



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

14 JANUARY 1991

On behalf of the Australian Government I condemn in the strongest possible terms the acts of racism and outright harassment being suffered by Arab Australians and Australian Muslims.

I condemn utterly any attacks made by racist elements in Australian society against any group on the basis of their ethnic origin or religious or cultural adherence.

I am particularly concerned that the recent increase in such incidents towards Arab Australians and Australian Muslims relates to the crisis in the Gulf, and reflects some sort of view that Arab and Muslim Australians may be in some way disloyal to Australia. Such a view would be utter nonsense.

While Australia is participating in the Gulf Task Force in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations, as a matter of principle, our country does not require of its citizens, whatever their background, that they agree with all the Government's policies. All Australians are free to disagree with the Government's policies, and to express their disagreements, without their loyalty being called into question.

As a matter of fact, many Arab and Muslim community groups have expressed support for the fundamental principles underlying the Government's response to the Gulf crisis. We naturally welcome that support without in any way denigrating the loyalty of those who hold other views.

Freedom of speech and demonstration of belief are fundamental to Australia's Parliamentary democracy. Part of Australia's uniqueness today is the success with which a diversity of immigrants have been attracted to Australia and given the opportunity to commit their loyalties to a new nation without having that loyalty constantly questioned.