



Embassy of the  
**Argentine Republic**  
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship

PRESS RELEASE

## Syrian Refugees: art meets humanitarian assistance at the Argentine Embassy in the UK



**From left to right: Mazen Kamal Homoud (Ambassador of Jordan), Gonzalo Vargas Llosa (Head of UNHCR), Linette de Jager, Carlos Sersale (Ambassador of Argentina) and artist Patricio Forrester**

**London, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017.-** Before an audience of 100 invitees gathered at the Argentine Residence in London, among them, the Head of the UNHRC and the Ambassadors of Jordan and Chile in the UK, host Ambassador Carlos Sersale welcomed yesterday the screening of “*Artmongering with refugees*”, a short documentary directed by Mathew Allen that shows the innovative project developed by *Artmongers*— founded by Argentine artist Patricio Forrester and Catherine Shovlin— together with Syrian refugees, to use street art as a vehicle to bring colour to Azraq Camp in Jordan.

“We were really touched by Patricio’s work in the refugee’s camp. It connects with the activities of the UNHCR in Jordan and also with the Latin American programmes to assist those who fled the war in Syria looking for better life conditions”, said the Argentine Ambassador. In 2016, the newly-elected Argentine government pledged to take in up to 3,000 refugees, coordinated by the National Refugees Commission.

In a panel moderated by writer and editor Martin Wright, Mr Forrester, Ms Shovlin and Mr Allen agreed that the key element to their work is ‘dynamic engagement’. “When I arrived at the camp my instinct was ‘take me to the local DIY to buy some paint’. When I got there, I felt like home. Every artmonger in the world smells the same

things". After that, Forrester changed his angle. Instead of looking at the camp as the centre of the art intervention, the key transformation had to be born around the collective work behind the space transformation.

On his speech, Mr Gonzalo Vargas Llosa, head of UNHCR in UK, shared the artists call for global commitment and engagement of countries and peoples to the Syrian refugees cause. "It is probably the most acute humanitarian drama today", he said, and reminded that since the beginning of the crisis more than 6 years ago over 5 million refugees have fled to the neighbouring countries.

"Countries in the region—Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon—are an extraordinary example of generosity and solidarity with their fellow human beings. But as I said before, they are also overwhelmed by this mass of Syrian refugees and that is why it is so absolutely critical that other countries beyond the region are also showing the moral leadership." In that respect, he said he felt "proud" of Latin America, his region, with countries such as Argentina and Chile, who have opened their doors to Syrians, and thanked the commitment of the United Kingdom's in receiving refugees, as well as the generosity of the British donors.

Mr Mazen Kamal Homoud, the Jordan Ambassador, detailed figures to show the impact of the refugee crisis in his country, with up to 20 per cent of their population summed by refugees. Half of them live in camps and the other half is integrated in host communities. "Is in this context that I want to thank open doors countries and here the Artmongers, for taking the steps to do a very kind human thing for people and lifting their spirits of those who live in refugee camps".

## **"PEACE ROCKS"**

[The Artmongers](#) was founded over a decade ago. It was born on the simple precept of making people's lives better through art, as a natural response of the artist to the question "what can I do as an individual to generate change?". The first step was to come together. The result was the improvement of public spaces such as community centres and hospitals around London.

More than ten years later, and on the verge of their third trip to Azraq Camp planned for September, the Artmongers prepared yesterday a last surprise for the present audience at the Argentine Residence: he invited to intervene small stones and replicate some of the work they did in the camp. "Stones can be a weapon, but if you paint them, and then put glitter on them, you flip them into art." As a result, around 50 new "peace rocks", as Mr Forrester likes to call them, have now become a part of the Artmongers collection.

- **Watch "Artmongering with refugees"- Short Documentary by Artmongers (13m30")-** click [here](#)**To know more about Artmongers actions-** click [here](#)

### **Press & Comms Office**

Embassy of Argentina in the UK  
65 Brook Street W1K London  
Tel: 020 7318 1323

[pressoffice@argentine-embassy-uk.org](mailto:pressoffice@argentine-embassy-uk.org)  
[www.argentine-embassy-uk.org](http://www.argentine-embassy-uk.org)