

16 January 2025

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proactive release

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Thank you for your email of 27 October 2024 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

1. *"All sitreps on the Israel-Gaza conflict, including as it relates to West-Asia more broadly*
2. *All Defence Weekly Reports and/or other related reports concerning New Zealand's mandates on Ukraine since June 2024*
3. *The most recent copy of the Defence-led projects status report."*

On 30 October 2024, you agreed to refine the scope of Part 1 of your request to be for:

*Can I please revise part one of the request (sitreps) to those from the month of October 2024 and any that address the 26 July 2024 NZ, Australia, and Canada joint statement? I am most interested in Israeli actions in Gaza and NZ officials' responses/talking points.*

On 30 October 2024 the following Parts 2 and 3 of your request were transferred under section 14(b) of the OIA to the Ministry of Defence for response.

On 27 November 2024, the timeframes for responding to your request were extended by an additional 20 working days because responding to your request necessitated the review of a large quantity of information, and due to the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request (section 15A(1)(a) and (b) of the OIA refers).

Please see the following table for a list of documents in scope of your request:

| #  | Document Type | Title   | Date           |
|----|---------------|---|----------------|
| 1. | Email         | Contingency media line on Israeli ground raids into Lebanon | 1 October 2024 |
| 2. | Email         | Update on Israel-Lebanon                                    | 1 October 2024 |

| #  | Document Type | Title  | Date            |
|----|---------------|--|-----------------|
| 3. | Document      | Compilation of Lebanon-related talking points  | 1 October 2024  |
| 4. | Document      | Situation Update: Israel-Iran Escalations  | 2 October 2024  |
| 5. | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 3 October 2024                               | 3 October 2024  |
| 6. | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 4 October 2024                               | 4 October 2024  |
| 7. | Email         | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 7 October 2024                               | 7 October 2024  |
| 8. | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 8 October 2024                               | 8 October 2024  |
| 9. | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 9 October 2024                               | 9 October 2024  |
| 10 | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 10 October 2024                              | 10 October 2024 |
| 11 | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 11 October 2024                              | 11 October 2024 |
| 12 | Email         | Middle East Tensions: Update from MFAT: 12 October                                   | 12 October 2024 |
| 13 | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 14 October 2024                              | 14 October 2024 |
| 14 | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 17 October 2024                              | 17 October 2024 |
| 15 | Email         | Death of Hamas Leader Yahya Sinwar: MEA quick take: 18 October                       | 18 October 2024 |
| 16 | Document      | Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 21 October 2024                              | 21 October 2024 |
| 17 | Email         | Middle East Tensions: Update from MFAT: 26 October: Israeli retaliation against Iran | 26 October 2024 |

Some information is withheld under the following sections of the OIA:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy;

- 9(2)(c): avoid prejudice to measures protecting the health or safety of members of the public;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments; and
- 9(2)(g)(ii): to protect officers and employees from improper pressure or harassment.

One additional document is withheld in full under s 9(2)(g)(i) of the OIA to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments.

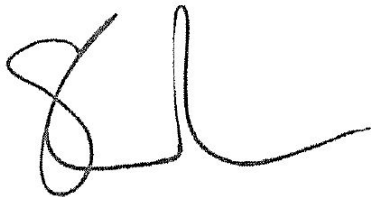
Where the information has been withheld under section 9 of the OIA, no public interest in releasing the information has been identified that would override the reasons for withholding it.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website:

[www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/)

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: [DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz). You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SC', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Corbett  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)  
**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)  
**Cc:** [OCE](#); [DCE](#); s9(2)(g)(ii)

[MEDIA](#); s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Subject:** Contingency media line on Israeli ground raids into Lebanon - 1 October  
**Date:** Tuesday, 1 October 2024 1:02:38 pm  
**Attachments:** [image001.jpg](#)  
[image002.jpg](#)

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[RESTRICTED]

Hi s9(2)(g)(ii)

As requested, below is a contingency line on Israel's "limited, localised and targeted ground raids" against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.

s9(2)(g)(i)

Note that CON will be sending a further update later today which will include the latest Consular lines as well as an update on our humanitarian response.

Any questions let us know.

Thanks,

s9(2)(g)(ii)

C s9(2)(a) E s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(a)

Out of scope

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**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)  
**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)  
**Cc:** [OCE](#); [DCE](#); s9(2)(g)(ii)

[MEDIA](#); s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Subject:** Update on Israel-Lebanon - 1 October  
**Date:** Tuesday, 1 October 2024 5:48:25 pm  
**Attachments:** [Lebanon lines - ongoing - 1 October.docx](#)

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[RESTRICTED]

Kia ora koutou,

Please find a brief update on the consular and humanitarian situation in Lebanon and an advisory on New Zealand support below. Updated talking points are attached.

*Reporting for the remainder of week*

- From tomorrow, we will provide short SITREPs by midday each day updating you on developments and latest TPs.
- We don't propose to report over the weekend unless there are significant urgent updates.
- We will review reporting tempo/need next Monday.

*Situation update*

- In addition to what was reported in CAI's FM, media are reporting that Israeli commando units have made brief incursions into Lebanon. According to Israeli officers these raids are to prepare for a possible wider ground invasion. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

*Consular update*

- There has been a small increase in registered New Zealanders in Lebanon overnight, to 47. Within the last 24 hours, two families (each comprising five people) have approached us for the first time to both register and seek urgent assistance to leave. s9(2)(a)
- New Zealand's Embassy in Cairo (accredited to Lebanon) is in direct contact with all registrants. With the exception of the two families noted above, all other registrants have said they intend to stay in Lebanon and shelter in place. We are continuing to encourage SafeTravel registrants to work with airlines on departure options, or otherwise familiarise themselves with the shelter in place guidance available on SafeTravel.
- Middle East Airlines (MEA), Lebanon's national carrier and the only airline currently operating services out of Beirut's Rafic Hariri Airport, has no capacity on outgoing flights.
- s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i)

#### *Humanitarian Update*

- The United Nations (UN) is reporting that at least 346,000 people in Lebanon have been displaced, while Lebanese authorities continue to estimate the number is over one million.
- On Monday 30 September [New Zealand announced a contribution](#) of \$1 million to UNICEF's response in Lebanon.
  - UNICEF is supporting displaced children and their families, including with emergency supplies (water, blankets, sleeping bags etc), hygiene and dignity kits, and nutrition services.
  - Australia and the United Kingdom are both supporting UNICEF's Lebanon response.
- The United Arab Emirates has announced a relief package for Lebanon of US\$100 million.
- We have added talking points in the attached.

Best regards  
s9(2)(g)(ii)

Lead Adviser (Policy)  
Consular Division

M s9(2)(a)      E s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(a)

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**Compilation of Lebanon-related talking points**

s9(2)(g)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act



s9(2)(g)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act

s9(2)(g)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act

- *[After recalling the Camp David Accords and emphasising the importance of diplomacy]*  
"Contrast that leadership with the catastrophic and ruinous path that has been followed in Gaza. This misery was caused by both Hamas' monstrous terrorist attack last year and now the overwhelming nature of Israel's response. We are most concerned about the generational consequences of this level of suffering and violence with no end in sight and which sees us on the precipice of an even wider conflict. Where is the sincerity and moral determination of today's leaders at the vortex of this unacceptable violence?"

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## Situation Update: Israel-Iran Escalations

### Media Lines

- New Zealand unequivocally condemns Iran's attack on Israel overnight.
- Actions like this significantly increase the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- Steps must be taken to promote stability and reduce tensions.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- [If needed] Senior MFAT officials will reiterate our concerns with Iranian and Israeli representatives in Wellington today.

### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders is clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, **leave now**.
- As the last 24 hours demonstrates, the situation in the region is extremely volatile.
- For most locations, this has been our advice for almost a year.
- In respect to Lebanon:
  - MFAT is in daily contact with registered New Zealanders that remain in Lebanon and wish to receive consular updates or assistance.
  - Most New Zealanders have told us they do not wish to leave the country at this stage.
  - MFAT is assisting a small number of citizens who want to leave Lebanon in the coming days. Our consular emergency response team is working closely with international partners to identify options for these individuals.
- In the meantime, we encourage all travellers to:
  - Continue working with airlines and their travel agent to secure departure bookings as soon as they become available.
  - Shelter in a safe place and follow the advice of local authorities.

Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.

- [If raised: Number of New Zealanders in Lebanon] New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **47 in Lebanon, 99 in Israel, 28 in Iran**.

## Proposed Tweet

We propose a post on X by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, focused on foreign policy concerns followed by a thread summarising consular advice. This is consistent with the approach of likemindeds, and with our response to Iran's missile attack against Israel in April.

