



FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

AUSTRALIAN PERMANENT MISSION
GENEVA

Geneva, 23 August 2021

Ms Beatriz Balbin
Chief, Special Procedures Branch
United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Dear Ms Balbin,

I have the honour to refer to your letter number AL AUS 1/2021 of 26 January 2021 concerning a registration and verification exercise in Al Hol and Al Roj camps located in northeast Syria in June 2020.

The Australian Government is deeply concerned about the situation in internally displaced persons camps administered by Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria. The Government is aware of the presence of Australian citizens, including children, in the camps, and in June 2019 took steps to remove from the camps all unaccompanied Australian minors known to us at that time. The Australian Government understands that local authorities administering the camps are not permitting repatriation of any other category of individuals at this time.

The security situation in the area of the camps prevents Australian consular officials from visiting the camps in person. Australian officials monitor conditions in the camp through regular engagement with Kurdish officials and humanitarian partners operating in northeast Syria. Australian officials are also in communication with family members of individuals in the camps.

The Australian Government funds humanitarian partners who work to support access to healthcare and protections to the most vulnerable in northeast Syria, including vulnerable populations in IDP camps. Australian funding to UNFPA is provided to meet the needs of women, girls and children in Syria, including vulnerable populations in the northeast. Australian funding to the WHO provides critical health services including COVID-19 prevention preparedness and response, nutrition assistance, and water, sanitation and hygiene activities.

As set out in Australia's formal statement to the UN Human Rights Committee in 2009, the Australian Government accepts that there may be exceptional circumstances in which Australia's human rights obligations may be relevant beyond the territory of a State party. The Australian Government has accepted that its human rights obligations extend outside Australian territory where it exercises 'effective control'. Consistent with this position, and noting that Australia does not administer the Al Hol and Al Roj camps, the Australian Government does not accept it exercises jurisdiction over the conditions of Australian

nationals in those camps such as to engage the extraterritorial application of Australia's international human rights obligations.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sally Mansfield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sally Mansfield
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Australian Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations and Conference on
Disarmament