

Media Release

Dutton and Turnbull's Comments Deplorable, Policies worse still

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull yesterday effectively endorsed the lowly remarks of his Immigration Minister Peter Dutton linking Lebanese Muslims to terrorism and suggesting that allowing Lebanese Muslim immigration in the 1970s was a mistake.

Hizb ut Tahrir / Australia adds its voice to community organisations that have rightly condemned these remarks, noting the following:

1. Those whom Dutton condemns as unworthy of acceptance are in fact worthy of venerable praise. Facing the tribulations and horrors of war, Lebanese migrants in the 70s, like many others in this period, were forced to flee their homelands, fearing for their lives and livelihoods. Upon arrival in an entirely foreign land and culture, they were met with yet more tribulation and hardship – language barriers, forced career changes, homesickness, discrimination. Yet throughout this ordeal they put their best foot forward for the sake of their children. Dutton and Turnbull's reproach of such people reflects on their own lowness, taking away nothing from the admirable sacrifices of immigrants and refugees.

2. Dutton's remarks were manifestly derogatory and absurd. How can an entire community be held responsible for the crimes of a small minority committed decades later? Crimes are committed by elements of every community. Singling out one reveals the true intent of Peter Dutton. His grudge with Lebanese Muslims has more to do with Syria than local issues, as indicated by the security document leaked from his department in February this year which singled out Lebanese Muslims as the "most prominent ethnic group amongst Australian Sunni extremists". The fact is that had Muslims travelled to Syria to support the Assad regime, instead of going to support the innocent people brutally oppressed by his regime, Dutton would be fine with that. "Terrorism" and "foreign fighters" are an excuse in a disgraceful and bloody political struggle between global and regional powers over Syria.

3. If Dutton and Turnbull are so keen to learn lessons from past mistakes they can start with the "emigration policy" of King George III (a.k.a. colonialism), which led to the brutally violent founding of Australia on explicitly racist and inhumane grounds, and the effects of which persist to this day. They can also reflect on the role of western foreign policy that led to many of the humanitarian crises around the world in recent history, creating refugees in the first instance. Australian politicians love to boast about taking in humanitarian refugees, while consistently turning a blind eye to Australia's role in creating them in the first place.

4. At the core of such comments and policies is the abiding strategy of Australian Governments of both persuasions to blame Islam and Muslims for the ugly consequences of their own policies. By revolving the debate around beliefs, extremism, and immigration attention is deliberately deflected away from the fact that the primary cause of terrorism is politics and foreign policy. The focus on migrants is a cheap and irresponsible, but not surprising, attempt to play to prevalent racist fears of the threatening, subversive foreigner.

5. It is worth reiterating that the "terrorism" which Dutton is ascribing to Lebanese Muslims is based on politicised convictions achieved through draconian anti-terror laws and a blatantly politicised anti-terror regime from the days of Howard through Rudd, Gillard and Abbott. The media trials, sensational raids, bullying spy tactics and circumstantial evidence used to garner convictions – mostly coming at just the right time to be paraded by authorities to push through more oppressive laws – are well known.

6. The Muslim community is well accustomed to this sort of cheap politics, the dangers of which have only augmented in recent times. We acknowledge the community's strong stance against this and urge her to continue to stand firm in the face of open hatred and exploitation. We advise those who in the past have been used by the government for its agenda on the pretence of "engagement", only to be disregarded at every turn, to reconsider their approach. Importantly, we remind the community that our success rests solely with Allah and Islam.

﴿وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا﴾

"Whoever upholds taqwa of Allah, He shall make for him a way out (of difficulty)." [65:2]

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