

16 August 2024

Dear Parliamentary Committee

I make this submission in relation to the ongoing and illegal detention of Mr Robert Pether in an Iraqi prison.

As you must be aware, Mr Pether was subjected to a judicial process that would make the proverbial kangaroo court seem like the International Court of Justice

There is zero proof of any remotely illegal activity by Robert, but he has been made the fall guy for something he was not involved in and was totally unaware of. Robert returned to Iraq on that fateful day over 3 years ago in good faith, and as an honest, passionate and hard-working professional wishing nothing other than to help sort out an apparent misunderstanding or problem.

The Iraq authorities have a history and a habit of grabbing any employee of an organization they suspect of wrongdoing. I myself was such a victim (my detention in solitary confinement was thoroughly unpleasant but thankfully brief - 4 days - but I was unable to leave Iraq for the next 11 months, so I have some idea of the distress caused to Robert and his family.

To feel the months rolling by and have no idea when you might be able to hold your loved ones again is beyond traumatic and is an experience I would not wish on anyone.

The Australian Embassy in Iraq made no effort at all on my behalf and did absolutely nothing to help me at that time, which only added to my misery and feeling of helplessness. I still wonder what its role actually is in that country.

This is an issue of basic humanity, not legality, for the Australian Govt, which has an obligation to support and protect its citizens working all over the world. The pain and suffering endured by both Robert, his wife Desree and their children is unimaginable, unbearable and life-scarring. It MUST be brought to an end, whatever the cost.

I call on you, the Australian Government, to redouble your efforts to intervene and gain the freedom of Robert Pether, whatever it takes.

Sincerely

Thomas Simpson
Dubai
UAE