Post 1 of 2 (policy focused):

*New Zealand unequivocally condemns Iran's attack on Israel overnight.*

*This is the kind of escalation New Zealand and partners have been warning against. Civilians throughout the Middle East are already enduring intolerable suffering through continued conflict. We urge all parties to step down from further retaliatory action. Maximum restraint and diplomatic solutions are essential.*

*We also condemn the terrorist attack in Jaffa.*

Post 2 of 2 (consular focused):

*Our advice to New Zealanders is clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now. As the last 24 hours has demonstrated, the situation in the Middle East remains extremely volatile.*

*Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call MFAT's 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.*

*Further information can be found on New Zealand's Safe Travel website: [Safe Travel](#)*

## Latest developments

- Iran launched around 180-200 missiles, including ballistic missiles, at Israel this morning, purportedly in retaliation for Israel's killing of Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah and Hamas' Ismail Haniyeh. The strike was authorised by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. According to the IDF, no one in Israel was killed as a result of the attack.
- Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) claims to have intercepted around 180 missiles, but that "a small number of hits" struck southern and central Israel. US Navy assets also participated in efforts to intercept the projectiles. It is unclear which other countries participated.
- **The Pentagon called the attack "twice the scope" of Iran's previous attack on Israel in April**, due to the more powerful nature of today's missiles. President Biden has said the US is "fully supportive" of Israel and that Iran's attack appears to have been "defeated and ineffective."
- Israel has promised to retaliate with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying "Iran made a big mistake tonight and will pay for it. Whoever attacks us, we attack them."
- Iran has stated that it will not pursue further attacks unless Israel "decides to invite further retaliation". New Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian cautioned Israel from retaliating, saying "this is only a portion of our power" on X.
- Six people were also killed in a terrorist attack in Jaffa (a Tel-Aviv neighbourhood). <sup>s6(a)</sup>

s6(b)(i)

## Reactions from FVEY partners

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### UK

- s6(a)
- Foreign Secretary Lammy:  
*"I condemn Iran's attack on Israel in the strongest terms. Today I warned Iran against taking action that could push the region further towards the brink. A cycle of escalation is in no one's interest."*

### Australia

- Prime Minister Albanese has posted on X saying *"Australia condemns Iran's missile attack on Israel. This is an extremely dangerous escalation - Australia and the global community have been clear in our calls for de-escalation. Further hostilities put civilians at risk. We are monitoring the situation closely and encourage Australians in Israel to follow the advice of local authorities."*
- Foreign Minister Wong has issued a further post on consular support for Australian's wishing to leave Lebanon.

### Canada

- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has posted on X stating *"Canada unequivocally condemns Iran's reckless attack against Israel. It puts innocent civilians at risk. We fully support Israel's right to defend itself against this attack. And, we repeat our call for de-escalation across the region, for the safety of all civilians."*
- Foreign Minister Joly in House of Commons (no X post yet) said *"Canada unequivocally condemns the attack. These attacks from Iran will only serve to further escalate the region... this is a very dangerous time for the Middle East, we need to make sure this war stops."*

### US

- President Joe Biden said to media *"The attack appears to have been defeated and ineffective, and this is a testament to Israeli military capability and the military... Make no mistake, the United States is fully, fully, fully supportive of Israel."*
- Jake Sullivan US National Security Adviser said *"this is a significant escalation by Iran, a significant event, and it is equally significant that we were able to step up with Israel and create a situation in which no one was killed in this attack in Israel. We have made clear that there will be consequences, severe consequences, for this attack, and we will work with Israel to make that the case..."*

## MFAT Assessment

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s6(a)

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## New Zealand Consular Interests

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This morning MFAT has:

- Communicated with all SafeTravel registrants in Lebanon advising them that we are working to assist New Zealanders wanting to depart asap <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>
- Raised the travel advisory setting for Israel to "do not travel" (a SafeTravel message will also be sent to registrants notifying them of this change and our latest advice).
- Had further exchanges with FVEY partners on contingency planning and consular responses.

### *Lebanon*

- The total number registered in Safe Travel as being in Lebanon is 47.
- MFAT continues to be in daily direct contact with all registrants (through a mixture of messages, calls and SafeTravel messages).
- The vast majority of New Zealanders registered with us have told us they want to remain in Lebanon. Some have flights booked for later in October.
- Only 8 registrants have sought help to leave as soon as possible (a family of 5; family of 2; an individual). <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>
- In addition, one person left Beirut yesterday on a commercial flight to Dubai which CAI helped to book. One person is due to leave on a commercial flight today, and a further one on Thursday on a commercial flight. By the end of this week, those actively looking to depart as of today's date (10 people) should have departed.
- The Ministry has sent an update to all Safe Travel registrants today advising them that (1) we are working to secure seats on flights for those who have told us they require our help to leave; (2) we may be able to secure seats on a flight leaving on Thursday; (3) those who have not yet requested assistance to leave but wish to depart Beirut now should contact the Embassy or MFAT afterhours consular number to request assistance as soon as possible.
- Demands for assistance with evacuations could change at any time, particularly if further escalation starts to directly impact areas which those normally resident in Lebanon consider "safe." where most of the registrants are based.

### *Wider region*

- The total number of New Zealanders in Israel is 99; and in Iran 28. At this stage airports remain open and flights are operating.
- Following Iran's missile strike this morning, CON has updated the travel advisory for Israel to "do not travel" for the whole country (moving from a mixture of "do not travel" for the OPT and border areas and "avoid non-essential travel" for the rest of the country). <sup>s6(a)</sup>



## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 3 October 2024

### Media Lines

- New Zealand unequivocally condemns Iran's attack on Israel.
- Actions like this significantly increase the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- Steps must be taken to promote stability and reduce tensions.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- *[If needed]* MFAT officials have reiterated our concerns directly to the Iranian Ambassador and Israeli Deputy Ambassador in Wellington.

### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders is clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- For most locations, this has been our advice for almost a year.
- As events over the last few days demonstrate, the situation in the region is extremely volatile.
- MFAT is working closely with international partners on the consular response.
- In respect to Lebanon:
  - MFAT is in daily contact with registered New Zealanders that remain in Lebanon and wish to receive consular updates or assistance.
  - Most New Zealanders have told us they do not wish to leave the country at this stage.
  - We expect the small number of citizens who want to leave Lebanon will be able to do so in the next two days.
- In the meantime, we encourage all travellers to:
  - Continue working with airlines and their travel agent to secure departure bookings as soon as they become available.
  - Shelter in a safe place and follow the advice of local authorities.
  - Register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **50 in Lebanon, 100 in Israel, 31 in Iran.**

## Latest Developments

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- MFAT officials met with the Iranian Ambassador in Wellington yesterday to condemn the attack and emphasise the need for maximum restraint and de-escalation.
- MFAT officials also met with the Israeli Deputy Ambassador. s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- Fighting continues in Lebanon with Israeli air strikes and ground forces continue to cross the border. Both sides have now reported "close range" encounters, resulting in the deaths of eight Israeli soldiers – the first to be killed in combat inside Lebanon since the incursion began. The Lebanese Ministry of Public Health reported 55 killed and 156 injured in Israel raids over the past 24 hours in southern Lebanon.
- A significant attack by Israel on Iranian military facilities and/or oil production facilities seems most likely according to open-source commentary. US President Joe Biden has told media that the US would not back Israel striking Iranian nuclear sites.
- There are significant flight cancellations and restrictions across the Middle East. Iranian airspace is closed until 5am today (local time). s6(b)(i)
- UN Secretary-General has condemned Iran's strike on Israel in a UN Security Council meeting and said it was high time to stop the "deadly cycle of tit-for-tat violence" in the Middle East. Separately, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz has declared him *persona non grata* and accused him of being an "anti-Israel Secretary-General who lends support to terrorists."

*For further information, please see the following formal messages:*

- Ankara, 3 October: 'Israel-Hezbollah: Israel vows to retaliation for Iranian attacks'
- Tehran, 3 October: s6(a)
- Middle East and Africa Division, 2 October: 'Meetings with Iranian and Israeli Embassies following missile attack'

## Reactions from FVEY Partners

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No significant updates to report.

## MFAT Assessment

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There are no changes to MFAT's assessment. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

## New Zealand Consular Interests

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### *Lebanon*

- 9 (out of 50) registrants have sought help to leave as soon as possible (a family of 5; family of 2; 2 individuals). All 9 should be able to leave Lebanon today (1pm local time) <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>
- MFAT messaged all registrants in Lebanon yesterday <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup> and asking any New Zealanders who wished to depart to contact us urgently. Only one traveller reached out (this person is now included in the above 9 scheduled to leave today).
- All other registrants have told us they want to remain in Lebanon or are comfortable with existing departure plans later in October. MFAT continues to be in daily direct contact with those who wish to be updated on the consular situation (through a mixture of messages, calls and SafeTravel messages).
- <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>
- The Netherlands, Germany, Spain, and South Korea have announced military flights to evacuate nationals. <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>

### *Wider region*

- MFAT raised its travel advice setting for Israel to the highest level yesterday - "do not travel" for the whole country (moving from a mixture of "do not travel" for the occupied Palestinian territories and border areas and "avoid non-essential travel" for the rest of the country). No enquiries or requests for assistance have been received from registered New Zealanders there.

## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 4 October 2024

### Media Lines

- New Zealand unequivocally condemns Iran's attack on Israel.
- Actions like this significantly increase the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- The violence and loss of life we've seen this week in Lebanon and Israel is appalling. This takes us in the opposite direction of where we need to be headed. We urge all parties to step back from the brink and agree to a ceasefire.
- New Zealand has contributed NZ\$1 million to UNICEF to support affected civilians in Lebanon.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation. Steps must be taken to promote stability and reduce tensions.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- *[If needed]* MFAT officials have reiterated our concerns directly to the Iranian Ambassador and Israeli Deputy Ambassador in Wellington.

### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- MFAT is working closely with international partners on the consular response.
- All New Zealanders that have sought MFAT's assistance to leave Lebanon, and who are able to do so, departed on flights overnight. Most of these (9) left on a charter flight to which MFAT secured access.
- MFAT has been able to secure additional seats on a departing flight today. New Zealanders registered on SafeTravel have been alerted to this further, possibly final, opportunity.
- New Zealanders that wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: 47 in Lebanon (though we know this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), 101 in Israel, 31 in Iran.

### *[If raised – increase in crude oil prices]*

- Officials are closely monitoring the escalating situation. There is no immediate risk to New Zealand's fuel security of supply as New Zealand sources its refined products from Asian refineries.
- If the Strait of Hormuz is blocked, New Zealand would work with the IEA (International Energy Agency) Governing Board to explore how to address the situation.

## Latest Developments

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s9(2)(g)(i)

- The IDF has instructed residents to head 60km north of the frontier.
- The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) reported that a soldier was killed in an Israeli strike on a military post in southern Lebanon. LAF forces fired back, the first time the LAF has responded to Israeli forces since 7 October, according to Reuters.
- Oil prices soared with the international benchmark Brent crude rising 4% to USD76.81. This follows President Biden's remarks that he is discussing possible Israeli strikes on Iranian oil sites in response to Iran's missile attack on Israel. The Governor of the Bank of England, Andrew Bailey, warned that a major conflict between Israel and Iran would make it impossible to keep oil prices stable and expose the global economy to a shock similar to the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War.
- The European Union Aviation Safety Agency advised European airlines to avoid Iranian airspace until 31 October. Middle East Airlines put on two additional flights to Paris on Thursday as requested by the French Foreign Minister. s6(b)(i)
- The death toll has passed 1,000 in the past two weeks in Lebanon. The estimated numbers of internally displaced people is over 540,000 since 27 September. The humanitarian need is rapidly escalating.

*For further information, please see the following formal messages and attachment:*

- Ankara, 4 October: *Israel-Hezbollah: Israeli operations broaden; 11 kiwis safely leave Lebanon*
- MBIE Assessment, 4 October: *Middle East and Possibility of Disruption to Field Supply*

## Reactions from FVEY Partners

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- G7 Leaders released a statement on October 3 condemning Iran's destabilising actions including through its proxies and armed groups; reiterating their commitment to Israel's security; calling for restraint from all regional leaders; a ceasefire in Gaza in line with UNSCR 2375 and cessation of hostilities in Lebanon consistent with UNSCR 1701; the protection of civilian populations; and underscoring the importance of the United Nations in resolving armed conflict and mitigating humanitarian impacts including the role of UNIFIL. See [here](#) for full statement.

## MFAT Assessment

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No changes to assessment.

## New Zealand Consular Interests

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### *Lebanon*

- 13 New Zealanders were able to leave Lebanon overnight – 9 on a s6(b)(i), and 4 through existing commercial bookings.
- s6(b)(i)
- One new registrant in the last 24 hours has confirmed they want to leave Lebanon. Aside from this individual, we are not aware of any other eligible traveller that is seeking assistance to leave.
- We are working with a very small number of New Zealanders that cannot leave due to travel document issues.
- All other registrants have told us they want to remain in Lebanon or are comfortable with existing departure plans later in October.
- s6(b)(i)

**New Zealand imports all of our fuel, mostly from refineries in Asia**

New Zealand fuel product is refined in Asia from oil largely sourced from the Middle East. s9(2)(g)(i)

**Until now, oil markets had remained relatively unaffected by war in Israel and Gaza**

Neither Israel nor Palestine are major oil players. Therefore, analysts had previously predicted that, *in the short term, a large price spike for oil wasn't likely to occur as a result of the war between Israel and Gaza*. The price of crude has been relatively stable over the past year, apart from brief spikes, including after the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attacks on Israel. When Iran fired a well-telegraphed wave of missiles at Israel in April, it didn't lead to prolonged price increases, either.

The widening war in the Middle-East has coincided with slowing international demand growth for oil. (This has been largely attributed to changes in the Chinese economy and the rising use of electric vehicles). Outside of China, there are also expectations of continued growth in supply – notably from oil producers in the Americas outside the OPEC+ [Oil Producing and Exporting Economies] group, such as the United States, Canada, Brazil and Guyana – which has helped fuel a recent sell-off in oil markets.

These factors external to the current Middle-East conflict may have limited the effect of that conflict on world oil prices.

s9(2)(g)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act

s9(2)(g)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act



s9(2)(g)(i)

MBIE and MFAT Officials continue to actively monitor the situation, and will provide you with further updates.

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## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 7 October 2024

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### Media Lines

**See 7 October Communications Plan** for more extensive media lines – the lines below are updated lines/new issues.

#### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- MFAT continues to work closely with international partners on the consular response. This has included securing seats for New Zealanders on flights out of Lebanon.
- All New Zealanders who have sought MFAT's assistance to leave Lebanon, and who are able to do so, have already departed or are due to depart today.
- New Zealanders who wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **37 in Lebanon** (though we know this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), **104 in Israel**, **42 in Iran**.

#### [If raised: UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza]

- UNRWA provides essential assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- New Zealand provided \$1million to UNRWA in the 2023/24 financial year.
- We are concerned about Israeli legislation under consideration that would limit UNRWA's ability to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- UN Agencies, including UNRWA, have remained central to the humanitarian response in Gaza and to supporting Palestinian refugees in the region. Its mandate has been agreed by UN member states. Other UN Agencies are not as well positioned to assist.
- As imperfect as it is, the UN system must be allowed to do the job given to it by UN member states.
- *[If raised: Will New Zealand continue to fund UNRWA]:* Officials will provide advice to Ministers on the option of future support to UNWRA later this year.

#### [Contingency lines should Israel take retaliatory action against Iran – these lines reflect similar lines used in April following retaliatory actions between Israel and Iran]

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran, including Israel's strikes today.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.

- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.

### Latest Developments

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- All eligible New Zealanders who have sought consular assistance to leave Lebanon <sup>s6(b)(1)</sup>
- CAI is in contact with the groups that remain in Lebanon (once a week by phone, twice a week by email).
- Israeli airstrikes on southern Beirut continue but the airport is still operating with flights continuing to depart.
- Hezbollah continues to fire rockets into Israel daily. Numbers vary but range from 30 to 120 a day; rocket fire over the weekend was targeted to southern Haifa (in northern Israel).
- Israeli has issued new evacuation orders for 26 towns in southern Lebanon.
- In Gaza, Israel is reportedly re-entering parts of the north (above Wadi Gaza) to counter a resurgence of Hamas there.
- Iranian media is reporting **all flights across Iran's airports will be cancelled** from Sunday at 21:00 local time until Monday at 06:00. A Spokesperson for Iran's National Security Committee said any threat against Iran will be met with a harsh and swift response.
- **Israel's Knesset** is expected to pass legislation which would disallow **UNRWA** from operating in Israel and Palestine and revoke UNRWA's privileges and diplomatic immunities. UNRWA's mandate is renewed annually by UN members states and these steps represent a further step by Israel in its increasingly strident opposition to UN Agencies operating in Israel and Palestine.
- **French** President Emmanuel Macron called for a **halt on arms deliveries to Israel** for use in Gaza on Saturday, prompting swift criticism from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who stated, "Israel's friends are expected to stand behind it, and not impose restrictions on it that will only strengthen the Iranian axis of evil."

*For further information, please see the following formal messages:*

- CAIRO, 7 October: ISRAEL- HEZBOLLAH: HEAVY AIRSTRIKES CONTINUE BOTH WAYS & REGION ON EDGE AHEAD OF OCTOBER 7 ANNIVERSARY
- NEW YORK, 6 October: UNRWA GRAVELY CONCERNED AS BILLS TARGETING THE AGENCY ADVANCE RAPIDLY THROUGH KNESSET
- ANK: 6 October: ISRAEL- HEZBOLLAH: ISRAEL STRIKES NORTHERN LEBANON FOR FIRST TIME
- LONDON, 5 October: MIDDLE EAST: UK UPDATE
- ANK: 5 October: ISRAEL- HEZBOLLAH: WEST BANK ATTACK ON REFUGEE CAMP - DEADLIEST IN 24 YEARS

## Reactions from FVEY Partners

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*Given the time difference the UK, US and Canada have not yet released their October 7 public coms.*

### Australia

- Prime Minister Albanese has released a [video statement](#) on the anniversary of the October 7 attacks which acknowledges the rise of antisemitism in Australia over the past year and sadness for the loss of civilian life in the Middle East.
- Large pro-Palestinian protests took place in Australian cities yesterday. These protests took place amidst growing community tensions in Australia between Jewish and pro-Israel groups and pro-Palestinian and Lebanese community groups. The protests yesterday were largely peaceful with a small number of arrests made.

