



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

4 OCTOBER 1990

I have today sent the following message to Australians in Iraq and Kuwait:

At this time of great difficulty for all of you detained against your will in Kuwait and Iraq, I want you to know that my sympathies and those of the Australian Government and people are constantly with you. I have been following closely the situation on the ground in Kuwait and Iraq from the reports of embassy officers in the region.

As you know, Australia has joined the international community in deploring Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and in taking concrete measures to reverse its aggression. The naval commitment we have made to the Multinational Force is an important part of the United Nations efforts to respond to the occupation of Kuwait, to secure Iraq's withdrawal and to ensure that foreign nationals held against their will are released. It is endorsed by the overwhelming majority of nations.

I want to assure you that your welfare and that of your families is very much on my mind and that of my colleagues in the Government. Our efforts to secure your freedom and to end the anguish that the current situation is causing you and your families will continue. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is working actively and effectively to protect the welfare of all Australians in the region, and I think you will agree with me that their efforts to date have been commendable.

As well as our efforts in Iraq and Kuwait, we will be doing our best to protect your interests and those of your families in Australia. On your behalf, I will be publicly calling on financial and other organisations in Australia to be fair and sympathetic in financial dealings which affect you. The Government will be happy to deal with any particular problems brought to our attention by your families and friends. In particular, we will consider sympathetically specific requests for assistance from any of your dependents who are in situations of particular need.

I do not underestimate the difficulties you face. The situation in Iraq and Kuwait is obviously tense and may worsen. But I know that your courage, determination and good sense will stand you in good stead as you bear up to these challenges. Australians have always been at their best with their backs against the wall, and I know that you too will find ways to endure the current crisis.

Finally, I want to make clear to you personally that no matter how long this painful business takes, I and my Ministers have your welfare as a focus of our efforts, and your safe return to Australia our firmest hope.