



FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

AUSTRALIAN PERMANENT MISSION
TO THE UN GENEVA

30 March 2022

Beatriz Balbin
Chief, Special Procedures Branch
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Dear Ms Balbin

On behalf of the Australian Government, I would like to express appreciation for Communications AL AUS 1/2022 of 1 February 2022 and UA AUS 2/2022 of 16 February 2022. I have the honour of responding in relation to the complex situation of detention facilities and internally displaced person (IDP) camps administered by Kurdish authorities in North-East Syria.

The Australian Government remains concerned about the situation in North-East Syria. The Government is aware of the presence of Australians in this region, including those detained in prisons and other detention centres. Although Australia's ability to provide consular assistance to Australians in Syria is limited, the Australian Government continues to closely monitor conditions in the region and regularly engages Kurdish officials and humanitarian organisations operating in North-East Syria.

Australia considers all circumstances when approaching the question of repatriations from Syria and responds on a case-by-case basis. In June 2019, the Australian Government facilitated the return of all unaccompanied Australian minors known to us at that time.

As set out in Australia's formal response to the UN Human Rights Committee in 2009, and reiterated in the Australian Government's response to AL AUS 1/2021, Australia does not accept that it exercises jurisdiction over detention facilities in North-East Syria such as to engage the extraterritorial application of Australia's international human rights obligations.

The Australian Government's view is that detention in North-East Syria must be in accordance with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Australia is opposed to terrorism and violent extremism in all its manifestations. Our close cooperation with partners, including through non-financial contributions to international coalitions such as the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh, are key in ensuring sustained diplomatic efforts to counter the threat posed by Daesh and other ideological and religiously motivated groups.

Australia takes all reports regarding the welfare of Australians, and Australia-linked individuals, very seriously and thanks organisations on the ground for their assistance in this challenging environment. Since 2011, Australia has committed almost \$500 million in humanitarian assistance

in response to the Syria regional crisis, including funding to the World Health Organization to provide critical health services such as COVID-19 prevention preparedness and response; nutrition assistance; and water sanitation and hygiene activities

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Gorely', written in a cursive style.

Amanda Gorely

Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Australian Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations and Conference on Disarmament