

Hon Erica Stanford

Minister of Education
Minister of Immigration



24-023

Jorja

fyi-request-25485-862f5a78@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Jorja,

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 January 2024 to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, which was transferred under section 14 of the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to my office on 5 February 2024. You requested, under the Act, the following information:

Copies of any briefings, reports, memos, or aides-memoire that have been commissioned by the Minister in relation to the conflict in Gaza since 7 October 2023

Copies of any meeting agendas, minutes, or notes regarding meetings that have been attended by the Minister in relation to the conflict in Gaza since 7 October 2023, including Agency and Officials meetings

On 5 March, my office wrote to you to advise the period of time available to make a decision on your request had been extended to 26 March 2024, under section 15A(1)(a) of the Act. This is because your request necessitated a search through a large quantity of information and meeting the original time limit would have unreasonably interfered with the operations of the offices collating the information.

I have interpreted the first part of your request as a request for any briefings, reports, memos or aides-memoire that I have requested officials provide me in relation to the conflict in Gaza since 7 October 2023. Any information that has been proactively provided to me by officials has been excluded from the scope of the request as such information was not commissioned by me. Any further information outside of briefings, reports, memos or aides-memoire is also excluded.

Please refer to the attached appendix for the information in scope of your request:

- Information regarding Palestine – 20 December 2023.

Please note some information has been withheld under the following sections of the Act:

- Section 6(b)(i), to protect the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the Government of any other country or any agency of such a Government.
- Section 9(2)(a), to protect the privacy of natural persons.
- Some information from the agenda has also been redacted as it is out of scope of your request.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or phone 0800 802 602.

Nāku iti nei, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "E Stanford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon Erica Stanford
Minister of Immigration

Request: Can we also get some lines re policy response from M5 countries and what we have done in the refugee space for Palestine.

- Officials are not aware of any refugee response from M5 countries in response to the Palestine crisis at this time.
- The focus is currently on providing humanitarian aid and supporting citizens, permanent family members and dependents to depart Gaza in accordance with established consular policy (primarily an MFAT response). MFAT advice to date has been that there is close coordination between M5 countries in respect of consular responses to this conflict and close alignment in the approach each country is taking.
- Since the conflict, Australia has issued temporary visitor visas to Palestinians under their existing visitor category. As of 11 December 2023, Australia approved 2,100 temporary visas to Palestinians S 6(b)(i)
- At the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) held in Geneva last week the main call was to not let this become a refugee crisis. There were three key messages to all member states at the GRF:
 - an immediate ceasefire and an end to the siege to let in aid
 - there must be meaningful assistance post the end of the war
 - it must be ensured that international humanitarian law remains the way of regulating the war.

New Zealand's general immigration response to humanitarian crises

- Where international humanitarian crises have occurred in the past, New Zealand has generally:
 - applied a sympathetic approach to people who are onshore on temporary visas, while maintaining an expectation that, unless they meet residence criteria, they will eventually leave and;
 - worked with the international community to help meet the protection needs of displaced people (primarily through the Refugee Quota Programme).
- In some specific cases, New Zealand has introduced targeted policies for people onshore who are effectively stranded in New Zealand, or in response to extraordinary circumstances provided bespoke visa pathways for people offshore to enter New Zealand.
- Recent crises where New Zealand has not provided a targeted response include the Sudan, Syria and Myanmar. The two key bespoke responses to recent crisis situations are Afghanistan and Ukraine.
 - Ukraine: a special temporary visa pathway was established for family members of Ukrainian New Zealanders. Applicants were required to be sponsored by their New Zealand families who make undertakings in respect to transport and settlement costs. In August 2023, the government announced a residence pathway would be established for people who hold a Special Ukraine Visa and have arrived in New Zealand before 15 March 2024.
 - Afghanistan: New Zealand provided a special visa pathway, assistance to depart and a full resettlement process for people (and their immediate families) facing significant risks to their lives due to their connection to New Zealand's deployment to Afghanistan. The response was comprehensive a resource intensive.
- Key considerations when considering an immigration response include: availability of existing pathways, cost, precedent setting/equity considerations, ties to Israel/Palestine, foreign policy implications, approach of comparable countries.

Visa processing

- INZ is ringfencing all visitor visa applications from nationals of Israel and Palestine for prioritised processing. Calibration meetings occur between the head office and processing office on decisions.
- We have a dedicated channel for escalations where family members living in New Zealand with immediate families (partners and dependent children) who are located in Gaza can request prioritisation.
- Prioritisation occurs across INZ systems: identity resolution, prioritisation requests to NZSIS for NSCs, and streamlined assessment on the ADEPT platform (jump to assessment process).
- Additionally, INZ has regular meetings with MFAT, and MFAT has been sharing INZ's escalation mailbox to people who seek consular support. INZ has received four escalation requests in the mailbox thus far.
- Visa approvals have been granted as an exception to instructions (ETI) where urgent humanitarian circumstances outweigh the requirement for applicants to meet bona fide instructions.

Decisions since 7 October 2023 (up to 15 December 2023)

Israel (onshore and offshore):

- We have received 153 applications across both temporary and residence class visa categories for Israeli nationals, of which 67 have been approved, with 80 applications under assessment.
- One application has been declined as the individual did not meet immigration instructions to be granted a visa. Three applications were admin cancellations and two were withdrawn.
- Out of the 67 applications that have been approved, nine applicants have arrived onshore

Palestine (onshore and offshore):

- We have received 27 applications across both temporary and residence class visa categories for Palestinian nationals, of which nine have been approved, with 13 applications under assessment.
- One application has been declined as the individual did not meet immigration instructions to be granted a visa. Two applications were administrative cancellations and two applications withdrawn.
- Out of the 9 applications that have been approved, two applicants have arrived onshore.

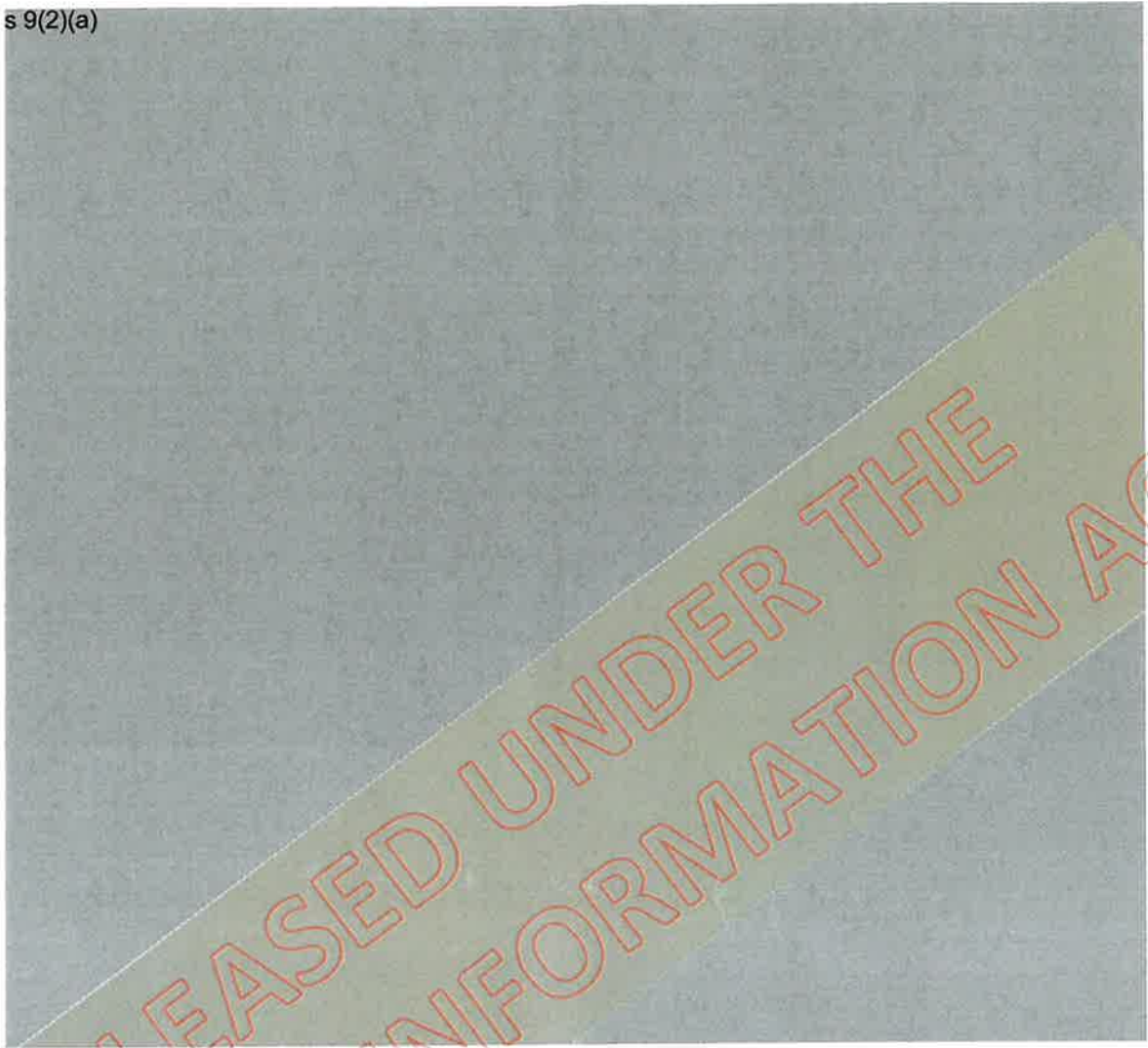
Asylum claims

- INZ has received s 9(2)(a) refugee status claims from Palestinians. s 9(2)(a)

- s 9(2)(a)

s 9(2)(a)

s 9(2)(a)



RELEASED UNDER THE
OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT