Mogherini with Syrian refugees, stopping the war a duty

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“It’s one thing to talk about war, another to see it reflected in the eyes of children. We have to find a way to stop the war in Syria”. Minister Federica Mogherini was visibly moved as she left the Syrian refugee camp of Terbol in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valey, where her Middle East mission began today, and where a hundred families are being sheltered: 800 persons living in tents, many of whom are children. “We can step up efforts to improve their living conditions, and for that Italian Cooperation, NGO and international organisation projects are a precious resource”, the minister said, pointing out that Italy had 50 projects underway, for an overall value of 150 million euro, in support of the Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. “But it is our duty to stop the war in Syria, to make it possible for them to go back to their homes, if they are still standing”, Mogherini asserted, who also visited the Palestinian refugee camp of Burj el Barajneh in Beirut, where 30-40,000 refugees have been living for decades and who were recently joined by an additional 9,000, many of whom were fleeing the besieged Syrian camp of Yarmouk.

The minister also made a stop at the INTERSOS community centre in Qabb Eliass, where the NGO works with the UNHCR on projects with a special focus on women and children. Then in Beirut she met with a delegation of the “Women and Governance” programme managed by the Italian Development Cooperation.

Mogherini goes on Sunday to Jordan, has a meeting in Rome on Monday with Israeli president Shimon Peres and Palestinian leader Abu Mazen, and is scheduled to attend the EU-Arab League meeting in Athens on Wednesday. Central to the minister’s institutional encounters in Beirut was the organisation of the ministerial conference on support for the Lebanese armed forces to be held in Rome on 17 June. The minister discussed the meeting with her Lebanese colleague Jebran Bassil and Defence Minister Samir Mokbel.

6 June 2014 – Mid-East: Mogherini in Lebanon and Jordan, visit to UNIFIL and refugee camps

Help for the Palestinian and Syrian refugees and Italy’s contribution to the stability and security of the region. These were the focus of Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini’s visit, starting today Friday 6 June and continuing until Sunday 8th, to Lebanon and Jordan.

Institutional meetings

In Lebanon, Minister Mogherini will meet her opposite number, Gebran Bassil, and the speaker of the Parliament, Nabih Berri. The visit will also include a meeting with Defence Minister Samir Mokbel in preparation for the conference on support for the Lebanese armed forces taking place in Rome on 17 June.

During the Jordanian leg of her trip, Mogherini will have an audience with the King of Jordan, Abdullah II, and will meet her counterpart, Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh. To prepare for the mission Minister Mogherini had a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister, Tammam Salam, who is currently out of the country.

Help for refugees

Minister Mogherini will be visiting the Burj el Brajneh refugee camp in Beirut, which is home not only to a long-standing Palestinian community but also to thousands of Syrian refugees. She will also visit a camp in the Bekaa region. The United Nations have estimated that over 1.3 million Syrians have sought refuge in Lebanon.

Mogherini will be attending the opening of the new hospital in Azraq, in Jordan, a pre-fabricated building designed to provide second-level healthcare for Syrian refugees. The hospital was built by the Italian Civil Protection Department in collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Italian, Norwegian, German, Canadian and Finnish Red Cross societies.

To help the Syrian refugees in Jordan, Italy has used 6.5 million of the 36 million allocated to tackle the humanitarian emergency. Other new initiatives envisaged during 2014 using multilateral channels will take the total Italian assistance for Jordan to 9.5 million.

Visit to UNIFIL HQ

On Sunday 8 June, Minister Mogherini will be visiting the UNIFIL headquarters in southern Lebanon, as well as the Italian contingent.

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