

22 November 2023

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OIA 28865

Kia ora

I refer to your social media post of 31 October 2023 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

All documents you hold that discuss this UN appointment.

Given the context of your social media post, we have interpreted your request to be for:
all documents held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) relating to the appointment of the Islamic Republic of Iran as Chair of the Social Forum of the Human Rights Council held on 2 and 3 November 2023.

There are five documents which contain information that is in scope of your request.

One document, titled *Meeting note: Iranian Solidarity Group, 30 May 2023* contains one paragraph in scope of your request. This paragraph is withheld in full under section 9(2)(ba)(i) of the OIA, to protect the supply of confidential information by another party.

The remaining four documents are email chains, containing significant amounts of duplication. These email chains, with duplications removed, are attached and have been released to you with some information 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;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
- 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 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 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line that ends in a small upward flick.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Out of scope

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Sent: Friday, 12 May 2023 9:43 am

To: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Cc: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Subject: RE: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Many thanks ^{s9(2)(g)}, to you and GVA for all of this. We'll let you know if it looks like something will need to be said (hopefully not).

A.

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Sent: Friday, 12 May 2023 9:39 am

To: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Cc: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Kia ora ^{s9(2)(g)} copying below the helpful response from GVA overnight. Let us know if you intend to submit advice/reactive talking points to OMFA and we'll be happy to review.

- The report is accurate, see letter member states received from the President (attached).
- New Zealand has never engaged in the Social Forum, which is mandated by a Cuba-led resolution that we do not co-sponsor or engage in (more information is here: [The Social Forum of the Human Rights Council | OHCHR](#))
- Our understanding from the attached letter is that only one regional group, (we assume Asia-Pacific), made a nomination (for Iran). In this circumstance, the President has no option other than to select the nominated candidate. The letter is standard UN/diplomatic protocol prose, and does not carry with it any unusual elements. If this appointment had been to a Human Rights Council body with profile and influence, we assume other regional groups would have put forward candidates.
- s6(b)(i)

- s6(a)

s6(a)

- Based on the draft you sent us, we therefore recommend the following adjustments:
 - New Zealand is not currently a member of the HRC, although we participate actively as an observer.
 - The role of Chair of the UN Human Rights Council's Social Forum is not a voted position, but is appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council on the basis of candidates put forward by UN regional groups. Iran was the only candidate put forward. It is not a Forum in which New Zealand engages.
 - New Zealand is clear that Iran is not qualified for any leadership role in the UN human rights system at this time: and we reiterate our call on Iran to [add detail from policy].
- If there is a need to state our formal position, you could consider including this in our next statement in the HRC on Iran.

s9(2)(g)(ii) (he/him | ia)

Kaiārahi Tohutohu (Tika Tangata) | Lead Adviser (Human Rights)
Tānga Kotahitanga Aorere & Tika Tangata | United Nations, Human Rights & Commonwealth Division
Manatū Aorere | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s9(2)(a) | s9(2)(g)(ii)

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Sent: Thursday, 11 May 2023 5:54 pm

To: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Cc: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Many thanks for getting back to me ^{s9(2)(g)(ii)} Confirming I'm comfortable with leaving this at least for tonight, but we may need to follow up tomorrow. I'll be in touch.

s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Acting Lead Adviser

Middle East and Africa Division

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s9(2)(a)

Duplicate information - 2 pages removed

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)
To:
Cc:
Subject: FW: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?
Date: Friday, 12 May 2023 9:54:00 am
Attachments: [230510 Appointment of the Chairperson-Rapporteur for the 2023 Social Forum.pdf](#)
[image001.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

FYI some very helpful digging on this by GVA overnight.

s9(2)(g)(i)

I'll give TEH a heads up on it too.

Happy to discuss as well if you like.

A.

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Released under the Official Information Act



BUREAU DU PRÉSIDENT

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

10 May 2023

Excellencies,

In my capacity as President of the Human Rights Council, I have the honour to refer to the Human Rights Council resolution 50/22 entitled "The Social Forum", in which the Council requests the President to appoint, as early as possible, from candidates nominated by regional groups, the Chair-Rapporteur for the 2023 Social Forum, bearing in mind the principle of regional rotation. Accordingly, in my letter dated 6 April 2023, I invited regional groups to submit nominations of the candidates for the Chair-Rapporteur of the 2023 Social Forum.

Following the receipt of a nomination from regional coordinators, I have the pleasure to inform you that I have decided to appoint H.E. Mr. Ali Bahreini, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to chair the 2023 Social Forum, to be held on 2 and 3 November 2023, which will focus on the contribution of science, technology and innovation to the promotion of human rights, including in the context of post-pandemic recovery.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Václav BALEK', written over a large, diagonal watermark that says 'Released under the Official Information Act'.

