



To The Hon Tony Abbott MP and the National Security Committee

c/-Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2061

Monday, August 31, 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

Do not allow Australian forces to bomb Syria

We urge you not to extend the bombing by Australian forces to Syria on the grounds of a common humanity which abhors indiscriminate bombing of civilians and armed militias. There is no moral reason for such bombing and all it will achieve is the intensification of the misery of the Syrian people. Your recent simple sentence “they (ISIS) do not respect borders so why should we?” smacks of primary school boy morality and not the mature response of a national leader and statesman.

Beyond the issue of morality, there are real hard nosed reasons why you should not bomb Syria.

1. It would be an extension of armed military excursions into a sovereign state which are illegal under international conventions. We could find ourselves prosecuted at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. We are signatories to that court but the US is not.
2. We will put ourselves at odds with our near neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia which are predominantly Muslim countries while we appear to be anti-Muslim or Islamophobic. They may retaliate by trade sanctions or non compliance on regional issues with Australia and so on. We are being belligerent against our own interests.
3. It will undermine our international reputation for fairness and humanity which at some time has been as high as Norway’s reputation for peace building and humanity.
4. Your government found half a billion dollars for the bombing of Iraq at a time when the Australian people were told to pull their belts in because there was no money left for necessary programs – “always money for war, never for bread”. Any deployment to Syria would also be massively costly in terms of treasure and putting Australian lives in harm’s way. We paid the last of the WW1 widows in 2010. We were still paying for that war nearly 100 years after it finished and now we will be paying the Middle East casualties for many decades to come.

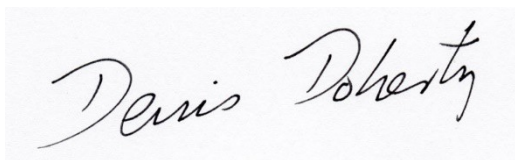
5. ISIS has had some tacit and in some cases active support from states including the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey. Now we find ourselves mixed up in their sectarian and conflicting national interests. There will be no benefit to Australia, only pain.
6. US interventions in Iraq starting many decades ago that saw the rise of Saddam Hussein to the present have failed. We see a country in chaos and ruins. This history should lead an astute leader to be cautious about accepting a request from them to participate in the war on Syria. We call on you to be more a statesman and less subservient to another country's interests.
7. As noted by Malcolm Fraser, former Liberal Prime Minister and Minister for the Army during the Vietnam War, the big empires we have aligned ourselves with – Britain and the United States -- have lied to us to get us into their wars. This is another example. We call on you to be an independent Prime Minister looking after the interests of the Australian people, not those of US corporations.

Finally we wish to point out what you could do about the influence of IS and Syria.

1. In relation to IS, Islamic communities in Australia have been calling out for funding for counter extremism education programs yet this money has not arrived. Instead major funding has gone to invade the privacy of Australian citizens and on the police and secret services. Community education and the promotion of tolerance would be more effective than bombing IS in Syria..
2. Act as an honest broker in the Middle East. Close the borders to all foreign fighters regardless of side and stop all arms shipments to Syria. Work with the US, Russia and China to resolve the issues in Syria diplomatically rather than making them worse by joining the US bombardment. Look for countries in the UN who will sponsor a ceasefire. Call for peace. Call for an end to flow of Syrian refugees too many of whom are dying as they flee towards Europe or Australia.

We call on you to be statesman not a warmonger who will bring more terrorism down on our shoulders. Say no to the bombing of Syria.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denis Doherty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Denis Doherty
For the Anti-Bases Campaign

cc: The Hon Warren Truss MP, The Hon Julie Bishop MP,
Senator the Hon George Brandis QC, The Hon Joe Hockey MP,
The Hon. Kevin Andrews MP, The Hon Peter Dutton MP,
Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, The Hon. Bill Shorten,
The Hon. Tanya Plibersek

