

12 October 2023

195 Lambton Quay
Private Bag 18–901
Wellington 6160
New Zealand

T +64 4 439 8000
F +64 4 472 9596

OIA 28815

Personal details removed for proactive
release

Personal details removed for proactive release

I refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) of 6 September 2023 to the Minister of Foreign Affairs which was partially transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Ministry) on 15 September 2023.

We are responding to your request for:

Can you please advise over the past three years:

- 1. how often LGBT+ issues/ concerns have been raised with the Egyptian and Lebanese governments;*
- 2. in what context these discussions or representations have been made; and*
- 3. what has been done by Aotearoa New Zealand to support these vulnerable communities (eg including in country support)*

We have numbered your request for administrative convenience.

New Zealand supports equal rights for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and considers the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights extends to sexual orientation and gender identity issues. Guiding our engagement in this space is New Zealand's International Human Rights Act Plan which is available at: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/Peace-Rights-and-Security/Human-rights/NZ-Human-Rights-Action-Plan.pdf>.

The Plan stipulates that sexual orientation and gender identity is one of four top tier priorities guiding our engagement on Human Rights matters. New Zealand actively promotes the rights of LGBTQI+ persons as an international human rights priority, including in the UN Third Committee, which deals with human rights, humanitarian affairs and social matters, and the Human Rights Council. We are an active member of groups that support initiatives to address discrimination and encourage progress across social, cultural, and legal spheres in the face of increasingly conservative global trends.

We actively advocate for LGBTQI+ rights in multilateral fora and are a founding member of the 42-country Equal Rights Coalition which promotes the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. We also actively support the mandate of the UN Independent Expert for Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity.

In 2022, New Zealand further demonstrated our support for the rights of LGBTQI+ persons by appointing Louisa Wall as Ambassador for Gender Equality focusing on the Pacific.

Question One and Two

With respect to your first two questions, Aotearoa New Zealand is accredited to Lebanon from our Embassy in Cairo. We have very limited engagement with the Government of Lebanon due to limited resourcing and noting that Lebanon's Government currently remains in caretaker mode. Staff from Cairo made an accreditation visit in February 2022 and before that in 2019. LBGTQI+ issues were not raised during the February 2022 visit.

With respect to the Government of Egypt, our engagement on LBGTQI+ matters is carefully calibrated to maximise our impact in a different cultural context and to avoid the risk of exacerbating an already difficult situation for the LBGTQI+ community in Egypt.

Discussions on LBGTQI+ matters normally take place as part of a discussion on New Zealand's human rights priorities within periodic conversations on broader human rights issues with bodies such as the National Council of Human Rights, and with officials of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights, and other official human rights contacts. As these interactions are within the context of other exchanges we do not have a record of the specific occasions at which LBGTQI+ issues were raised, therefore we refuse this part of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information does not exist.

Question Three

We have not provided specific in-country funding support to the LBGTQI+ communities of Egypt or Lebanon. New Zealand has however provided funding in Egypt for some local organisations and civil society groups whose work has tangible impact for the LBGTQI+ community. In addition, our Embassy staff regularly participate in meetings and events supportive of the LBGTQI+ community in Egypt, for example, events for International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, briefings from the LBGTQI+ community, and information sharing sessions.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website:

www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/

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



Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade