than a year after the crisis in their country began. According to UNHCR and the Lebanese authorities, over 9600 Syrians have registered for assistance in north Lebanon, many of them in Akkar. A lesser number are receiving assistance in the rest of the country, mainly in the Bekaa.

We all hope that political efforts for a solution in Syria will bear fruit and that those who have been displaced will soon be able to return to their homes. In the meantime assisting them in their need is an urgent humanitarian obligation, and one to which Lebanon has risen impressively. There is close cooperation between the United Nations and the Lebanese authorities. The government, and in particular the High Relief Commission, has been doing an excellent job. The UN is committed to continue providing assistance as long as necessary.

I have been struck by what I have heard and seen of the kindness and generosity Lebanese families living in this area have extended to the displaced people in their time of need, notwithstanding the difficult circumstances

they themselves face. UN agencies – UNDP and UNICEF as well as UNHCR and many NGO partners -- are already present in the Akkar area. We will be discussing with the Lebanese authorities and donor organizations what more can be done to help.

Thank you very much."

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