Václav BÁLEK
President of the Human Rights Council

To all Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Office at Geneva

Out of scope

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)
Sent: Thursday, 1 June 2023 1:33 pm
To: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Cc: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[IN CONFIDENCE]

Correct, we didn't end up saying anything publicly on this. s6(a)

s9(2)(g)(ii) (he/him | ia)

Kaiārahi Tohutohu (Tika Tangata) | Lead Adviser (Human Rights)
Tānga Kotahitanga Aorere & Tika Tangata | United Nations, Human Rights & Commonwealth Division
Manatū Aorere | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s9(2)(a) | s9(2)(g)(ii)

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)
Sent: Thursday, 1 June 2023 8:46 am
To: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Cc: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[IN CONFIDENCE]

Kia ora team New York - forwarding for your awareness s9(2)(g)(i) am I correct that we didn't end up saying anything on this?

Cheers
s9(2)(g)(ii)

Sent with BlackBerry Work
(www.blackberry.com)

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)
Date: Thursday, 11 May 2023 at 7:23 PM

Duplicate information

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Sent: Thursday, 11 May 2023 8:00 am

To: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Cc: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[UNCLASSIFIED]

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

Released under the Official Information Act

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

s9(2)(g)(ii) (he/him | ia)

Kaiārahi Tohutohu (Tika Tangata) | Lead Adviser (Human Rights)
Tānga Kotahitanga Aorere & Tika Tangata | United Nations, Human Rights & Commonwealth Division
Manatū Aorere | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s6(a) | s9(2)(g)(ii)

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Date: Thursday, 11 May 2023 at 1:35 pm

To: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Cc: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum? [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

[UNCLASSIFIED]

Thanks for sharing ^{s9(2)(g)(ii)} I hadn't heard this news (nor in fact of the HRC Social Forum at all from either of the two Novembers I've been in UNHC so far). For now the best I can offer in terms of reactive lines would be something like:

- New Zealand is not currently a member of the HRC, although we participate actively as Observers.
- The role of Chair of the UN Human Rights Council's Social Forum is appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council, [it is not a voted position].
- s6(a)

Also just to note that GVA's going to be quite busy overnight tonight with the Sudan Special Session, but if you feel we need to get lines to OMFA urgently today/tomorrow then I'm sure they'll do their best to respond to something short and predrafted for them to respond to.

s9(2)(g)(ii) (he/him | ia)

Kaiārahi Tohutohu (Tika Tangata) | Lead Adviser (Human Rights)
Tānga Kotahitanga Aorere & Tika Tangata | United Nations, Human Rights & Commonwealth Division
Manatū Aorere | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s9(2)(a) | s9(2)(g)(ii)

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Sent: Thursday, 11 May 2023 1:01 pm

To: s9(2)(g)(ii)

Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[UNCLASSIFIED]

^{s9(2)(g)(ii)} – we've just seen [this](#) online, s6(a) (though we're obviously not a council member at the moment, so may not have had the opportunity to vote?).

I don't recall seeing any information about this social forum before, so any background you might have would be appreciated.

Hillel Neuer @HillelNeuer · 12h

BREAKING: The Islamic Republic of Iran was today appointed Chair of the U.N. Human Rights Council Social Forum. This year's theme is technology and promotion of human rights; Iran just hanged Yousef Mehrad and Sadrollah Fazeli Zare for using social media to criticize religion.

UN Human Rights Council

642 4,022 5,713 974.2K

A.

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Acting Lead Adviser
Middle East and Africa Division
New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade | Manatū Aorere

s
6(**E s9(2)(g)(ii)**

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www.mfat.govt.nz | www.safetravel.govt.nz



From: s9(2)(g)(ii)
To: s9(2)(g)(ii)
Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?
Date: Thursday, 1 June 2023 1:30:56 pm
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)

[RESTRICTED]

Cool thx s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii) (he/him | ia)

Kaiārahi Tohutohu (Tika Tangata) | Lead Adviser (Human Rights)
Tānga Kotahitanga Aorere & Tika Tangata | United Nations, Human Rights & Commonwealth Division
Manatū Aorere | Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

s9(2)(a) | s9(2)(g)(ii)

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)
Sent: Thursday, 1 June 2023 1:28 pm
To: s9(2)(g)(ii)
Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[RESTRICTED]

Correct, it's never come up at that level and no advice has been put up.

s9(2)(ba)(i)

A.

From: s9(2)(g)(ii)
Sent: Thursday, 1 June 2023 1:03 pm
To: s9(2)(g)(ii)
Subject: Iran - chair of HRC Social Forum?

[RESTRICTED]

s9(2)(g)(i)

s9(2)(g)(ii) (he/him | ia)

Kaiārahi Tohutohu (Tika Tangata) | Lead Adviser (Human Rights)
Tānga Kotahitanga Aorere & Tika Tangata | United Nations, Human Rights & Commonwealth Division
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s9(2)(a) | s9(2)(g)(ii)

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