

Office of Rt Hon Winston Peters

Deputy Prime Minister

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister for Racing



11 April 2024

Elise Campbell

fyi-request-25578-29453ed3@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Elise Campbell,

Thank you for your email of 31 January 2024 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

I am emailing to request correspondence between yourself and the Prime Minister's Office as well as the Ministry of Defence, relating to decisions about funding for UNRWA, specifically for the period from 24/01/2024 to 31/01/24. If there are any memoranda about phone conversations held, this would be helpful, in addition to any emails exchanged.

I am requesting this information as it appears there is a disconnect between what has been said by Prime Minister Christopher Luxon about a potential funding pause and what has been said by yourself. I am seeking clarity on how this decision was made and what parties have been involved.

On 26 February 2024, the timeframes for responding to your request were extended by an additional 30 working days due to the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request (section 15A(1)(b) of the OIA refers).

Also on 26 February 2024, we advised you that in order to assist the office to more readily respond to your request, and to avoid a refusal of your request under section 18(f) of the OIA, that the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research, we proposed a rescope of your request to:

Correspondence between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office that relates substantively to advice and decisions about funding for UNRWA, specifically for the period from 24/01/2024 to 31/01/24.

As to date we are yet to receive a reply from you, your request is refused under section 18(f) of the OIA.

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.

New Zealand has supported UNRWA since its establishment in 1949, including through engagement on its mandate and financial contributions. In the absence of a two-state solution, it is New Zealand's longstanding view that UNRWA plays a unique and essential role in ensuring the humanitarian, development, and protection needs of Palestinian refugees are met in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Under our current three-year arrangement with the Agency (2021/22-2023/24), New Zealand provides UNRWA with NZ\$1 million in funding annually to support their provision of essential humanitarian assistance for Palestinian refugees. Our next payment is due by mid-year, so we have time to consider the investigation into the serious allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the brutal 7 October 2023 Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel. This is not a pause or suspension.

New Zealand takes these allegations very seriously. It is important these allegations are properly understood and investigated urgently. We have confidence in the UN's ability to undertake this investigation and are engaging with partners on the process. We will be looking for evidence that the investigation is thorough, and that the allegations will be dealt with appropriately. We will also be looking for assurances that necessary measures are in place to guard against a recurrence.

We remain acutely aware of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the critical role of UNRWA in the response.

Regarding the Israel-Hamas conflict and the situation in Gaza, the Government's strong focus is on the protection of civilians and the urgent need to stop the violence as soon as possible. In our public statements, New Zealand has called for a humanitarian truce / humanitarian pauses in fighting and the urgent need for further steps towards a sustainable ceasefire in order to put a stop to civilian suffering as soon as possible.

New Zealand will continue to advocate strongly for improved humanitarian access at all levels, including in Prime Minister and Foreign Minister engagements, and directly with Israel. New Zealand has provided a total of NZ\$17 million in financial support to the humanitarian response and welcomed action taken by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly calling for safe, unhindered, and expanded humanitarian access.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamie Allen', with a long horizontal line above the name.

Jamie Allen
Private Secretary (Advisory/Media)