### MFAT Assessment

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There are no changes to MFAT's assessment. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

## New Zealand Consular Interests

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### Lebanon

- A further 5 New Zealanders departed Lebanon overnight or will do so tonight <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>
- We are assisting one other family <sup>s9(2)(a)</sup>. Immigration New Zealand will be alerted to the urgency of the application once it is submitted.
- All other New Zealanders that are registered with MFAT wish to remain in Lebanon or are comfortable with their own departure plans later in October.
- In recent days we have received a small number of enquiries from individuals that are ineligible for consular assistance (family members of New Zealand citizens in New Zealand). Some of these individuals <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup> do not have visas to enter New Zealand. We have directed them to commercial departure options (becoming available in the next few days).

<sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>

## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 8 October 2024

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### Media Lines

#### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- With MFAT support, all New Zealanders who have sought MFAT's assistance to depart, and who are able to travel, have now left Lebanon.
- New Zealanders who wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **36 in Lebanon** (though this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), **104 in Israel**, **40 in Iran**.

#### [If raised: UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza]

- UNRWA provides essential assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- New Zealand provided \$1million to UNRWA in the 2023/24 financial year.
- We are concerned about Israeli legislation under consideration that would limit UNRWA's ability to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- UN Agencies, including UNRWA, have remained central to the humanitarian response in Gaza and to supporting Palestinian refugees in the region. Its mandate has been agreed by UN member states. Other UN Agencies are not as well positioned to assist.
- As imperfect as it is, the UN system must be allowed to do the job given to it by UN member states.
- *[If raised: Will New Zealand continue to fund UNRWA]:* Officials will provide advice to Ministers on the option of future support to UNRWA later this year.

#### [Contingency lines should Israel take retaliatory action against Iran – these lines reflect similar lines used in April following retaliatory actions between Israel and Iran]

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran, including Israel's strikes today.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.

- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.

### Latest Developments

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- All eligible New Zealanders who have sought consular assistance to leave Lebanon have now left. Our post in Cairo remains in contact with the groups that remain in Lebanon (once a week by phone, twice a week by email). The next phone check-in is scheduled for Wednesday local time.
- There was no major escalation of hostilities overnight, <sup>s6(a)</sup>
- Daily exchanges of rocket fire continue between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah. Hezbollah rockets hit Haifa, Israel's third-largest city, yesterday. Hezbollah claims the rockets were targeted at a military base south of Haifa. The IDF is investigating how its air defences failed to intercept the rockets.
- Israeli Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant will reportedly visit the Pentagon later this week, following a discussion with US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin on Sunday about Iran, Lebanon, and Gaza. US Central Command chief Michael Kurilla is also in Israel today and US State Department spokesperson, Matthew Miller, has publicly called on Israel not to attack Beirut Airport or the roads leading to it.
- Israeli Defence officials have reportedly warned Netanyahu that Hamas has ordered the remaining hostages to be executed if the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) "was getting close."
- There was a clash between pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli protestors (including Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki) outside TVNZ's Auckland office yesterday. Around 35 police officers were deployed to separate the groups. One protestor was pepper sprayed.

*For further information, please see the following formal messages:*

- Cairo, 8 October: 'Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah: One year in – no ceasefire in sight'

### Humanitarian updates

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- The conflict in Lebanon continues to drive displacement, with the UN's latest estimates increasing by around 70,000 people over the weekend to 608,500 displaced. The Government of Lebanon continues to estimate the total to be in excess of one million people.
- The UN has released a new appeal for US\$324 million to assist refugees in Syria stemming from the conflict, on top of the US\$426 million appeal issued for Lebanon last week.
- Israel's Knesset looks likely to pass its legislation banning UNRWA's operations in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee met on Monday to discuss the bills. If passed, these laws could cause major issues for the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, introduce operational challenges for UNRWA's work elsewhere, and represent an unprecedented challenge to the operation of the UN in the region.
- <sup>s6(b)(1)</sup>

## Reactions from FVEY Partners

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The UK, US and Canada have now released their October 7 public comms:

- **UK:** Prime Minister Keir Starmer published a [written statement](#) and delivered an [oral statement](#) to the House of Commons. Starmer expressed his grief for the attacks and set out three areas of focus for the UK in the weeks ahead: its consular and humanitarian response in Lebanon, efforts for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and support for the two-state solution.
- **US:** President Joe Biden issued a [statement](#) criticising Hamas' actions, expressing support for Israel's right to defend itself, and condemning the rise in antisemitism around the world.
- **Canada:** Prime Minister Justin Trudeau released a [statement](#) condemning the attacks, acknowledging the rise of antisemitism in Canada over the past year, and reiterating Canada's commitment to a two-state solution.

## MFAT Assessment

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s6(a)

## New Zealand Consular Interests

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### Lebanon

- A further family was able to depart Lebanon overnight <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>. The Embassy in Cairo has assisted a small number of others to identify commercial flights out of Beirut.
- We are assisting one other family <sup>s9(2)(a)</sup>. Immigration New Zealand will be alerted to the urgency of the application once it is submitted.
- All other New Zealanders that are registered with MFAT wish to remain in Lebanon or are comfortable with their own departure plans already in place.
- In recent days we have received a small number of enquiries from individuals that are ineligible for consular assistance (family members of New Zealand citizens in New Zealand). Some of these individuals <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup> do not have visas to enter New Zealand. We have directed them to commercial departure options (becoming available in the next few days).
- <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>

- Contingency plans remain in place for significant escalations in the conflict that could trigger non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) out of Cyprus.

Released under the Official Information Act



## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 9 October 2024

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### Media Lines

#### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- With MFAT support, all New Zealanders who have sought MFAT's assistance to depart, and who are able to travel, have now left Lebanon.
- New Zealanders who wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **29 in Lebanon** (though this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), **104 in Israel**, **40 in Iran**.

#### [If raised: UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza]

- UNRWA provides essential assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- New Zealand provided \$1million to UNRWA in the 2023/24 financial year.
- We are concerned about Israeli legislation under consideration that would limit UNRWA's ability to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- UN Agencies, including UNRWA, have remained central to the humanitarian response in Gaza and to supporting Palestinian refugees in the region. Its mandate has been agreed by UN member states. Other UN Agencies are not as well positioned to assist.
- As imperfect as it is, the UN system must be allowed to do the job given to it by UN member states.
- *[If raised: Will New Zealand continue to fund UNRWA]:* Officials will provide advice to Ministers on the option of future support to UNRWA later this year.

#### [Contingency lines should Israel take retaliatory action against Iran –]

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.

## Latest Developments

- **All eligible New Zealanders who have sought consular assistance to leave Lebanon have now left.** Our post in Cairo remains in contact with the groups that remain in Lebanon (once a week by phone, twice a week by email). The next phone check-in is scheduled for Wednesday local time.
- Israeli Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant, cancelled his visit to the Pentagon at short notice, on the direction of Prime Minister Netanyahu. Gallant was set to meet with US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin to discuss Iran, Lebanon, and Gaza. According to Israeli media Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has blocked the meeting from taking place until he has spoken with President Joe Biden and the Israeli Cabinet has approved plans for retaliation against Iran. <sup>s6(a)</sup>
- Daily exchanges of rocket fire continue between Israel and Hezbollah. Media reporting suggests that overnight Hezbollah undertook its largest rocket attack on the Israeli city of Haifa. The group's leadership has promised more attacks, stating that the strike was "in retaliation for attacks on Lebanese civilians."
- The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) announced it had killed Suheil Hussein Hussein, the head of Hezbollah's headquarters in Beirut. Hussein's unit managed Hezbollah's budget and the organisation of other branches inside Hezbollah. Hezbollah has not yet confirmed his death. <sup>s6(a)</sup>
- Iranian news agency Tasnim reported Iran plans to bolster its allies and militant groups in the region through a new defence pact. The pact reportedly aims to create a joint defence structure for countries and entities belonging to the "Axis of Resistance". Signatories of the pact would be obliged to provide comprehensive economic, military, and political support to allies in the event of an attack by Israel or the US.

