



THE HON KEVIN RUDD MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
CANBERRA

25 OCT 2011

The Hon John Murphy MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Murphy

I refer to your letter of 19 September 2011 regarding a petition submitted for the consideration of the Standing Committee on Petitions opposing calls for President Bashar al-Assad of Syria to appear before the International Criminal Court.

While I note the petition, the Australian Government, along with the international community, remains deeply concerned about the actions of the Syrian regime. The Syrian regime has not made genuine efforts to implement reforms, despite repeated commitments to do so.

The recent finding of the UN Human Rights Council fact-finding mission to Syria, that there is evidence of "human rights violations ... which may amount to crimes against humanity", underlines the seriousness of the situation. The report details a consistent pattern of violence against unarmed protestors. It reports accounts of summary executions, including of injured protestors seeking medical treatment; indiscriminate firing on civilians (including children) by security forces; and the use of tanks, heavy machine guns and helicopters in urban areas.

Australia has urged the international community to intensify its pressure on Damascus to respond to the voices of the Syrian people demanding their legitimate freedoms. Australia supports stronger Security Council action, including referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, as stated in my letter to the President of the UN Security Council in June.

Thank you for bringing this petition to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Rudd