

Baldoz urges OFWs in Libya to be vigilant; POEA Governing Board temporarily bans deployment of new-hires

Following the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) declaration of Crisis Alert Level 2 for Libya in view of the continuing deterioration of the political and security situation in the North African country, Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz yesterday immediately called on all overseas Filipino workers in Libya to stay calm, exercise precaution, and remain vigilant.

"We are working closely with the DFA in monitoring the situation in Libya. I have instructed the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Tripoli to constantly keep in touch with the Filipino community in Libya and apprise them of the situation," said Baldoz as she announced that the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Governing Board has issued a resolution imposing a temporary ban in the deployment of OFWs to Libya.

Acting DOLE Secretary Rebecca Chato has signed the governing resolution, together with Felix Oca, Estrelita Hizon, Alexander Asuncion, and Milagros Isabel Cristobal. Baldoz, who is attending the ASEAN Labor Ministers' Meeting in Myanmar, is the Chairman of the Governing Board. POEA Administrator Hans Leo J. Cacdac, Governing Board Vice Chairman, who is also on official travel, was represented in the Board by Deputy Administrator Ameurfina Reyes, POEA officer-in-charge.

In a letter to Secretary Baldoz, DFA Secretary Albert F. Del Rosario said the DFA had raised the crisis alert level for Libya due to the continued deterioration of the political and security situation in that country.

Alert Level 2 is Restriction Phase in the crisis alert level system and it is issued when there are real threats to the life, security, and property of Filipino nationals from internal disturbance and external threats. Restriction Phase requires Filipino nationals staying to restrict non-essential movements, avoid public places, and prepare for evacuation, if necessary.

Armed revolt in Libya started last Friday when a military officer, General Khalifa Hifter, called for the country's top judicial authorities to form a new presidential council to take over power until the next parliament elections. On Sunday, the parliament building in Tripoli was stormed and ransacked by armed militias and the legislature was declared suspended.

Records of the POEA show that 8,852 OFWs were deployed to Libya in 2013, most of whom are nurses, engineers, laborers and helpers, welders and flame cutters, and wiremen. End/rhev