

Key Messages: Israel/Gaza conflict (**Sunday 19** November)

s9(2)(g)(i)

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Situation overview (not for public dissemination)

- Six weeks since the Hamas terrorist attack, Israel's ground operation continues. Israel's stated goal remains to ensure its security by destroying Hamas' leadership, military infrastructure, and its ability to govern.
- The Israel Defence Force (IDF) has split Gaza into two sectors and is engaged in intense fighting in Gaza City. The IDF is gradually pushing south. s6(a)
- Hamas is still holding ~240 hostages. So far, four have been released, with another rescued by the IDF. Some deceased hostages have been recovered by the IDF in Gaza. Negotiations to release some of the hostages, possibly in return for an extended humanitarian pause and/or prisoner release continue s6(a) .
- The humanitarian impact is catastrophic and compounding. Over 1.5 million are internally displaced within Gaza. Essential services including medical care are destroyed, and basic necessities, including food, scarce. While four hour pauses for transit in humanitarian corridors are in place, s6(a) .
- Tensions continue to rise in the West Bank, where there have been clashes between Israeli forces, Israeli settlers, Palestinian militants and Palestinian civilians.
- s6(a) Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah are exchanging fire on Israel's northern border. Iran-aligned Shia militias have claimed responsibility for strikes on US bases in Iraq and Syria. The US has responded s6(a)

s6(a)

Latest updates

Key overnight updates

- s6(a) Israel has announced it will allow 70,000 litres of fuel into Gaza per day. s6(a)
- The IDF appears to be preparing for a military push in to southern Gaza, though timing for doing so is so far unclear. An airstrike has hit the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis, killing 28 people, three days after the IDF dropped leaflets over the city urging civilians to evacuate.
- The IDF continues operations within the Al-Shifa hospital compound. Israel has confirmed that the bodies of two Israeli hostages were found in buildings near the hospital.
- Hundreds of people, including some patients, left Al-Shifa on Saturday through a 'secure route'. s6(a)
- s6(a)
- Negotiations on a ceasefire/hostage and prisoner release deal continue. s6(a)

Demonstrations within Israel demanding the release of the hostages continue.

- Reuters reports that support within Israel for the conflict remains strong. In an Israeli Democracy Institute poll, the most common response - from 38 percent of people - was that Israel should negotiate a prisoner deal but continue fighting. Overall, 70 percent of respondents did not think the conflict should stop. The common message was that to stop now would mean that the aims of the conflict would not be achieved.

Humanitarian – Gaza

- The UN reports that 830,000 are sheltering in at least 154 UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) emergency shelters.
- No trucks of humanitarian aid had entered Gaza via the Rafah crossing as at 17 November, for the third consecutive day.
- The World Food Programme (WFP) continues to report increases in cases of dehydration and malnutrition and has again warned about the threat of starvation due to the collapsed food supply chain and insufficient aid delivery. Only 10 per cent of necessary food supplies have entered Gaza since the beginning of the hostilities. UNRWA reports 70 per cent of the people in the south have no access to clean water due to the absence of fuel needed for desalination and other water services. Overcrowding is contributing to the spread of diseases, including acute respiratory illness and diarrhoea.

Conflict – West Bank and regional flare-ups

- Violence in the West Bank continues. Israeli Security Forces (ISF) conducted raids in Jenin and Tubas over the weekend, with the militant wing of Fatah claiming five of its fighters were killed.
- Exchange of fire between Lebanese Hezbollah and Israel continues on Israel's northern border.

International and multilateral

- In an Op-Ed [published by the Washington Post](#), US President Joe Biden has indicated for the first time that the US may look to consider visa bans against Israeli extremist settlers carrying out violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.
- s6(a), s6(b)(i)

Social cohesion

- Pro-Palestinian protests and demonstrations are being held across New Zealand cities this weekend.

Consular

Gaza

- 10 New Zealanders and one family member have successfully departed Gaza.
- We are aware of 14 further individuals who remain in Gaza:
 - Nine New Zealand Permanent Residents: we continue to seek approvals for their exit s6(a)
 - One New Zealand citizen s9(2)(a) has approval to leave any day the border is open. s9(2)(a)
 - A group of four New Zealand citizen family members, s9(2)(a)
- s6(a)

Lebanon

- 13 New Zealanders are registered as being in Lebanon. MFAT has contacted all registrants and alert them to our advice that New Zealanders should depart the country now via commercial means. s9(2)(a)

Annex 1 - Further talking points

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Annex 2 - Latest facts and figures

Reported deaths and wounded figures in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (17 November 2023)

	Israel	Gaza (OPT)	West Bank (OPT)
Deaths	Israeli and other nationalities: 1,200* (revised down)	Palestinian: >12,000 IDF: 57 (↑ 9)	Palestinian: 199 (↑ 8) Israeli: 4 (↑ 1)
Wounded	~5,400 (unchanged)	27,490 (unchanged)	Palestinian: 2,971 (↑ 242)
Other	~240** captive	Missing ~2,700	>1,900 arrested (unchanged)

*Gaza authorities have been unable to update some casualty figures since 10 November due to the intensity of fighting and airstrikes.