### *Multilateral sphere:*

- United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, has written to Prime Minister Netanyahu registering his concern at the Israel Knesset's proposed legislation to disallow UNRWA operations in Israel and Palestine and revoke UNRWA's privileges and diplomatic immunities. During a statement at the UN Security Council stakeout on 9 October, Guterres highlighted the vital and irreplaceable nature of UNRWA's humanitarian response in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- The Knesset's proposed UNRWA legislation is one of several actions Israel has taken in the past week <sup>s6(a)</sup>. Other actions include declaring UN Secretary-General Guterres persona non grata in Israel and requesting the removal from Southern-Lebanon of peacekeepers operating under the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mandate.
- <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>

### *Miscellaneous:*

- <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>

For further information, please see the following formal messages:

- Ankara, 9 October: 'Formal Message: Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah: s6(a)
- Riyadh, 9 October: 'Formal Message: Yemen: Houthis undeterred by Israeli airstrikes'

### Humanitarian updates

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- The World Health Organisation has warned of outbreaks of diarrhoea, hepatitis A, and a number of vaccine preventable diseases in Lebanon due to crowded conditions in displacement shelters and hospital closures as medical staff have fled Israel's incursions and airstrikes.
- The World Food Programme Country Director has registered "extraordinary concern" for Lebanon's ability to continue to feed itself, noting that harvests will not occur, and that produce is rotting in fields.
- The IDF have issued a total of thirty-nine evacuation orders up to and including the night of 6 November. Unsafe zones in Beirut's southern suburbs include at least seven hospitals.

### MFAT Assessment

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s6(a)

### New Zealand Consular Interests

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#### Lebanon

- No updates.
- Contingency plans remain in place for significant escalations in the conflict that could trigger non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) out of Cyprus.

## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 10 October 2024

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### Media Lines

#### Israel takes retaliatory action against Iran

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.

#### Israel – Hezbollah Escalations

- A regional war would have disastrous consequences for the Middle East and especially for civilians across the region.
- The violence and loss of life in Lebanon and Israel is horrific. This takes us in the opposite direction of where we need to be headed. It is critical all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation. Steps must be taken to promote stability and reduce tensions.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- We supported the ceasefire proposal by the US, France, and others. We reiterate the call on all parties, including the Governments of Israel and Lebanon, to agree to a ceasefire. Diplomacy can work where there is political will.

#### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- With MFAT support, all New Zealanders who have sought MFAT's assistance to depart, and who are able to travel, have now left Lebanon.
- New Zealanders who wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **30 in Lebanon** (though this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), **102 in Israel**, **41 in Iran**.

#### [If raised: UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza]

- UNRWA provides essential assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- New Zealand provided \$1 million to UNRWA in the 2023/24 financial year.
- We are concerned about Israeli legislation under consideration that would limit UNRWA's ability to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- UN Agencies, including UNRWA, have remained central to the humanitarian response in Gaza and to supporting Palestinian refugees in the region. Its mandate has been agreed by UN member states. Other UN Agencies are not as well positioned to assist.
- As imperfect as it is, the UN system must be allowed to do the job given to it by UN member states.
- *[If raised: Will New Zealand continue to fund UNRWA]:* Officials will provide advice to Ministers on the option of future support to UNRWA later this year.

## Latest Developments

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- s6(a)  

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant has said the retaliation will be "deadly, precise and surprising". s6(a)

. We have brought our reactive talking points to the top of the attached document. We will provide by the end of the day further contingency material.
- Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu appeared to confirm on Tuesday evening that Israel had assassinated s6(a) Hashem Safieddine in a targeted airstrike in Beirut last Thursday. Safieddine was widely believed to be the successor to former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah (assassinated on 28 September). Hezbollah has not publicly confirmed Safieddine's death and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) likewise declined to confirm however on Tuesday Minister Gallant said Safieddine was likely killed in the Beirut airstrike.
- In a video addressed to the Lebanese people Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel had taken out "thousands of terrorists, including Nasrallah himself, and Nasrallah's replacement, and his replacement's replacement." Netanyahu also urged Lebanese citizens to "save Lebanon before it falls into the abyss of a long war that will lead to destruction and suffering like we see in Gaza. It doesn't have to be that way... Free your country from Hezbollah so that your country can prosper again."
- The IDF has continued to battle Hezbollah forces, both in close-quarters combat and through airstrikes. During ground operations, IDF troops razed the "Garden of Iran" park on the outskirts of the Lebanese village of Maroun al-Ras, and raised an Israeli flag over the area, s6(a)  

UNIFIL warned that Israeli ground operations near their base in the village was "extremely dangerous" and compromised the peacekeepers' safety.

*For further information, please see the following formal messages:*

- Ankara, 10 October: *'Israel- Hamas - Hezbollah: s6(a)*
- Washington, 10 October: *'Formal Message: Request for reporting - Partner responses to conflict escalation in Lebanon and Israel'*

## Humanitarian updates

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- France announced it will host an international ministerial conference focused on the political and humanitarian situation in Lebanon, on 24 October, <sup>s6(a)</sup>

## MFAT Assessment

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s6(a)

## New Zealand Consular Interests

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### *Lebanon*

- The New Zealand Embassy in Cairo contacted all 8 groups who have said they are remaining in Lebanon (the weekly "check-in" call). None are actively seeking to leave. The Embassy had one new registrant overnight on Safetravel, who is known to groups the embassy is already in contact with; the new registrant confirmed today they do not want to leave. Our Embassy will continue working with two existing registrants who are not able to leave <sup>s6(a)</sup>, and/or waiting on passports.

## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 11 October 2024

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### Media Lines

#### Israeli attacks on UN Peacekeepers

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by reports of deliberate attacks on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.
- Any deliberate targeting of UN peacekeepers is a violation of international law.
- We strongly urge the relevant parties to respect the neutrality of the UN and the mandate of the UN forces on the ground.
- The parties must re-commit to and implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which calls for a full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the disarmament of armed groups including Hezbollah.
- UN peacekeeping missions including the UN Interim Force in Lebanon and the UN Truce Supervision Organisation are critical in playing a stabilising role in mitigating the risk of further escalation in the region. Their good offices must be part of diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions.

#### Israel takes retaliatory action against Iran

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Iran] Staff and dependant movements are a MFAT operational issue. We do not comment on staff movements. MFAT is continuing to monitor developments closely.*
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Israel] New Zealand does not have an embassy in Israel.*

#### Israel – Hezbollah Escalations

- A regional war would have disastrous consequences for the Middle East and especially for civilians across the region.
- The violence and loss of life in Lebanon and Israel is horrific. This takes us in the opposite direction of where we need to be headed. It is critical all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation. Steps must be taken to promote stability and reduce tensions.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.

- We supported the ceasefire proposal by the US, France, and others. We reiterate the call on all parties, including the Governments of Israel and Lebanon, to agree to a ceasefire. Diplomacy can work where there is political will.

### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- With MFAT support, all New Zealanders who have sought MFAT's assistance to depart, and who are able to travel, have now left Lebanon.
- New Zealanders who wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **30 in Lebanon** (though this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), **100 in Israel**, **38 in Iran**.

### [If raised: UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza]

- UNRWA provides essential assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- New Zealand provided \$1 million to UNRWA in the 2023/24 financial year.
- We are concerned about Israeli legislation under consideration that would limit UNRWA's ability to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- UN Agencies, including UNRWA, have remained central to the humanitarian response in Gaza and to supporting Palestinian refugees in the region. Its mandate has been agreed by UN member states. Other UN Agencies are not as well positioned to assist.
- The UN system must be allowed to do the job given to it by UN member states.
- Israel has a choice: it can work with fellow UN member states to help UNRWA improve, or it can continue to be obstructionist and stand alone.
- *[If raised: Will New Zealand continue to fund UNRWA]:* Officials will provide advice to Ministers on the option of future support to UNRWA later this year.

### Latest Developments

- **UNIFIL headquarters and positions were repeatedly hit by the IDF in the last 24 hours.** An observation tower was directly hit by an IDF tank, injuring two Indonesian peacekeepers.
- **UNIFIL has publicly described the attacks as “direct” and “deliberate”** and says any deliberate attack on peacekeepers is a violation of international law.
- s6(a)
- The strikes take place following an Israeli request to UNIFIL for UN peacekeepers to withdraw to at least 5km from the Lebanon/Israel border. UNIFIL refused this request as being contrary to their mandate as set by UN member states.



s6(a)

- **Hezbollah has fired 40 missiles into Israel.** Most were intercepted by Israel's missile defence system.
- **Five health workers were killed in an air strike in the southern Lebanese town of Derdghaiya** last night. This brings the total number of health workers killed to at least 115 since the start of the Israeli operation in Lebanon last month.
- **IDF confirms strikes in Beirut and southern Lebanon overnight.** The IDF said it "struck multiple weapons storage facilities" in the Dahieh area of Beirut. Two Hezbollah commanders responsible for missile attacks on northern Israel were also "eliminated" in the strikes, the IDF said.
- **An Israeli air strike on a school in Gaza housing displaced families in Deir al-Balah killed 28 and injured 54.** The IDF said that Hamas operatives were using the compound prior to carrying out what it described as a "precise strike".
- **Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet) and Israeli Police have arrested a five-man ISIS cell** in the Israeli-Arab town of Tayibe. The cell was preparing to carry out an attack on the Azrieli Tower and a shopping mall in Tel Aviv possibly using a large car bomb.
- **Israel has carried out strikes on Hassia city in Syria's Homs province overnight.**
- **The Conflict in Lebanon has now forced 1.2 million people from their homes.** Lebanon's humanitarian needs are "huge", and the situation is "getting worse by the day" amid a displacement crisis caused by Israel's war against Hezbollah, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- On Wednesday **President Biden held a "direct" 30-minute phone call with Netanyahu**, their first in almost two months, to discuss Israel's planned response to an Iranian ballistic missile attack. Biden affirmed his ironclad commitment to Israel's security, emphasised the need for a "diplomatic arrangement to safely return both Lebanese and Israeli civilians to their homes on both sides of the Blue Line" and emphasised the need to minimise harm to civilians, particularly the densely populated areas of Beirut.
- **Legislation is expected to pass the Knesset on Tuesday.** The real implications of the legislation are unclear, but it is anticipated that it will make it near impossible for UNRWA to operate in the oPT and work with Israel. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

