

Weeks ahead of the ANZAC commemoration at Gallipoli, serious tensions erupted between Australia and Turkey, after threatening comments by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the wake of the Christchurch massacre.

Scott Morrison on Wednesday called in the Turkish ambassador to give him a tongue lashing. He demanded a withdrawal of the remarks and the taking down of a nationalist video featuring footage of the Australian gunman's live stream.

The strength of the Prime Minister's response has an eye to the emotional place of Gallipoli in the Australian narrative. But he also has to be careful not to cause the Turkish government to respond by hampering next month's ANZAC commemoration.

President Erdoğan, electioneering at Çanakkale, just across from the Gallipoli peninsula, referred to the massacre, saying: "They test us with the messages they give in New Zealand [...] We understood that your hatred is alive [...] We understood that you begrudge our lives."

He said: "Your ancestors came. [...] Later on, some of them returned back on their feet, some of them in coffins.

"If you will come here with the same intentions, we will be waiting for you. You should have no doubt that we will farewell you just like your grandfathers".

New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters, visiting Indonesia, on Wednesday highlighted that the gunman was "a non-New Zealander, an outsider".

Peters also said he thought Erdoğan had not known the full facts but "since he's been apprised, or informed of the facts, he's made a very conciliatory statement today [...] which would stand in stark contrast to what he said the other day."

Christchurch attack strains Australian-Turkish relations ahead of ANZAC day

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

In an [opinion piece](#) published in The Washington Post Erdoğan has written “all Western leaders must learn from the courage, leadership and sincerity of New Zealand’s prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, to embrace Muslims living in their respective countries”.

Peters, who is going to Turkey this week, said when there he would “set any record straight that needs to be set straight as to what went on”.

Attacking Erdoğan’s original comments, Morrison told a news conference they were “highly offensive to Australians and highly reckless in this very sensitive environment”.

Morrison said he had asked for the remarks to be clarified and withdrawn. “I’ve asked for these comments, particularly their reporting of the misrepresented position of Australia on Turkish television, the state-sponsored broadcaster, to be taken down,” he said.

He would wait for the Turkish government’s response - beyond that “all options are on the table”. Asked what these options were, the Prime Minister would not elaborate.

Morrison said he did not accept as an excuse that “things are said in an electoral context”.

The travel advisory for Turkey is under review. People planning to go to Gallipoli should exercise common sense and await further advice, Morrison said. The present advice is for people to exercise a “high degree of caution”.

Morrison said Erdoğan’s remarks were “offensive, because they insult the memory of our ANZACs and they violate the pledge that is etched in the stone at Gallipoli, of the promise of Atatürk to the mothers of our ANZACs. So I understand the deep offence Australians would be feeling about this.

“The comments completely misrepresented the Australian and New Zealand governments’ very strong response to the extremist attack, he said. All Australians had condemned it.

Christchurch attack strains Australian-Turkish relations ahead of ANZAC day

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

"We have reached out to embrace our Muslim brothers and sisters in New Zealand and in Australia, quite to the contrary of the vile assertion that has been made about our response," Morrison said.

He said he had spoken with Turkish Australian leaders on Wednesday morning. "They have expressed to me their deep disappointment about these comments. They don't represent the views of Turkish Australians.

"I am not going to single out the comments of one person and ascribe it to a people, whether in Turkey or across Australia. I don't think it does reflect the views of the Turkish people, or certainly of Turkish Australians," Morrison said.

He said Foreign Minister Marise Payne would be speaking to her Turkish counterpart.

The Australian ambassador to Turkey was due to speak with Erdoğan's advisers.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Read more <http://theconversation.com/christchurch-attack-strains-australian-turkish-relations-ahead-of-anzac-day-113932>