

30 September 2022

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OIA 28273

Tēnā koe Andrew Li

I refer to your email dated 2 September 2022 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

I am deeply interested in the process by which you selected the five delegates, all supporters of the 'israeli' government's campaign against the indigenous native population of Palestine who, unlike 'israelis', have lived there since time immemorial, as 'expert delegates' to the 'International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance', a group that slanderously declares that anyone, including many New Zealand Jews, who does not support the 'israeli' government's crimes committed against the Palestinian people is 'anti-semitic'.

I am particularly deeply interested in why Shoshana Maasland (nee Shoshan Max, i.e. Dame Lesley Max's daughter), was considered an appropriate 'expert' to go on this junket for opponents of Palestinian self-determination. She doesn't appear to have published any academic research on the subject of the Holocaust (in common the case with the majority of other 'experts' you selected). She hasn't even published articles in non-academic publications supporting 'israel' against the Palestinian people, which is the purpose of the IHRA, as is at least the case for the likes of Paul Moon, so it is difficult to see what expert knowledge she would provide besides carrying Dame Max's bags.

I am requesting all information held by MFAT in regards the selection of these 'experts'. That should include information that MFAT employees recall from in-person or phone/internet conversations with outside groups such as the NZJC, who one presumes made the actual selection, rather than our elected government or independent public servants.

The documents released under this OIA give further detail into the selection process for the expert delegates. We have withheld some information under the following sections of the OIA:

- 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.

Where 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.

Additionally, appointing expert delegates was a necessary element of Aotearoa New Zealand becoming an Observer to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The Working Rules of the IHRA state:

“Observer Countries are asked to put together a delegation that participates in the IHRA Plenary meetings. The delegations must be headed by a senior governmental representative, e.g. with the rank of ambassador. The Head of Delegation may appoint a deputy. In addition, IHRA maintains three standing Working Groups as well as three standing Committees. An Observer Country may appoint up to six expert delegates and should appoint at least three delegates. These expert delegates can attend the meetings of those groups in an observing capacity.”

In order to designate New Zealand’s expert delegates, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Ministry) identified the following three criteria that expert delegates would need to fulfil:

- Delegates must have a demonstrated history of expertise and action of relevance to the work of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance;
- Delegates must coordinate closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade in the discharge of their duties; the Ministry reserves the right to revoke any position as a New Zealand delegate at any time; and
- Delegates must attain separate funding for their travel and associated expenses should they wish to attend any IHRA meetings in-person.

Ministry officials worked with the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand and the New Zealand Jewish Council to identify candidates who best matched these criteria. These candidates were then approved by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

To finalise their appointment as expert delegates, the candidates signed a set of conditions, which among other elements included the following elements:

- The participant will at all times be under the authority of the leader of the delegation or, in their absence, that of the deputy leader, and will comply with their instructions or with any instructions received from the New Zealand authorities.
- As a participant in an official delegation the participant will act consistently with the government’s interests as identified in the brief or by the delegation leader.

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

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

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade