



The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Minister for Immigration and Border Protection

Dr Dennis Jensen MP
Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Chair

Petition number 959/1428

Pursuant to Standing Order 209(b), relating to referring a petition to a Minister for response, please find attached the Immigration and Border Protection response to Petition Number 959/1428.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Minister for Immigration and Border Protection

10/12/2014



Immigration and Border Protection portfolio

RESPONSE TO PETITION

(Petition No. 959/1428)

This petition of Certain Citizens of Australia was submitted by the Standing Committee on Petitions for a response from the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, in writing, on 20 October 2014:

DRAWS TO THE ATTENTION OF THE HOUSE that numerous reliable media outlets have documented the expulsion of Christian people from the city of Mosul in Iraq. For those people it was a choice between conversion to Islam or death.

These people have had houses and possessions confiscated by the IS forces which now control part of Iraq and Syria. Their plight is indeed pitiful.

THIS PETITION REQUESTS, as a matter of utmost urgency, that the House of Representatives calls on the Government to offer asylum in Australia to a substantial number of these refugees.

Mr Morrison – The response to the petition question is:

The Australian Government is deeply concerned about the violence in Iraq and Syria and the impact it has had on so many people across the Middle East. The Government and people of Iraq face a deadly threat from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and cannot be left to face it alone. Australia has joined with international partners to assist the Iraqi Government in combating ISIL.

Australian defence force personnel have commenced air operations over Iraq, including striking ISIL targets. We are also deploying Special Forces to advise and assist the Iraqi Security Forces. This is in addition to our deliveries of military stores and humanitarian air drops to assist civilians besieged by ISIL in Amerli and on Mount Sinjar. A \$15 million package announced recently in October will provide shelter, food and medical assistance to displaced people in Iraq and Syria through partners such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme. This funding announcement brings Australia's total assistance for Iraq to \$17 million since June this year and for Syria to \$135.8 million since the conflict began in 2011. This includes a \$2 million package of assistance announced in September this year that will specifically support vulnerable women and girls in Iraq.

Australia's assistance is also focused on lending a hand to those in most desperate need. I announced on 17 August 2014 that the Government would be setting aside at least 4,400 places in this year's Humanitarian Programme for the resettlement of Iraqis and Syrians who have fled their home countries due to conflict in that region. There will be 2,200 places for Iraqis and 2,200 places for Syrians within the 11,000 places for the offshore component of the 2014–15 Programme.

People resettled will include refugees referred to Australia by UNHCR and people proposed by their close family members in Australia through the Special Humanitarian Programme. I anticipate that this will include Christians and other minorities who have fled Mosul, as well as other areas of Iraq affected by the crisis.

This commitment builds on Australia's strong history of resettling Iraqi refugees under the offshore Humanitarian Programme. In the last 10 years, around 22,000 Iraqis who have fled violence and unrest in Iraq have started a new life in Australia. The majority of Iraqis resettled in Australia are from minority ethnic and religious communities, including many Christians.