*For further information, please see the following formal messages:*

*ANK: 11 October - ISRAEL - HAMAS - HEZBOLLAH: ISRAEL FIRES DIRECTLY AT UNIFIL AND OTHER UN POSITIONS IN LEBANON*

*TEH: 11 October - s6(a)*

MFAT Assessment

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s6(a)

New Zealand Consular Interests

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*Lebanon*

- No new registrations today. A bi-weekly SafeTravel message was sent to all registrants in Lebanon (30) on NZT Thursday advising those who wished to depart to contact MFAT. The message also noted that <sup>s6(a)</sup>
- s6(b)(i)

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)  
**To:**

**Cc:**

**Subject:** Middle East Tensions: Update from MFAT: 12 October

**Date:** Saturday, 12 October 2024 9:38:01 am

**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[SitRep Middle East Tensions - 11 October 2024.pdf](#) Attachment is released earlier in this PDF.

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[RESTRICTED]

Hi all

A short update this morning, related to reports overnight of a further Israeli strike on UN premises in Lebanon:

- The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) confirmed in a statement that its headquarters in southern Lebanon's Naqoura was hit by explosions for the second time in 48 hours, injuring two peacekeepers. The two wounded soldiers are believed to be members of the Sri Lankan battalion. Reports indicate IDF fired an artillery shell at the main entrance of the UNIFIL headquarters.
- The Leaders of Spain, France and Italy (the largest European contributors to UNIFIL personnel) issued a joint statement condemning the attacks as "unjustifiable" and constituting a "serious violation of the obligations of Israel" under humanitarian international law. They called for an immediate ceasefire and said they counted on "Israel's commitment to the security of UN and bilateral peacekeeping missions in Lebanon as well as international organisations active in the region".

Existing media lines provided in yesterday's SitRep (**attached**) remain fit-for-purpose, reproduced here for ease:

#### **Israeli attacks on UN Peacekeepers**

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by reports of deliberate attacks on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.
- Any deliberate targeting of UN peacekeepers is a violation of international law.
- We strongly urge the relevant parties to respect the neutrality of the UN and the mandate of the UN forces on the ground.
- The parties must re-commit to and implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which calls for a full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the disarmament of armed groups including Hezbollah.
- UN peacekeeping missions including the UN Interim Force in Lebanon and the UN Truce Supervision Organisation are critical in playing a stabilising role in mitigating the risk of further escalation in the region. Their good offices must be part of diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions.

s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Senior Policy Officer**

Middle East and Africa Division

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade | Manatū Aorere

**M** s9(2)(a)

**E** s9(2)(g)(ii)

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## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 14 October 2024

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### Recommended X Post

As requested by OMFA we provided a draft X post below.

#### Recommended X Post

*New Zealand is alarmed at injuries to UN peacekeepers and damage to UN facilities in Lebanon caused by the Israel Defence Force as recently as yesterday. Any targeting of UN peacekeepers is a violation of international law and is completely unacceptable. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon and the UN Truce Supervision Organisation play a critical stabilising role in the region and must be part of efforts to reduce tensions.*

*New Zealand strongly supports the UN Secretary General and UN peacekeepers. Israel's actions undermine the United Nations' ability to carry out its mandate, which includes mediating conflicts and providing humanitarian support. The UN system must be allowed to do the jobs entrusted to them by the UN Security Council and Member States.*

### Media Lines

#### Israeli attacks on UN Peacekeepers

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by reports of deliberate attacks by Israel on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.
- Any deliberate targeting of UN peacekeepers is a violation of international law and is completely unacceptable.
- We strongly urge the relevant parties to respect the neutrality of the UN and the mandate of UN forces on the ground.
- The parties must re-commit to and implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which calls for a full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, the withdrawal beyond the Litani River, and the disarmament of armed groups including Hezbollah.
- UN peacekeeping missions including the UN Interim Force in Lebanon and the UN Truce Supervision Organisation are critical in playing a stabilising role in mitigating the risk of further escalation in the region. Their good offices must be part of diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions.
- *[If raised that Israel has asked UNFIL peacekeeping to evacuate from southern Lebanon]:* Individual countries cannot dictate the terms of UN peacekeeping operations especially within another sovereign state. Only the UN Security Council can change the mandate of peacekeeping missions.

#### Israel takes retaliatory action against Iran

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.

- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Iran] Staff and dependant movements are a MFAT operational issue. We do not comment on staff movements. MFAT is continuing to monitor developments closely.*
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Israel] New Zealand does not have an embassy in Israel.*

### Israel – Hezbollah Escalations

- A regional war would have disastrous consequences for the Middle East and especially for civilians across the region.
- The violence and loss of life in Lebanon and Israel is horrific. This takes us in the opposite direction of where we need to be headed. It is critical all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation. Steps must be taken to promote stability and reduce tensions.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- We supported the ceasefire proposal by the US, France, and others. We reiterate the call on all parties, including the Governments of Israel and Lebanon, to agree to a ceasefire. Diplomacy can work where there is political will.

### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- With MFAT support, all New Zealanders who have sought MFAT's assistance to depart, and who are able to travel, have now left Lebanon.
- New Zealanders who wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **31 in Lebanon** (though this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), **64<sup>i</sup> in Israel**, **36 in Iran**.

### [If raised: UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza]

- UNRWA provides essential assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- New Zealand provided \$1 million to UNRWA in the 2023/24 financial year.
- We are concerned about Israeli legislation under consideration that would limit UNRWA's ability to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories.

- UN Agencies, including UNRWA, have remained central to the humanitarian response in Gaza and to supporting Palestinian refugees in the region. Its mandate has been agreed by UN member states. Other UN Agencies are not as well positioned to assist.
- The UN system must be allowed to do the job given to it by UN member states.
- Israel has a choice: it can work with fellow UN member states to help UNRWA improve, or it can continue to be obstructionist and stand alone.
- *[If raised: Will New Zealand continue to fund UNRWA]:* Officials will provide advice to Ministers on the option of future support to UNRWA later this year.

## Latest Developments

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- Israeli PM Netanyahu told the UN Secretary-General over the weekend "to get UNIFIL forces out of harm's way"; saying "I appeal to the UN Secretary General; Your refusal to evacuate UNIFIL soldiers has turned them into hostages of Hezbollah." UNIFIL has refused, stating that it will remain in southern Lebanon, as set out in its mandate.
- Since 1 October, UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon have stated that seven of their posts, including their headquarters have been damaged due to conflict between the IDF and Hezbollah.
- 5 UNIFIL peacekeepers have been injured by IDF activities between 10-12 October.
- s6(a)
- s6(a)
- s6(a)
- In response to these attacks on UN peacekeepers by Israel we recommend that MFA issue an X post (see draft above). MFAT officials in Wellington will also meet with the Israeli Ambassador today to register our concern with Israel's actions.
- **A drone strike from Hezbollah reportedly hit Israel** Sunday night local time, with Israeli media reporting 20 – 40 injured; the drone hit an area known as Benyamina (about 40km south of Haifa).
- **The Pentagon confirmed on Sunday that the U.S. will deploy a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to Israel** to support the defense of Israel from attacks by Iran and Iranian-aligned militias.
- **Large blasts shook Beirut over the weekend as Israeli airstrikes targeted Hezbollah leadership** in a central Beirut neighbourhood previously considered a "safe" area s6(a)
- Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati urged the United Nations to pass a resolution calling for an "immediate" ceasefire between Israel and the Hezbollah. Mikati emphasized his

government's commitment to deploy the Lebanese Armed Forces on the border with Israel as part of a cessation of hostilities and said Hezbollah agreed on the matter.

• s6(a), s6(b)(i)

The Wall Street Journal has reported that Sinwar has ordered Hamas commanders in the West Bank to renew suicide attacks in Israel.

• The **Hamas run Ministry of Health in Gaza reports 52 dead and 128 injured** on Sunday in Gaza.

• The World Food Programme (WFP) warned that escalating violence in northern Gaza is "having a disastrous impact on food security for thousands of Palestinian families" and that **no food aid has entered northern Gaza since 1 October**.

