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Kurdish Lobby Australia

13 March 2017

The President
Returned & Services
League of Australia
PO Box 721
Fyshwick ACT 2609

Dear Mr White,

Kurdish Lobby Australia appreciates the support the RSL gives returned servicemen and women, especially in recognition of the sacrifices of Australians at Gallipoli. Since many people visit the site each year to celebrate Anzac Day, we would like to express our concerns about ongoing events in Turkey, as outlined below, which challenge the spirit of the ANZACS.

Following the July 2016 attempted coup in Turkey, government purges have resulted in the sacking and imprisonment of tens of thousands of military personnel, civil servants including teachers, as well as academics, journalists, diplomats, elected parliamentarians and mayors. Turkey remains under a state of emergency, with many of those imprisoned being denied due legal process. The resulting instability and insecurity has been compounded by multiple terrorist attacks, resulting in many countries deeming Turkey an unsafe tourist destination.

In addition to the purge, the Turkish government ended peace talks with Kurds in July 2015, and began a civil war in eastern Turkey, evicting 500,000 people from their homes, placing curfews on and besieging and attacking towns and villages, murdering civilians and destroying neighbourhoods. Since August 2016, Turkish forces have also been attacking US-led coalition supported forces in Syria. These Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have been very successful in liberating towns and territory from ISIS.

On 16 April, Turkey is holding a referendum on constitutional changes that will give the president powers to dissolve parliament, dismiss legislation passed by parliament, issue legislative decrees, appoint and sack ministers, implement states of emergency and appoint the heads of military and intelligence agencies, universities, senior bureaucrats and judges. If passed, these constitutional amendments will remain in place beyond the presidency of Erdogan.

As Turkey's current trajectory does not reflect the values of most Australians and the spirit of the ANZACS, Kurdish Lobby Australia requests that the RSL withdraw its support for Anzac Day celebrations at Gallipoli.

If the RSL would like more information about what is happening in Turkey, Iraq and Syria, Kurdish Lobby Australia would be happy to meet with or make a presentation to members of the RSL.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Buckley
Kurdish Lobby Australia