

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House the call by Foreign Minister Mr Kevin Rudd for the United Nations Security Council to refer President Bashar al-Assad of Syria to the International Criminal Court. We believe that it is not in *Australia's interest for Mr Rudd to jump to conclusions about President al-Assad and his government's handling of the current upheaval in Syria.* We are aware that there have been calls from peaceful demonstrators in Syria for reform and that in response President Assad has announced significant reforms. We are also aware that there is evidence of sectarian violence and the killings of soldiers, police and innocent people by armed civilians presumably intent on undermining and overthrowing the Syrian government. We reject the notion that political freedoms can be achieved through violence. We know that the largest demonstrations across Syria occurred on 25 March 2011 and were in support of President Assad and reform. In these circumstances, we therefore consider it inappropriate and ill-considered for the Australian Foreign Minister to make a call to refer President Assad to the International Criminal Court.

We therefore ask the House to request the Minister of Foreign Affairs to desist from making any further call for President Assad to be brought before the International Criminal Court and we request the Minister make an effort to seek a more informed and balanced view of current events in Syria.