

4 July 2022

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OIA 28022

Tēnā koe Andrew Li

I refer to your email of 23 April 2022 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

On 0855 Friday, a message was publicly posted on Twitter by the official MFATNZ Twitter account, suggesting that the Palestinian victims were to blame for the repeated terrorist attacks by the Zionist entity on the al-Aqsa Mosque, and that Palestinians were somehow obliged to refrain from responding against terror attacks launched by Zionists on the third holiest site in Islam and the Gaza concentration camp.

<https://twitter.com/MFATNZ/status/1517245771367673856>

I am requesting:

- 1) All internal notes and communications internally within MFAT and externally with the likes of Ms Mahuta which related to the production of this message.*
- 2) All internal notes and communications internally within MFAT and externally with the likes of Ms Mahuta which related to the ongoing Zionist terrorist attacks on the Al Aqsa mosque and Gaza which escalated following the April 15 attack.*
- 3) MFAT policy, documents, and messages related to how MFAT communications should address Palestine, and the so called state of 'Israel', as well as the conflicts between the native Palestinian population of Palestine and the Zionist invaders.*

In addition to the questions above,

- 4) I am requesting the name of the individual responsible for posting the attack on the Palestinian people mentioned above:*

<https://twitter.com/MFATNZ/status/1517245771367673856>

On 12 May 2022, the deadline to provide a decision on your request was extended to 23 June 2022, when you were advised that a decision had been made on your request. Thank you for your patience while this process was completed.

Attached are the documents relevant to questions 1 and 2 of your request. Some portions of the documents are 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;
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy;

- 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.

For question 3 we are providing you a summary response to your request as provided for under section 16(1)(e) of the OIA.

3) MFAT policy, documents, and messages related to how MFAT communications should address Palestine, and the so called state of 'Israel', as well as the conflicts between the native Palestinian population of Palestine and the Zionist invaders.

New Zealand uses a range of terms, but largely uses Occupied Palestinian Territories and Palestine to refer to the region, and refers to the West Bank as such. It is well known that New Zealand shares the overwhelming view of the international community that, since 1967, Israel has been in occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and its settlements are a violation of international law. New Zealand largely uses the term 'Israeli-Palestinian conflict' to describe the conflict between these groups, though a range of terms can be used.

4) I am requesting the name of the individual responsible for posting the attack on the Palestinian people mentioned above:

The name of the employee is being withheld under section 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA. I can advise that they are a member of the Ministry's Communications and Media Division.

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

Please note that we may publish this letter (with your personal details redacted) and enclosed documents on the Ministry's website.

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: 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 or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Julie-Anne Lee
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade