

12 May 2026

QB26-000043

SYRIA - AUSTRALIANS IN IDP CAMPS;

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

ISSUES

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Australians in Internally Displaced
Person (IDP) Camps; s 22(1)(a)(ii)

KEY MESSAGES

- Aware that two Australian families have now returned to Australia from an IDP camp in Syria
 - the Government did not repatriate this group, nor will we assist any ISIS-linked Australians seeking to return from Syria.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

If asked: Was the Australian Government involved in the recent departure of two Australian families from the Al Roj IDP camp?

- No. The Australian Government is not repatriating Australians seeking to return from Syria.

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If asked: Was the US involved in this recent departure?

- Aware of media reports on US involvement in facilitating the departure of this group from the camp.
- We cannot speak for the US on this matter, nor comment on unverified reports
 - the Australian Government has been very clear on its position – we are not repatriating ISIS-linked individuals from Syria.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

If asked: Why did the Government say it would not provide assistance to individuals to return, yet granted them passports? Why didn't the Government 'manage' their return, instead putting Australia's security at risk?

- Under legislation, any Australian can apply for and, if they meet the eligibility requirements, be issued an Australian passport.
- Our Consular Services Charter includes issuing replacement passports and travel documents as a standard service.
- The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in IDP camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.
- Australia's security agencies are prepared to respond to any self-managed returns from IDP camps
 - the Government has confidence in its security agencies.

If pressed: Will other women be arrested if they try to return to Australia?

- Where Australians returning to Australia have allegedly breached Australian law, they will be, where appropriate, and on a case-by-case basis, subject to law enforcement action.
- Unable to comment on individual cases due to privacy considerations.

Status of Australian women and children in IDP camps in Syria

- In 2019, the Australian Government repatriated eight Australian unaccompanied minors.

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- On 29 October 2022, the Australian Government repatriated four Australian women and their 13 Australian children to New South Wales from an IDP camp in Syria.
- On 26 September 2025, one further family [two women and four children] found their own way to Australia from an IDP camp in northeastern Syria.
- On 7 May 2026, two further families [four women and their nine children] travelled to Australia from a Syrian IDP camp.

If asked: Are more Australian women and children going to depart the IDP camps and attempt to return to Australia?

- DFAT has no role in monitoring the movement of Australians overseas.

If pressed: Why were the women and children able to depart the camp this time, and not in February?

- This is a matter for camp authorities and the Syrian Government.
- The Australian Government was not involved in either attempted departure.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Background

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Australian-linked individuals in IDP camps and detention centres in northeast Syria

On 7 May 2026, two families (four women and their nine children) arrived in Australia after leaving Al-Roj camp. Three women were arrested on arrival in Australia. The media had first reported on their travel to Damascus on 24 April 2026, due to an agreement between camp and Syrian government authorities. On 28 April, media reported that the US had assisted in securing the agreement for their departure.

On 16 February 2026, media reported that the remaining cohort of 34 Australian women and children in Al-Roj had left the camp under SDF escort, however were turned away by STG officials as they did not have the appropriate permissions to enter STG-controlled territory. Extensive media coverage reported that Dr Jamal Rifi paid for the passport and citizenship applications for the cohort and travelled to Syria with the passports in his possession to assist the cohort's travel to Damascus. On 18 February, the Minister for Home Affairs announced he has raised a Temporary Exclusion Order (TEO) against one of the women.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

The Commonwealth defeated a legal action brought by Save the Children Australia (STCA) in June 2023 (on behalf of 10 women and 21 children in northeast Syria) to compel the Government to repatriate the women and children to Australia. The Federal Court dismissed STCA's application, finding there was insufficient evidence of Commonwealth control over this cohort. STCA's appeal was dismissed by the Full Federal Court on 18 June 2024 and the High Court refused special leave for a further appeal on 23 September 2024.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

FOR: SENATOR THE HON PENNY WONG

SQ26-000136

Question Submitted By:	Michaelia Cash		
Subject:	133 - ISIS Returnees		
Cleared By:	ELIZABETH MCGREGOR	Date: 20 March 2026	
Responsible Area:	ISG CCD CNB - Consular Operations Branch		
Director Name:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)	Phone:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Consultation	N/A		

Background for Advisers:

N/A

The information is correct and the attached response to this question is s 22(1)(a)(ii) APPROVED / NOT APPROVED

per PENNY WONG 9/4/26

OFFICIAL

Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional Estimates 2025-2026

QUESTION ON NOTICE/Written

133 – Additional Estimates

Topic: 133 - ISIS Returnees

Senator Michaelia Cash

Question:

On what date did DFAT first become aware that each of the 34 individuals was seeking to return to Australia?

Answer:

The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.



QUESTION ON NOTICE

FOR: SENATOR THE HON PENNY WONG

SQ26-000137

Question Submitted By:	Michaelia Cash		
Subject:	134 - ISIS Returnees		
Cleared By:	ELIZABETH MCGREGOR	Date: 20 March 2026	
Responsible Area:	ISG CCD CNB - Consular Operations Branch		
Director Name:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)	Phone:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Consultation	N/A		

Background for Advisers:

N/A

The information is correct and the attached response to this question is s 22(1)(a)(ii) (APPROVED / NOT APPROVED)

per PENNY WONG 9/4/26

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Additional Estimates 2025-2026

QUESTION ON NOTICE/Written

134 – Additional Estimates

Topic: 134 - ISIS Returnees

Senator Michaelia Cash

Question:

On what date was the Minister first briefed regarding the proposed or anticipated return of the 34 individuals?

