



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Syria

SPEECH

Wednesday, 9 September 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Bandt, Adam, MP	Question No.

Mr BANDT (Melbourne) (09:43): People in my electorate of Melbourne—and, I suspect, right around the country as well—are concerned that we are on the verge of bombing in Syria. Bombing Syria will make a very bad situation worse. It will not stop ISIS, it will not make Australians safer and it will not make Syrians safer. Bombing Syria, when that country is in the middle of a very vicious and very complex civil war, risks creating more refugees, risks further destabilising the region and, perversely, risks helping the brutal Assad regime and offshoots of al-Qaeda that are currently involved in fighting ISIS as well.

The Assad regime is responsible for more than three-quarters of the deaths in Syria. But our government does not seem to have a plan for them. Our government does not seem to have a plan for dealing with the political or military problems in Syria or moving towards creating a sustainable and stable political solution. Its first instinct is to go in, pick sides and bomb—and that risks making a very tense situation worse. We are doing this without a long-term plan for Syria's stability. What about making an effort to help stop the flow of fighters, money and weapons over the border into other countries? What about working with the groups that very tentatively and in very difficult situations are trying to broker ceasefires?

What about working with the civil society groups that want to see democracy and stability in the region? It seems that we have learnt nothing from the involvement of Western forces in this region. That is why it should not be up to the Prime Minister alone to determine whether Australia goes to war and whether we start bombing instead of exploring other solutions. That is exactly why we need to have a parliamentary debate before Australian armed forces are deployed in countries on the other side of the world, where we risk making a bad situation worse and where history tells us that, when we do it, we create the grounds for terrorists to thrive.

I am also distressed to hear reports that government members are advocating for a discriminatory intake of people who are fleeing the brutality of ISIS and the brutality of the Assad regime. When people saw the tragic images of a young boy washed up on a beach, they did not ask about his religion before deciding whether to help. People wanted to help. When someone says they need our help, our first question should not be, 'Tell me whether you are a Muslim.' Saying that we will leave you in harm's way because of your religion is not the way the government should go. ISIS kills Muslims too and they need protection. I am not a religious person, but saying we are not going to help because people are not Christian does not seem to me like a very Christian thing to do.