



Response to Statement of Foreign Minister Smith Regarding the Dubai Passports Incident

We are greatly disappointed by the Government's decision to request that a member of the Israeli Embassy in Canberra be withdrawn from Australia as a consequence of the Dubai passports incident. We consider that decision to be an over-reaction.

The statement issued by the Foreign Minister does not disclose any specific evidence in support of his conclusions about Israel's involvement in the matter.

Little good can come from taking punitive action in relation to this matter against Israel, which is the Middle East's only stable democracy and the only Middle Eastern country that can be relied on to act resolutely against international terrorism.

We welcome the Foreign Minister's clear statement that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that those Australian passport holders identified by Dubai authorities were anything other than innocent victims of identity theft.

We are confident that despite recent events, the longstanding friendship and co-operation between Australia and Israel will endure and that Australia's strong bipartisan support for Israel and for a just and lasting peace between Israel and its neighbours, will remain steadfast.

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