Answer:

The Australian Government has long been aware of individuals in internally displaced persons camps in Syria with an intention to return to Australia.



QUESTION ON NOTICE

FOR: SENATOR THE HON PENNY WONG

SQ26-000138

Question Submitted By:	Michaelia Cash		
Subject:	135 - ISIS Returnees		
Cleared By:	ELIZABETH MCGREGOR	Date: 20 March 2026	
Responsible Area:	ISG CCD CNB - Consular Operations Branch		
Director Name:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)	Phone:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Consultation	N/A		

Background for Advisers:

N/A

The information is correct and the attached response to this question is s 22(1)(a)(ii)  APPROVED / NOT APPROVED

per PENNY WONG 9/4/26

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Additional Estimates 2025-2026

QUESTION ON NOTICE/Written

135 – Additional Estimates

Topic: 135 - ISIS Returnees

Senator Michaelia Cash

Question:

Did DFAT prepare any written assessment, risk analysis, options paper, or legal advice concerning the return of the 34 individuals? If yes, please provide the dates this was provided.

Answer:

Our security agencies have been monitoring – and continue to monitor – the situation in Syria to ensure they are prepared for any returns to Australia.



QUESTION ON NOTICE

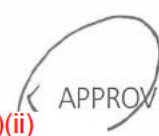
FOR: SENATOR THE HON PENNY WONG

SQ26-000154

Question Submitted By:	Michaelia Cash		
Subject:	151 - ISIS Returnees		
Cleared By:	ELIZABETH MCGREGOR	Date: 20 March 2026	
Responsible Area:	ISG CCD CNB - Consular Operations Branch		
Director Name:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)	Phone:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Consultation	[If Applicable – Otherwise Write “N/A”]		

Background for Advisers:

N/A

The information is correct and the attached response to this question is s 22(1)(a)(ii)  APPROVED / NOT APPROVED

per PENNY WONG 9/4/26

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Additional Estimates 2025-2026

QUESTION ON NOTICE/Written

151 – Additional Estimates

Topic: 151 - ISIS Returnees

Senator Michaelia Cash

Question:

Was there a DFAT official or any other Australian government employee or representative in the Al Roj camp in Syria in February, 2026 as the 34 individuals prepared to attempt to return to Australia?

Answer:

DFAT officials have not visited Al Roj camp.



QUESTION ON NOTICE

FOR: SENATOR THE HON PENNY WONG

SQ26-000157

Question Submitted By:	Michaelia Cash		
Subject:	154 - ISIS Returnees		
Cleared By:	ELIZABETH MCGREGOR	Date: 20 March 2026	
Responsible Area:	ISG CCD CNB - Consular Operations Branch		
Director Name:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)	Phone:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Consultation	N/A		

Background for Advisers:

N/A

The information is correct and the attached response to this question is s 22(1)(a)(ii) ☒ APPROVED / NOT APPROVED

per PENNY WONG *9/4/26*

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Additional Estimates 2025-2026

QUESTION ON NOTICE/Written

154 – Additional Estimates

Topic: 154 - ISIS Returnees

Senator Michaelia Cash

Question:

When was the last time a DFAT official or any other Australian government employee or representative visited the Al Roj camp in Syria? What was the purpose of that visit?

Answer:

DFAT officials have not visited Al Roj camp.



QUESTION ON NOTICE

FOR: SENATOR THE HON PENNY WONG

SQ26-000159

Question Submitted By:	Michaelia Cash		
Subject:	156 - ISIS Returnees		
Cleared By:	ELIZABETH MCGREGOR	Date: 20 March 2026	
Responsible Area:	ISG CCD CNB - Consular Operations Branch		
Director Name:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)	Phone:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Consultation	N/A		

Background for Advisers:

N/A

The information is correct and the attached response to this question is

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

☒ APPROVED / NOT APPROVED

per PENNY WONG 94/26

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Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Additional Estimates 2025-2026

QUESTION ON NOTICE/Written

156 – Additional Estimates

Topic: 156 - ISIS Returnees

Senator Michaelia Cash

Question:

When will a DFAT official or any other Australian government employee next visit the Al Roj camp in Syria?

Answer:

There are no planned visits by DFAT officials to Al Roj camp in Syria.



QUESTION ON NOTICE

FOR: SENATOR THE HON PENNY WONG

SQ26-000160

Question Submitted By:	Michaelia Cash		
Subject:	157 - ISIS Returnees		
Cleared By:	ELIZABETH MCGREGOR	Date: 20 March 2026	
Responsible Area:	ISG CCD CNB - Consular Operations Branch		
Director Name:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)	Phone:	s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Consultation	[If Applicable – Otherwise Write “N/A”]		

Background for Advisers:

Enter text here: Ministerial advisers value receiving additional information regarding the question on notice. Please add background information to the response. Include details of consultation (if applicable) and any reason for a delay in completing the response.

The information is correct and the attached response to this question is s 22(1)(a)(ii) APPROVED / NOT APPROVED

per PENNY WONG 9/4/26

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Additional Estimates 2025-2026

QUESTION ON NOTICE/Written

157 – Additional Estimates

Topic: 157 - ISIS Returnees

Senator Michaelia Cash

Question:

What will be the purpose of any future visit to the Al Roj camp in Syrai by a DFAT official or any other Australian government employee?

Answer:

There are no planned visits by DFAT officials to Al Roj camp in Syria.