

H.E. Svatopluk Cumba

Ambassador of the Czech Republic in Lebanon

Al-Khiam, 23 October 2014

“Czech Aid for Education in Marjeyoun & Hasbaya, Lebanon 2014”

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over three years have passed since this beautiful country and its intelligent, educated, friendly and open-hearted people began to feel the consequences of the unfortunate developments in neighbouring Syria. More than one million Syrians have arrived in your country seeking refuge. I have to say that I was (and still am) astonished by the generosity, strength and enduring cohesion of the Lebanese people, who considered it natural to help their neighbours and brothers and sisters in need, regardless of the burden of this gesture on your shoulders.

Ladies and gentlemen, the whole world looks up to you and your heroic humanitarian effort. And many countries, including the Czech Republic are trying to help you, mostly by supporting the UN bodies and other international and non-governmental organizations to deal with the problems you are facing on daily basis. But apart of that “multilateral“ approach, a lot can be done also by direct assistance and cooperation with local communities. This approach has proved to be the most effective way as not a single dollar or lira gets lost in bureaucracy.

Ladies and gentlemen, children are the most affected by this crisis, especially as reaching a lasting solution will probably take a long time. But we cannot give up, and together we must try not to allow children to grow up without education and become a so-called lost generation. Lack of education would affect not only them and their families’ lives but also diminish the chances of their country to rebuild what has been damaged and, maybe even further undermine the stability of the region in the future. So, as the turmoil in the region continues, we believe the international community should help Lebanon not only on the macroeconomic level and by supporting the security forces, but also support the Lebanese host communities and at the same time, help the Lebanese Government to continue deliver the socioeconomic services - especially, to maintain the functioning of the public education system that is providing education to several hundred thousands extra students.

I am aware the problem is too complex to solve completely, but we can change the situation in a local community, in a local school. And this is what we are doing now here in the area of Marjeyoun and Hasbaya by rehabilitating public schools in Marjeyoun, Koleyaa, Ebl al-Saqi, Ayn Arab School, the School of Ali Hussein Abdulla in Khiyam and Hasbaya Public School for Girls as well as refugees camp in the area of Marj el Khokh. We are also doing similar work like the rehabilitation of May public school for Girls in Tripoli and more recently Salem Haidar School in Bednayeel, Bekaa. This is very minimal compared to the cost of the crisis to you and your Government, but it comes from our hearts and it truly reflects the solidarity that the Czech people are feeling with the people of Lebanon.

Ladies and gentleman, in order to finalize any project like this we always need a reliable partner. Our partner in the South is the AGHSAN Association, presided by our most respected friend Dr. Kamel Morkos. I personally deeply admire all the efforts he has been spending in development of his native Deirmimas and of all this beautiful region surrounding it. Dr. Morkos is equally concerned with the sensitive situation related to the impact of the Syrian crisis on local communities. Following our recent cooperation several months ago, during which we organized the distribution of humanitarian aid from the Czech Republic to the women and children refugees in your region, he was ready to collaborate with us on the current project we are delivering today.

Thank you, Dr. Morkos and thank you all the members of AGHSAN Association.

And thank you all the Lebanese public school teachers for all your hard work in these demanding times.

Long live Lebanon, long live the Czech Republic.