Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

FCO Minister Alistair Burt visits Lebanon

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Minister for the Middle East, Alistair Burt MP visited Lebanon on 29 April 2013. Mr Burt reiterated the importance of international community support to Lebanon's disassociation policy. He announced $400,000 of UK capacity building support to the Lebanese parliamentary elections.

After his meeting with Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, Mr Burt said:

As I discussed with Speaker Berri, President Sleiman and the Army Commander today, I am pleased that we are, together, building Lebanon's capacity to protect its sovereignty. At this challenging time, I say to Lebanon: 'Don't send your sons to fight and die in Syria.' Getting sucked in to Syria's conflict would be easy. Neutrality is the braver choice. Disassociation is the only policy that works for Lebanon.

He called on all political parties to engage urgently with PM-designate Tammam Salam to form a government and run the legislative election:

Uncertainty in the region is no excuse for dodging the constitutional timeframe for elections. The technical work is done. Now it is time for all parties to put Lebanon first. I call on Lebanon's politicians to agree an elections law to enable elections to take place within the constitutional timeline.

Mr Burt later reinforced these messages with PM-Designate Tammam Salam. He also reiterated the UK's readiness to support the transparent management of Lebanon's oil and gas resources, noting the success of all six British companies in the oil and gas pre-qualification round. In his meeting with the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, General Jean Kahwaji, Mr Burt discussed Lebanese stability and welcomed the increased cooperation between the UK and the Lebanese Armed Forces to protect Lebanon's sovereignty.

Mr Burt visited the offices of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), where he met Syrian refugees and highlighted the UK's $40m contribution to the response to the Syria humanitarian crisis in Lebanon. Mr Burt also heard from religious leaders from across Lebanon's confessions, about the importance of inter-faith dialogue in times of regional uncertainty.

Before leaving Beirut, Mr Burt will attend the first Social Media Awards in Lebanon, where he will discuss Digital Diplomacy and freedom of expression with digital activists.

Find out more about Mr Burt’s visit to the UNHCR Centre in Lebanon in this video blog:

Mr Burt talked about his visit to UNHCR registration centre in Lebanon

Further Information

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