

## ACFID Resolution 1/2021

RESOLUTION on the urgent need to repatriate Australian children and women from detention camps in North East Syria

### Pre-Amble

ACFID notes that:

- There are over 60 Australians, including more than 40 children, trapped in Kurdish controlled camps, Al Hol and Al Roj, in North East Syria. Conditions in the camps are dire, with 62 children killed in Al Hol since January 2021. Beyond the threat to their safety, many Australians are suffering from untreated physical and mental health issues that are worsening over time. Some children entered the camps with wounds that have not received medical attention, others have suffered injuries or illness in the camps and not recovered.
- In June 2019, the Australian government repatriated eight orphaned children. Since then, no further repatriations to Australia have occurred.
- The Australian government has argued that there are significant barriers to repatriate nationals from the camps. These barriers continue to be overcome by numerous other governments, with a total of 1,163 foreign children repatriated in 63 operations since 2017. Australia has recently overcome similar concerns to evacuate Australian and Afghan nationals from Kabul, and the United States government has offered direct support to extract Australians from North East Syria to alleviate security concerns.
- Australia is legally obliged to repatriate foreign nationals from the camps in North East Syria, a call that has been reiterated by numerous UN Human Rights experts. Through the extra-territorial application of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC), Australia has the positive obligation to protect children from inhumane conditions in the camps, and to repatriate them with their caregivers. Rights are further protected under the Optional Protocol on the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and supported by the Paris Principles. Furthermore, UN Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017) binds all States to take action, including the provision of timely and appropriate reintegration and rehabilitation assistance to children returning from conflict zones.

### Resolutions

ACFID

- Commits to calling on the Australian government to take immediate steps to repatriate all Australian nationals from Al Roj and Al Hol camps. This includes taking advantage of Australia's regional presence and recent establishment of systems to relocate those fleeing Afghanistan.
- Urges the Australian government to treat children primarily as victims of war, even those who had been forced to join ISIS, as outlined under the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups.

**Moved:** Mat Tinkler, Save The Children Australia and Dr Nora Amath, Islamic Relief Australia

**Seconded:** Christian Nielsen, Live and Learn Environmental Education