



Ref No: MC17-017798

Ms Alison Buckley
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Dear Ms Buckley

Thank you for your correspondence of 12 September 2017 to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Hon Peter Dutton MP, concerning Australia's humanitarian intake and the plight of the Yezidi and Christian minorities in Iraq. The Minister appreciates the time you have taken to bring this matter to his attention and has asked that I reply on his behalf.

The Australian Government acknowledges the violence in Iraq and Syria, and the suffering it has caused. The Government also acknowledges the difficulties faced by Australian citizens with family members residing in these countries.

As you are aware, in September 2015, the Government committed to resettling an additional 12,000 people displaced by conflicts in Iraq and Syria, with a focus on vulnerable people and persecuted minorities. Although these additional 12,000 places have now been granted, those with active applications who are in humanitarian need and displaced by conflict in Iraq and Syria are still considered under the general Humanitarian Program.

Australia's offshore Humanitarian Program is designed primarily to assist people who have left their home country because of persecution and severe human rights abuses, and who have no options for return or for resettlement in another country.

The In-Country Special Humanitarian Programme (subclass 201) visa is the only visa under the Humanitarian Program that may be granted to an applicant who is still living in their home country. However, Australia's ability to assist people in these circumstances is limited due to the difficulties with assessing applicants residing in their home country and assisting their departure from that country. Consequently, the In-Country Humanitarian visa is used only in exceptional circumstances.

Concerning your suggestion for a private sponsorship model, you may be aware that on 1 July 2017, the Government introduced the Community Support Program (CSP). The CSP provides a sustainable model of private sponsorship of refugees, and enables communities and businesses, as well as families and individuals, to propose humanitarian visa applicants with employment prospects and support new humanitarian arrivals in their settlement journey. Further information on the CSP is available at <http://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Refu/Offs/community-support-programme>.

The Department welcomes hearing from communities and individuals about their views on the Humanitarian Program. The proposals you have put forward for the Government's consideration, namely to approve and facilitate the acceptance of Yezidi internally displaced people and refugees, can be forwarded as part of the Government's annual consultations on the Humanitarian Program.

The consultation process usually takes places in the first quarter of the year, and further details about how groups and individuals can take part and put forward their views is made available on the Department's website at that time.

Please note that your request for Australian Government intervention in Iraq falls within the portfolio of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Thank you for raising this matter with the Minister.

Yours sincerely



Tina Weston

Director

Humanitarian and International Protection Policy Section

16 October 2017