

## Terrorists win if Muslims banned: Turnbull



Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition leader Bill Shorten in conversation during the ceremony to sign the condolence book for former Prime Minister of Israel Shimon Peres, at Parliament House in Canberra on Monday 10 October 2016. Photo: Alex Ellinghaus

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Malcolm Turnbull has pushed back at calls by One Nation and others to ban or limit Muslim immigration, saying that would be pandering to the whims of terrorists. In a speech to Parliament on racial tolerance, the Prime Minister said concerns about Muslims should not be dismissed because they were real but political leaders had a duty to step up and ease them.

Mr Turnbull said the aim of terrorists who claim to be "fighting and killing for Islam" was to create division and fear. "The object of these terrorists is to divide Islam by driving a wedge of violence between Muslims, between Sunni and Shia and to turn Muslims against the West and the West against Muslims," the Prime Minister said. "The resolution of this conflict within Islam will ultimately depend on Muslims, but in the meantime the Islamist terrorists have succeeded in raising levels of anxiety about Muslim immigration, about the role of Islam itself within Australia.

"We should not dismiss these concerns - they are real. As leaders our job is to explain the facts, reassure citizens and ensure that everything we do is calculated to keep Australians safe."

Counter productive

Mr Turnbull noted that terrorists wanted the wider Australia community to turn against Muslims. "Their message to Australian Muslims is 'you are not wanted here, you will never be accepted here, you cannot be Australian.'," he said. The most effective weapon against this

is inclusion. "An inclusive nation is a safer nation. It enables our security agencies to better protect us. It enables them to secure the support and assistance of the Muslim communities without which they cannot keep us safe," he said. "Australia's migrant story tells us that if we keep learning from each other, opening our doors, our hearts and our minds, harmony will win out."

As Mr Turnbull spoke, the very same argument was playing out in the second US presidential debate between Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump. Ms Clinton argued similarly against a proposed ban by Mr Trump, calling it shortsighted and dangerous. "We need American Muslims to be a part of our eyes and ears and our frontlines," Ms Clinton said. "I have worked with many different groups around America, I have met with a lot of them and I have heard how important it is for them to feel that they wanted and included and part of our country, part of our homeland security."

"I intend to defeat ISIS. To do so in a coalition with majority Muslim nations. Right now, a lot of those nations are hearing what Donald says and wondering why should we co-operate with the Americans? This is a gift to ISIS and the terrorists. "Violent jihadist terrorists. We are not at war with Islam. It is a mistake and it plays into the hands of the terrorists to act as though we are."

#### Rising fears

The motion on racial harmony was an initiative of Labor leader Bill Shorten and mimicked a motion supported by John Howard and Kim Beazley after Mr Howard won government in 1996. This one comes against the backdrop of rising fears of Muslims and a terrorist attack. A recent Essential Media Poll found 49 per cent of Australians supported a proposal by Pauline Hanson to ban Muslim immigration.

A study released Monday by the Australian national University found 45 per cent of Australians fear they or a family member will be affected by a domestic terrorist attack. The ANU research also found a clear link between fears of Islamic extremism and terrorism. It shows 71 per cent are concerned or very concerned about the possible rise of Islamic extremism in Australia. However, a similar number, 70 per cent, believe Muslims in Australia should not be subject to additional security just because of their religion. It shows a high public perception of Muslims as a potential security threat due to a higher risk of radicalisation. "While many Australians fear terrorist attacks, and a majority are prepared to compromise their individual rights and freedoms in favour of living in security, they have, at the same time, conflated terrorism with extremism," said co-author and director of the ANU's Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies Amin Saikal.

Despite the high levels of support for the government's policy approach and ongoing initiatives announced by the Turnbull government, more than half, or 56 per cent, want it to do more to prevent an attack while 36 per cent believe it is doing all it can. Just 8 per cent feel it has gone too far.