



14 October 2019

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Morrison

I am writing on behalf of the members of Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) which represents over 150 religious congregations across Australia with approximately 5,500 Catholic religious women and men throughout the nation. CRA members and our colleagues serve in education, health care and social services and have grassroots knowledge of the needs of First Australians, refugees and asylum seekers, people struggling to survive on the margins of society and many others in need of assistance.

The members of CRA are deeply concerned for the safety and long-term future for the children and those young women who are Australian-born – who are languishing in Al Hawl refugee camp in northern Syria. We recognise the complexity and the political implications for Australia that are present in their situation, however, having followed this ‘story’ for some time – we believe it is time for the Australian government on behalf of its citizens to act with compassion. Following the recent decision of the U.S. government to withdraw its troops from Syria, there is every possibility that these innocent children and their mothers may become collateral damage in the ensuing conflict. Minister Dutton’s hard-line approach that the “women and children will not be rescued” is surely at odds with Australia’s national values of a ‘fair go’ and while we understand that the women, mothers of these children, all have different stories – what of the children, whose innocence is unquestioned?

As a nation with a robust justice system, and in the face of growing international outrage and alarm, surely it is time for Australia to follow the “golden rule” espoused by all the major faith traditions, to “do unto others, as you would have them do to you.” [Luke 6:31] The Australian government has the power and the means to make every diplomatic effort for the women and children whose lives are at stake. We urge you, in the name of compassion to take whatever steps are necessary to bring these people to safety, while the narrowing window of opportunity remains open.

Sr. Anne McGuire RSM
For the CRA Justice Committee