



AUSTRALIANS FOR WAR POWERS REFORM

Including the CAMPAIGN FOR AN IRAQ WAR INQUIRY

27 June 2019

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Mr Morrison

No War with Iran: No War without Parliament

I write on behalf of Australians for War Powers Reform, an organisation dedicated to achieving Parliamentary involvement in any decision Australia might make to deploy members of the Australian Defence Force into international armed conflict. The purpose of this letter is to convey our concern about the prospect of military action against Iran.

Australia has no quarrel with the government of Iran, which since 2015 has fully observed the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency¹, and has not proceeded towards development of nuclear weapons. Iran and Australia have a significant two-way trading relationship, worth \$A584 million in the last financial year.

A year ago, United States President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the JCPOA, imposed economic sanctions, and threatened other countries which trade with Iran. In April 2019 he designated Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps a foreign terrorist organisation.

In May he sent a carrier strike group and a bomber task force to the Middle East, and anticipated deploying 120,000 or more US troops. In June two attacks on tankers in the Gulf were blamed on Iran, without robust evidence, a rocket was fired into Baghdad's Green Zone, and confrontation occurred with US proxy fighters in the Persian Gulf. Reports that Iran was responsible for these hostile acts have been widely questioned². A US drone was shot down by Iran, and the question of whether or not this was in

¹ http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/prepcom19/statements/29April_IAEA.pdf

² See for example <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iran-threat-us-coalition-forces-middle-east-a8914191.html>

international airspace is contested by the two sides. President Trump came close to ordering an attack on Iran.

The aim of further recent US sanctions is to draw Iran into armed conflict, according to an unnamed American official (quoted by Helen Cooper and Edward Wong, 'Skeptical US Allies resist Trump's New Claim of Threats from Iran', *New York Times*, 14 May 2019).

False narratives were used in the past to justify attacks on Vietnam and Iraq, which included Australian forces. We do not wish Australia to repeat the experience of those disastrous, illegal wars.

We urge you to advise President Trump that our alliance does not oblige Australia to join a war against Iran, and to halt any preparations for it.

We also suggest that you use the opportunity of the G20 summit to discuss the Iranian situation with other leaders, and prepare a joint statement advising President Trump that they are not willing to join a coalition.

In the absence of a credible threat to Australia and without an authorising Resolution of the UN Security Council, any Australian involvement in attacks on Iran would be an act of aggression and therefore illegal.

We appeal to you for a debate in our Parliament on the growing tensions between the US and Iran, and steps which Australia could take to reduce them. Such a debate and a vote by all our elected representatives, and authorisation by the Governor-General, as the only person with the Constitutional power to authorise the deployment of the ADF into international armed conflict, must be absolute prerequisites before any military action is undertaken.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Barratt', with a stylized, cursive script.

(Paul Barratt AO)
President
Australians for War Powers Reform
PO Box 1821
ARMIDALE NSW 2350