• **The Knesset is scheduled to vote on anti-UNRWA legislation on 28 October 2024** that is expected to pass (the vote will not occur on 15 October as reported in PHM's FM of 11 October 2024). The legislation as currently drafted would prohibit contact between Israeli officials and UNRWA. s9(2)(g)(i)

• The European Union issued a statement Sunday 13 October expressing 'its grave concern' for the draft legislation. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

• s6(b)(i)

MFAT Assessment

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s6(a)

i The drop in registered New Zealanders in Israel (100 on Friday) likely reflects lapsed registrations in SafeTravel not a significant drop in actual numbers. New Zealanders registered as resident in a country are required to review their registration annually. If not renewed, they are no longer recorded as being in country.



## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 17 October 2024

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### Media Lines

#### Israeli attacks on UN Peacekeepers

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by reports of deliberate attacks by Israel on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.
- We have raised these concerns directly with the Israeli Foreign Ministry.
- Any deliberate targeting of UN peacekeepers is a violation of international law and is completely unacceptable.
- We strongly urge the relevant parties to respect the neutrality of the UN and the mandate of UN forces on the ground.
- The parties must re-commit to and implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which calls for a full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, the withdrawal beyond the Litani River, and the disarmament of armed groups including Hezbollah.
- UN peacekeeping missions including the UN Interim Force in Lebanon and the UN Truce Supervision Organisation are critical in playing a stabilising role in mitigating the risk of further escalation in the region. Their good offices must be part of diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions.
- *[If raised that Israel has asked UNFIL peacekeeping to evacuate from southern Lebanon]:* Individual countries cannot dictate the terms of UN peacekeeping operations especially within another sovereign state. Only the UN Security Council can change the mandate of peacekeeping missions.

#### Israel takes retaliatory action against Iran

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Iran]* Staff and dependant movements are a MFAT operational issue. We do not comment on staff movements. MFAT is continuing to monitor developments closely.
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Israel]* New Zealand does not have an embassy in Israel.

**Israel – Hezbollah Escalations**

- A regional war would have disastrous consequences for the Middle East and especially for civilians across the region.
- The violence and loss of life in Lebanon and Israel is horrific. This takes us in the opposite direction of where we need to be headed. It is critical all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation. Steps must be taken to promote stability and reduce tensions.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- We supported the ceasefire proposal by the US, France, and others. We reiterate the call on all parties, including the Governments of Israel and Lebanon, to agree to a ceasefire. Diplomacy can work where there is political will.

**Consular**

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- With MFAT support, all New Zealanders who have sought MFAT's assistance to depart, and who are able to travel, have now left Lebanon.
- New Zealanders who wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **30 in Lebanon** (though this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), **71<sup>i</sup> in Israel, 32 in Iran.**

**[If raised: UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza]**

- UNRWA provides essential assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- New Zealand provided \$1 million to UNRWA in the 2023/24 financial year.
- We are concerned about Israeli legislation under consideration that would limit UNRWA's ability to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- We have raised these concerns directly with the Israeli Foreign Ministry as New Zealand and together with several other likeminded countries.
- UN Agencies, including UNRWA, have remained central to the humanitarian response in Gaza and to supporting Palestinian refugees in the region. Its mandate has been agreed by UN member states. Other UN Agencies are not as well positioned to assist.
- The UN system must be allowed to do the job given to it by UN member states.
- Israel has a choice: it can work with fellow UN member states to help UNRWA improve, or it can continue to be obstructionist and stand alone.
- *[If raised: Will New Zealand continue to fund UNRWA]:* Officials will provide advice to Ministers on the option of future support to UNRWA later this year.

## Latest Developments

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### Gaza

- The **US has sent a letter** signed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin **to Israel demanding Israel take steps within 30 days to improve the dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza or risk the supply of US weapons to Israel.** The letter was leaked to journalists and lays out proscriptive demands focused on three categories: Increasing the supply of humanitarian aid by the start of winter; facilitating the aid delivery route through Jordan; and ending the "isolation" of northern Gaza. The letter said Israel must enable the entry of at least 350 aid trucks into Gaza each day through all four major crossings controlled by the IDF.
- Israel continues its strikes in northern Gaza with reports of 65 killed and 140 injured over the past 24 hours (15-16 October 2024).
- Humanitarian aid has arrived in northern Gaza for the first time in two weeks. The UN reports that escalating violence and access constraints in the north of Gaza have had "a disastrous impact on food security" where at least three quarters of the population have been relying on food aid to survive.
- On the second day of the current polio campaign in Gaza, UNRWA reports that it has vaccinated over 64,000 children and in addition, administered 51,000V Vitamin A doses.

### Israel

- Israeli media is reporting that **Israel will look to close five government ministries as well as some diplomatic missions abroad** as part of a Treasury plan to get Israel's ballooning deficit in check amid the continued economic strains on the Israeli economy of the ongoing conflict s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- A source told CNN, that Israel's plan to respond to Iran's attack is ready. **US officials told CNN they expect Israel's counterattack on Iran will come before US election day.**

### Lebanon

- The **mayor of the southern Lebanese city of Nabatieh, was killed in an Israeli strike** on the city's municipality building. Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati condemned the strike.
- The **displacement crisis in Lebanon continues.** A quarter of Lebanon is now under Israeli military evacuation orders, and the Government of Lebanon estimates that 1.2 million people have been displaced.
- The UN report that humanitarian conditions in Lebanon are poor. There are currently 1,059 government-assigned collective shelters in the country hosting over 188,146 people. Of those, 876 shelters have reached maximum capacity. Of 207 primary health-care centres in conflict areas, 100 are now closed due to the escalation of violence.
- **Israel continues airstrikes on Beirut** shortly after the US said publicly that it opposes the wide scope of Israeli air assault.
- Hezbollah said it sent "barrages" of rockets into several areas of northern Israel overnight. The IDF did not report any injuries and the extent of the damage is unclear.

**International**

- French President Emmanuel **Macron accused Israel of “indiscriminate” strikes in Lebanon and Gaza, and of targeting UN peacekeepers**, according to the French readout of yesterday’s phone call between Macron and Netanyahu.<sup>s6(a)</sup>
- **Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi is visiting Jordan, Egypt and Türkiye.**

**Consular**

- Ten groups of New Zealanders in Lebanon were contacted in the last 24 hours –nine groups require no assistance at this time. One group are seeking financial and logistical assistance to evacuate (still in process of passports renewal). Officials are working to assist this group.
- A significant number of airlines have now suspended operations into Israel. Airlines that have suspended flights include United, Delta, American Airlines, KLM, Lufthansa, Air Canada, Ryanair, Emirates and Cathay Pacific. United and American Airlines have cancelled flights to Tel Aviv until March 2025. Other airlines continue to operate for the time being including: FlyDubai, Etihad, TAROM, Arkia, El Al, Hainan Airlines, TUS, Bluebird Airways, Corendon Airlines, Uzbekistan Airways, Electra Airways, GullivAir, FlyOne, Ethiopian Airlines, Bees, as well Sky.

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i The drop in registered New Zealanders in Israel (100 on Friday) likely reflects lapsed registrations in SafeTravel not a significant drop in actual numbers. New Zealanders registered as resident in a country are required to review their registration annually. If not renewed, they are no longer recorded as being in country.

Out of scope

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**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Sent:** Friday, October 18, 2024 11:13 AM

**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

DCE s9(2)(g)(ii)

<media@mfat.govt.nz>, s9(2)(g)(ii)

MEDIA

**Subject:** Death of Hamas Leader Yahya Sinwar : MEA quick take: 18 October

Kia ora korua

MEA's quick take on Hamas Leader Yahya Sinwar's reported death is below.

Have a good weekend

s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(a)

\*\*

### Situation and MFAT assessment

Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was reportedly killed by the Israeli Defence Force overnight. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

Should we be asked about Sinwar's death we provide contingency messaging below. <sup>s9(2)(g)(i)</sup>

### Contingency talking points

- Hamas committed appalling acts of violence and terrorism under Sinwar's leadership, including the horrific 7 October terrorist attack against Israel.
- His death is an opportunity to release the hostages, agree a ceasefire and enable full humanitarian access.
- Palestinian civilians must not continue to pay the price for this conflict.

### Social media

- None proposed; <sup>s9(2)(g)(i)</sup>

### Partner reactions

- Canada ([Trudeau](#) + [Joly](#)): "...Sinwar's death ends a reign of terror. Hamas must lay down its arms, release the hostages and play no future role in the governance of Gaza..."
- UK ([Lammy](#)): *Sinwar was a brutal terrorist responsible for the horror of October 7th. My thoughts this evening are with his victims and the families of all those who suffered the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust, and the hostages who must still be released. Now is the time for a ceasefire which leads to a new chapter in the Middle East*
- Australia ([Albanese](#)): *Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was a terrorist and the architect of the atrocities committed on October 7. He was an enemy of the Israeli people and an enemy of peace-loving people everywhere. His death is a significant moment and can be a vital turning point in this devastating conflict. Australia joins with the international community in renewing our call for the return of the hostages, urgent humanitarian support for civilians in Gaza and a ceasefire that will break the cycle of violence and put the region on the path to an enduring two state solution.*
- US (Biden): This is a good day for Israel, for the United States, and for the world
- US (Harris): Israel has a right to defend itself, and the threat Hamas poses to Israel must be eliminated. This moment gives us an opportunity to finally end the war in Gaza
- US (State Dept): "we now see an opportunity [for a ceasefire] with him having been removed from the battlefield, being removed from the leadership of Hamas, and we want to seize that opportunity"

## Situation Update: Middle East Tensions, 21 October 2024

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### Media Lines

#### [If Raised: Media Reports on leaked US intelligence documents]

- We do not comment on intelligence matters.
- What I can say is that our approach to the conflict in the Middle East has been consistent. We continue to call for a ceasefire, in Gaza and in Lebanon and reiterate that all actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.

