



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Aorere, Take Waonga, Take Tauhoko

54th Parliament

April 2025

**Petition of Geoffrey Mortlock: Impose
sanctions on Israel until it withdraws from all
Palestinian territory**

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Tim van de Molen, Chairperson

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Petition of Geoffrey Mortlock

Recommendation

The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee has considered the petition of Geoffrey Mortlock—Impose sanctions on Israel until it withdraws from all Palestinian territory—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request to impose sanctions on Israel

The petition was presented to the House on 19 November 2024. It requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to impose sanctions on Israel (including sanctions on settlers in the West Bank) until Israel has withdrawn from all Palestinian territory and it has reverted to the borders established for Israel under the UN Mandate of 1947 (Resolution 181).

Comments from the petitioner

The petitioner, Geoffrey Mortlock, opposes the Israeli occupation of Palestine, saying that it is “illegal and immoral”. He submitted that it has deprived Palestinians of establishing their own country, making it impossible to implement the two-state solution envisaged by United Nations Resolution 181(II).¹ In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly decided to partition Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, with Jerusalem placed under a special international regime. The petitioner considers that the situation in Palestine has profoundly deteriorated since attacks by Hamas on Israel in October 2023. He said that Israel’s response to those attacks has been “grossly disproportionate”.

The petitioner requests that Parliament impose sanctions on Israel, including its ministers, senior military and government officials, and Israelis who occupy Palestinian land. He considers that sanctions will incentivise Israel to take action to achieve a two-state solution. Mr Mortlock submitted that New Zealand should not wait for a United Nations sanction process to be undertaken and should instead impose sanctions in collaboration with other countries. He said that any sanctions against Israel would be justified on the basis that New Zealand supports respect for international law and opposes crimes against humanity, the dispossession of people from their land, and the creation of apartheid states.

Government response to the situation in Palestine

In December 2024, we heard from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) as part of the 2023/24 annual reviews. We discussed the conflict in Palestine.² MFAT emphasised that New Zealand has long criticised Israel for its occupation of the Palestinian territories and noted that this view is the foundation of New Zealand’s policy for the region.

¹ [Read the resolution on the United Nations website here.](#)

² [Hansard transcript, 2023/24 Annual review of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, pp 45–47.](#)

Sanctions

During that hearing, we noted that sanctions were imposed on Russia (in response to the conflict in Ukraine) to address a threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We asked whether the ministry has considered a similar response to Israel's occupation of Palestine. MFAT said that the two situations are very different: Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a breach of the United Nations Charter and has been described as "illegal".³ It told us that sanctions are most effective when numerous countries impose them (as was the case with sanctions against Russia). We heard that a "vanishingly small" number of countries are sanctioning Israel and therefore sanctions would not be effective.

Addressing immediate needs

MFAT told us that it is focusing on the immediate needs in the region which include a ceasefire, the unconditional release of hostages, and a greater flow of humanitarian supplies into Gaza. New Zealand continues to provide humanitarian support in response to the Israel-Hamas conflict. Contributions totalling \$29.5 million have been provided to the World Food Programme, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the UN 2720 Mechanism for Gaza.

MFAT said that, for change to occur in the region, both parties need to be willing to negotiate. At our hearing, MFAT said that was not evident. We note that a ceasefire deal was agreed between Israel and Hamas in January 2025. The Government welcomed the ceasefire and stated that the terms of the deal "must now be implemented fully".⁴ On 20 March 2025, the Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed New Zealand's position: it wants an end to the war, and a permanent ceasefire now.⁵

Our response to the petition

We thank the petitioner for providing a written submission and for raising this issue for our consideration. We appreciate that there is considerable public concern about this issue, and a growing sense of urgency that the New Zealand Government address it.

We wish to emphasise that the situation in Palestine is complex and has continued to evolve over time, including since this petition was lodged. We agree with the Government that any steps taken relating to this conflict must be effective and informed by careful consideration of ever-changing information. We support MFAT's focus on the immediate needs in the region and consider these priorities are important steps to resolving an intricate problem.

We will continue to interact with MFAT in our upcoming rounds of financial scrutiny.⁶ MFAT also provides up-to-date information on its website regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict.⁷ We encourage the petitioner to stay informed about New Zealand's ongoing response to events in the Middle East through these channels.

³ [Media release, New Zealand stands with Ukraine, three years after illegal Russian invasion.](#)

⁴ [Media release, NZ welcomes Israel-Hamas ceasefire deal.](#)

⁵ [See more about the Minister's recent comments on Radio New Zealand's website.](#)

⁶ [Read more about this committee's past and current business on the Parliament website.](#)

⁷ [Read more about the Israel-Hamas conflict on MFAT's website.](#)

New Zealand Labour Party differing view

The New Zealand Labour Party believes the petition requesting sanctions should be endorsed. Details as to the scope and terms of such sanctions should be urgently developed by the Government with advice from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand differing view

The Green Party supports implementing sanctions on Israel in response to Israel's unlawful occupation of Palestine.

We agree with the petitioner that sanctions are necessary to incentivise Israel to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territory. Sanctions and international pressure are necessary to ensure that all parties are willing to negotiate a peaceful resolution. Material interventions are necessary to put the Government's words into action.

To that end, the Green Party has proposed legislation in the name of Chlöe Swarbrick to implement sanctions on Israel in response to their unlawful occupation of Palestine, modelled after the Russia Sanctions Act 2022. This bill currently has the support of 55 Members of Parliament, and we are seeking more.

We fundamentally disagree with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade that the situations in Palestine and Ukraine are so different that sanctions would not be an appropriate response to Israel's occupation of Palestine. We particularly disagree with MFAT's assertion, as noted in this report, that Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been described as "illegal", and Israel's occupation of Palestine has not.

- The United Nations General Assembly has recognised that Israeli settlements and their associated regime were established and are maintained in violation of international law.
- The General Assembly has recognised that Israel's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory amount to annexation.
- The General Assembly has recognised that Israel's efforts to impose Israeli sovereignty over occupied territory, by force, constitutes a violation of the United Nations charter.
- The General Assembly has called for all states to implement sanctions in response to Israel's unlawful presence in the occupied Palestinian territory—just as the General Assembly did in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

MFAT's failure to recognise the illegality of Israel's occupation of Palestine and the failure to recognise the similarities between the occupation of Palestine and the invasion of Ukraine are disappointing. The greatest difference is only the total failure of the international community to condemn and stop Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine like they rightly condemned and responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Green Party stands in solidarity with Palestinians under Israeli occupation, and we wholeheartedly support this petition.

We recommend that Parliament pass legislation to implement sanctions on Israel, just as Parliament did in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was referred to us on 13 February 2025. We met between 19 February and 10 April 2025 to consider it. We received a written submission from the petitioner.

Committee members

Tim van de Molen (Chairperson)
Tim Costley
Hon Peeni Henare (until 12 March 2025)
Dana Kirkpatrick
Laura McClure
Hon Damien O'Connor
Hon David Parker (from 12 March 2025)
Teana Tuiono

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to this petition are [available on the Parliament website.](#)