

BACK POCKET BRIEF**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Supplementary Estimates – October 2019****BACK POCKET BRIEF****Topic: Foreign Terrorist Fighters and their Families****Group: Citizenship and Social Cohesion****Division: Counter-Terrorism Coordination Centre****Overview**

- No blanket policy on repatriating Australian FTF women and children - each case assessed on merits.
- Government monitoring situation in Syria closely, no Australian officials to be put at risk in an effort to repatriate those in Syrian camps.
- Syria extremely volatile and dangerous. Australian Government has classified as ‘do not travel’. Significantly limits ability to provide assistance.
 - Access to timely and accurate information on the situation is limited.
- Any women and children returning from Syria would be assessed for their level of risk to the community and considered for intervention programmes and other support to assist them to re-integrate.
- Temporary Exclusion Orders allow authorities to control the return of people of counter-terrorism interest and impose monitoring conditions after their arrival, in order to manage any risk the present.

Children

- Priority is to ensure their successful reintegration by attending to their particular needs.
- These children are not responsible for the decisions of their parents. Supporting their successful reintegration into Australian society forms part of community safety obligations.
- Australian Government authorities, working with their State and Territory counterparts, will carefully assess each child’s particular circumstances, including:
 - their family circumstances, and how they will be cared for in Australia.
 - their future medical, welfare, and education needs.
 - addressing any community safety risks that may be presented.

If asked: Has the Australian Government repatriated any unaccompanied minors from Syria?

- On 25 and 30 June 2019, two groups of unaccompanied Australian minors, comprising eight people, were removed from Syria and repatriated to Australia.

- Media suppression orders currently in place that prohibit publication of names, images and information about the location of the minors.
- Further public commentary on specific cases is unhelpful and may put at risk the safety and security of these children.

Australian Government support to humanitarian organisations working in Syria

- Australian agencies working with humanitarian agencies who have access to the camps and who have the mandate and expertise to deliver assistance to affected populations, including Australians, in the form of food, healthcare and shelter.
- Australia has committed more than \$433.2 million to the Syria response since 2011.
 - Includes a \$220 million multi-year (2017-20) humanitarian package addressing urgent humanitarian needs in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.
- Inside Syria in 2018-19, Australian funding is supporting the provision of food and medical care for the most vulnerable.
 - Funding of \$5 million through World Food Program is helping to deliver food and nutrition assistance to 3.3 million people across Syria
 - including food for the entire population of al Hawl camp, and nutrition supplies for pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls in the camp
 - Funding of \$1 million through United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) will help address the needs of women and children in Syria
 - in al Hawl, UNFPA is providing medical care to more than 3,000 women and girls, including more than 470 pregnant women.
 - funding of \$1 million through the World Health Organisation (WHO) to improve access to healthcare, including in al Hawl.

Turkish military operations in Syria

If asked: Will Australia expedite the repatriation of Australians from Syria due to Turkish military operations there?

- Concerned for the welfare of Australians in Internally Displaced Persons camps in Syria.
- Very complex situation, not clear at this stage how Turkey's offensive will affect the camps.
- Priority of the Australian Government is the protection of Australia and the Australian community.
- Will not put further Australian officials, forces or our public in danger. Any repatriation will occur only if it is safe to do so.
- Ability of the Australian Government to provide consular assistance to Australians in Syria is severely limited.

If asked: What are the implications of the Turkish military operation for those in detention facilities and IDP camps, in north-east Syria?

- Full implications of the Turkish military operation will depend on the scale of Turkey's incursion.
- Current environment in northeast Syria is highly dangerous and unpredictable, and has the capacity to escalate further with little warning.
- Taking advice on the situation from international partners, including our allies and humanitarian agencies.