

Proactive Release

Statutory publication date: 10/07/2024

The following Cabinet papers and related Cabinet minutes have been proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Title	Reference
<i>Cabinet Minute of Decision – Report of the Cabinet Legislation Committee: Period Ended 24 May 2024</i>	CAB-24-MIN-0188
<i>Minute of Decision: Government Response to the Petition of Mohamed Soliman on Closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand</i>	LEG-24-MIN-0087
<i>Government response to the petition of Mohamed Soliman on Closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand</i>	

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the OIA that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to OIA redaction codes:

- s6(a): to protect the international relations of the New Zealand government;
- s6(b)(i): to protect the entrusting of confidential information to the Government of New Zealand by another country.

The Governments response to 'Petition of Mohamed Suliman on Closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand' is available via the following link:

petitions.parliament.nz/11184322-7b14-4d30-7fe3-08dbced60938



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Report of the Cabinet Legislation Committee: Period Ended 24 May 2024

On 27 May 2024, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Legislation Committee for the period ended 24 May 2024:

Out of scope

Proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Out of scope

LEG-24-MIN-0087

Government Response to the Petition of Mohamed Soliman on Closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand

CONFIRMED

Portfolio: Foreign Affairs

Out of scope

Proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Portfolio: Revenue

Out of scope

Diana Hawker
for Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs



Cabinet Legislation Committee

Minute of Decision

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Government Response to the Petition of Mohamed Soliman on Closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand

Portfolio Foreign Affairs

On 23 May 2024, the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 **noted** that on 20 December 2023, the petition entitled *Mohamed Soliman: Close the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand* (the Petition) was presented to the Petitions Committee;
- 2 **noted** that on 4 March 2024, the Petition was referred to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for response;
- 3 **noted** that the Minister of Foreign Affairs recommends that the Government not respond positively to the petitioner's request that "the New Zealand Government limit the diplomatic relationship between New Zealand and Israel by closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand";
- 4 **approved** the Government response to the Petition, attached to the submission under LEG-24-SUB-0087;
- 5 **noted** that the Government response will be presented to the House by 28 May 2024;
- 6 **invited** the Minister of Foreign Affairs to present the Government response to the House in accordance with Standing Order 380;
- 7 **invited** the Minister of Foreign Affairs to write to the petitioner enclosing a copy of the Government response to the Petition, after the response has been presented to the House.

Sam Moffett
Committee Secretary

Present: (see over)

Present:

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon Chris Bishop (Chair)
Hon Dr Shane Reti
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Nicole McKee
Hon Casey Costello
Hon Simon Watts
Hon Andrew Bayly
Hon Penny Simmonds
Hon Andrew Hoggard
Jamie Arbuckle, MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for LEG

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~~In Confidence~~

Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Chair, Cabinet Legislation Committee

Government response to the petition of Mohamed Soliman on Closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand

Purpose

- 1 This paper seeks approval of the government's response to the Petitions Committee referral of the petition entitled *Mohamed Soliman: Close the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand*.

Background

- 2 On 4 March 2024, the Petitions Committee referred the petition of Mohamed Soliman to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for response under the Standing Order 380.
- 3 The petition requests that the New Zealand Government limit the diplomatic relationship between New Zealand and Israel by closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand.
- 4 The Israeli Embassy in Wellington originally opened in 1975 and closed for three years between 2002 and 2005. The New Zealand Embassy in Ankara, Türkiye is accredited to Israel. s6(b)(i)
- 5 s6(a)
- 6 Since the 7 October 2023 Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel and consequent Israeli military offensive in Gaza, there has been renewed public interest in the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Protests, community engagement, and anti-social or illegal behaviour related to the issues has increased in New Zealand as a result. This has included acts of vandalism committed against the Israeli Embassy in Wellington and a reported rise in antisemitism. There have also been increased political calls for action to address the perceived injustices facing Palestinians and Israelis, including as relates to New Zealand's relationships with other countries.

Comment on the government response

- 7 The Minister of Foreign Affairs recommends the government not respond positively on the petitioner's request that "*the New Zealand Government limit the diplomatic relationship between New Zealand and Israel by closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand.*" As the government response lays out, it is

not in New Zealand's interest to restrict diplomatic channels that enable bilateral discussions on issues of importance to New Zealand ^{s6(a)}

This is especially relevant where New Zealand is geographically distant from the country in question, as is the case with Israel.

- 8 Dialogue and an ability to freely exchange frank views are the lifeblood of international relations. The government response lays out how the Israeli Embassy's presence has allowed the government to act in New Zealand's interests recently, including:
- 8.1 To express our condolences for the victims of the 7 October 2023 Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel;
 - 8.2 To request Israel's support for New Zealand consular efforts in Israel and the evacuation of New Zealand citizens and permanent residents from Gaza; and
 - 8.3 To register New Zealand's deep concerns regarding the on-going conflict in Gaza and the broader situation in the region.
- 9 The government response also notes the potential detrimental consequences if the government were to seek to close the Israeli Embassy. If we expelled Israeli Embassy staff and effectively closed the Embassy, we would expect Israel to respond in kind.
- 10 New Zealand officials have met with the Israeli Ambassador ^{s6(a)} since the 7 October terrorist attack. ^{s6(a)}

Timing of the government response

- 11 The government response must be presented to the House by 28 May 2024.

Consultation

- 12 The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (National Security Group and Policy Advisory Group) has been informed.

Financial implications

- 13 There are no financial implications for New Zealand.

Publicity

- 14 There are no financial implications for New Zealand.

Proactive Release

- 15 This paper is proposed for proactive release, subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister of Foreign Affairs recommends that the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 note that on 20 December 2023 the petition entitled *Mohamed Soliman: Close the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand* was presented to the Petitions Committee;
- 2 note that on 4 March 2024 the petition entitled *Mohamed Soliman: Close the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand* was referred to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for response;
- 3 note that the Minister of Foreign Affairs recommends that the government not respond positively on the petitioner's request that "the New Zealand Government limit the diplomatic relationship between New Zealand and Israel by closing the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand";
- 4 approve the government response, attached to this submission, entitled *Mohamed Soliman: Close the Israeli Embassy in New Zealand*;
- 5 note that the government response will be presented to the House by 28 May 2024;
- 6 invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to present the government response to the House in accordance with Standing Order 380; and
- 7 invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to write to the petitioner enclosing a copy of the government response to the report of the Petitions Committee on the petition, after the response has been presented to the House.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Winston Peters

Minister of Foreign Affairs