#### [If Raised: Yahya Sinwar death]

- Hamas committed appalling acts of violence and terrorism under Sinwar's leadership, including the horrific 7 October terrorist attack against Israel.
- With his death we encourage all parties to recommit to a process to release the hostages, agree a ceasefire and enable full humanitarian access.
- Palestinian civilians must not continue to pay the price for this conflict.
- *[If asked why New Zealand did not make a statement when all other Five Eyes countries did?]* New Zealand's policy on the Israel-Hamas conflict is clear and consistent. We do not comment on every development.

#### Israel takes retaliatory action against Iran

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East - civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Iran]* Staff and dependant movements are a MFAT operational issue. We do not comment on staff movements. MFAT is continuing to monitor developments closely.
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Israel]* New Zealand does not have an embassy in Israel.

#### Israeli attacks on UN Peacekeepers

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by reports of deliberate attacks by Israel on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.
- We have raised these concerns directly with Israeli officials and the Israel's Ambassador in New Zealand.

- Any deliberate targeting of UN peacekeepers is a violation of international law and is completely unacceptable.
- We strongly urge the relevant parties to respect the neutrality of the UN and the mandate of UN forces on the ground.
- The parties must re-commit to and implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which calls for a full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, the withdrawal beyond the Litani River, and the disarmament of armed groups including Hezbollah.
- UN peacekeeping missions including the UN Interim Force in Lebanon and the UN Truce Supervision Organisation are critical in playing a stabilising role in mitigating the risk of further escalation in the region. Their good offices must be part of diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions.
- *[If raised that Israel has asked UNFIL peacekeeping to evacuate from southern Lebanon]:* Individual countries cannot dictate the terms of UN peacekeeping operations especially within another sovereign state. Only the UN Security Council can change the mandate of peacekeeping missions.

#### Israel – Hezbollah Escalations

- A regional war would have disastrous consequences for the Middle East and especially for civilians across the region.
- The violence and loss of life in Lebanon and Israel is horrific. This takes us in the opposite direction of where we need to be headed. It is critical all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation. Steps must be taken to promote stability and reduce tensions.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- We supported the ceasefire proposal by the US, France, and others. We reiterate the call on all parties, including the Governments of Israel and Lebanon, to agree to a ceasefire. Diplomacy can work where there is political will.

#### Consular

- Our advice to New Zealanders remains clear and simple – do not travel to Lebanon, Israel or Iran, and if you are in those countries, leave now.
- With MFAT support, most New Zealanders who have sought MFAT's assistance to depart, and who are able to travel, have now left Lebanon. We are working with a small number of New Zealanders who still require assistance to depart.
- New Zealanders who wish to remain in Lebanon should shelter in a safe place, follow the advice of local authorities, and register on [SafeTravel](#) if they haven't already. SafeTravel is the main mechanism MFAT uses to communicate with New Zealanders in a crisis.
- Any New Zealander needing urgent consular assistance should call the 24/7 emergency consular assistance call centre on +64 99 20 20 20.
- New Zealanders currently registered on SafeTravel: **30 in Lebanon** (though this figure includes New Zealanders that have now departed), **71 in Israel, 31 in Iran.**



**[If raised: UNRWA operations in the West Bank and Gaza]**

- UNRWA provides essential assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- New Zealand provided \$1 million to UNRWA in the 2023/24 financial year.
- We are concerned about Israeli legislation under consideration that would limit UNRWA's ability to operate in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- We have raised these concerns directly with the Israeli Ambassador and Israeli officials, as New Zealand and together with several other likeminded countries.
- UN Agencies, including UNRWA, have remained central to the humanitarian response in Gaza and to supporting Palestinian refugees in the region. Its mandate has been agreed by UN member states. Other UN Agencies are not as well positioned to assist.
- The UN system must be allowed to do the job given to it by UN member states.
- Israel has a choice: it can work with fellow UN member states to help UNRWA improve, or it can continue to be obstructionist and stand alone.
- *[If raised: Will New Zealand continue to fund UNRWA]:* Officials will provide advice to Ministers on the option of future support to UNRWA later this year.

## Latest Developments

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### **Media Reports on leaked US intelligence documents**

- Over the weekend, media reported that two alleged US intelligence documents about Israeli plans for an attack on Iran were leaked.
- The Pentagon and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence did not comment "but did not dispute their authenticity." The US is investigating the leaks.
- The leaked documents are reported to be marked "top secret, no foreigners" although there are indications that parts of the document may be seen by "Five Eyes" partners.

### **Drone launched towards Netanyahu's home**

- A explosive drone was launched towards Netanyahu's home in the northern Israeli town of Caesarea on Saturday.
- Netanyahu's spokesman, Omer Dostri said Netanyahu and his wife were not in the vicinity and there were no casualties.
- Netanyahu posted on X "The attempt by Iran's proxy Hezbollah to assassinate me and my wife today was a grave mistake. This will not deter me or the State of Israel from continuing our just war against our enemies in order to secure our future." Adding "Israel is determined to achieve all our war objectives and change the security reality in our region for generations to come."

### **Gaza**

- Gaza's Ministry of Health are reporting at least 87 people have been killed and more than 40 people injured after an Israeli air attack in Beit Lehiya in northern Gaza.
- The UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine Francesca Albanese, said over the weekend that "in Gaza, the collective shame of the century continues unabated and unstoppable, in defiance of every norm of international law", calling Israel's actions in Gaza "a disgraceful testament to our global failure to protect basic human rights".

### **Lebanon**

- Multiple Israeli airstrikes continued across Lebanon. Israel announced it would begin targeting Hezbollah's financial assets and institutions, moving beyond current targeting of military assets and installations.
- This comes after Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said that it was now time to move from "defeating the enemy to destroying it".

### **Diplomatic Efforts**

- s6(b)(i)
- According to media reports today, Israel's Foreign Minister has announced that the Foreign Ministry will **begin** legal and diplomatic action against France for its decision to ban Israel from an arms fair in Paris.

**UNRWA – Knesset Legislation**

- As mentioned in previous sit reps the Knesset is scheduled to vote on anti-UNRWA legislation on 28 October 2024.
- s6(a), s6(b)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act

Out of scope

**From:** s9(2)(g)(ii)  
**Date:** Saturday, 26 Oct 2024 at 1:25 PM  
**To:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

**Cc:** s9(2)(g)(ii)

<[DCE@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:DCE@mfat.govt.nz)>, s9(2)(g)(ii)

DCE

**Subject:** Middle East Tensions: Update from MFAT: 26 October: Israeli retaliation against Iran  
[SEC=RESTRICTED]

[RESTRICTED]

Hi s9(2)(g)(ii)

Israel's retaliation against Iran occurred in the past hour (around 2am Saturday morning Tehran time). An update on what we currently know, and media lines, set out below. We will update further as necessary.

**Israel strikes military targets**

Iran's state media has reported strikes on "several military bases in the west and southwest of Tehran". The scale and exact targets are not yet clear. Israel's strikes do appear limited to military targets, but the targets are close enough to Tehran to be highly visible to the population. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

### **Post security**

s6(a), s9(2)(c)

s6(b)(i)

### **Consular**

There are 31 New Zealanders registered in Iran. SafeTravel messages have consistently underlined the seriousness of the security situation, the risk of further escalation at any moment, and reiterated MFAT's advice to not travel/leave now.

### **Media lines:**

- New Zealand is gravely concerned by ongoing retaliatory actions by Israel and Iran.
- Retaliation significantly increases the risk of a regional war, which would have catastrophic consequences in the Middle East – civilians are already enduring intolerable suffering while conflict continues.
- Israel has a right to defend itself within the limits set under international law.
- Acts of retaliation and reprisal do not constitute self-defence under international law.
- All actors, all the time, need to respect international humanitarian law and protect civilians.
- It is critical that all actors in the region prioritise de-escalation.
- We call on all parties to break the cycle of retaliation to prevent a wider regional conflict.
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Iran]* Staff and dependant movements are a MFAT operational issue. We do not comment on staff movements. MFAT is continuing to monitor developments closely.
- *[If asked on voluntary evacuation of MFAT dependants from Israel]* New Zealand does not

have an embassy in Israel.

s9(2)(g)(i)

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