** The number of hostages and hostage deaths has been revised several times.

New Zealanders registered on SafeTravel as in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Lebanon

¹ s9(2)(a)

	Israel	Occupied Palestinian Territories	Lebanon
Present	111	9* (7 in Gaza, 2 in West Bank)	13
Departed	55	9 (all from West Bank)	

* This figure is not inclusive of those New Zealanders who have chosen not to register on SafeTravel.

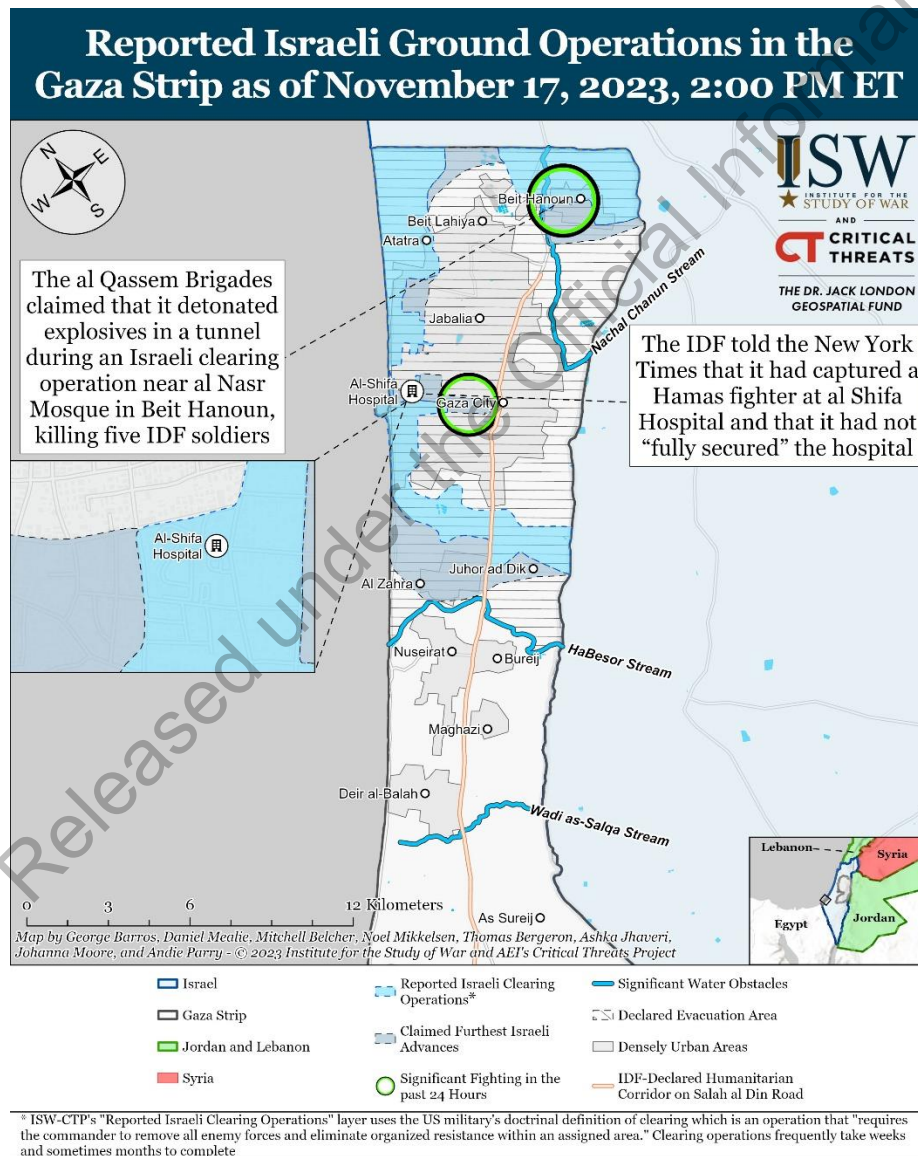
Humanitarian contributions by nation

	Amount (local currency)	Amount (NZ\$)
New Zealand	NZ\$10 million	\$10 million
Australia	AUD\$25 million	\$27.1 million
Canada	CAD\$60 million	\$74.9 million
Denmark	DKK\$125 million	\$30.4 million
European Union	EUR100 million	\$181 million
France	EUR100 million	\$181 million
Germany	EUR50 million	\$90.9 million
Ireland	EUR13 million	\$23.5 million
Japan	US\$75 million	\$126 million
Netherlands	EUR25 million	\$45 million
Spain	EUR5 million	\$9 million
Sweden	SEK\$150 million	\$23 million
United Kingdom	GBP£30 million	\$62.4 million
United States	US\$100 million	\$171 million

Annex 3: New Zealand Government statements

- [Further humanitarian support for Gaza, the West Bank and Israel | Beehive.govt.nz \(18 November\)](https://www.beehive.govt.nz/statement/further-humanitarian-support-for-gaza-the-west-bank-and-israel)
- [New Zealand National Statement, UN General Assembly Emergency Special Session \(27 Oct 2023\)](#)
- [New Zealand calls for humanitarian pause in Gaza \(25 Oct 2023\)](#)
- [New Zealand National Statement, UN Security Council Open Debate: Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question \(24 Oct 2023\)](#)
- [New Zealand provides humanitarian support to Israel and Gaza \(17 Oct 2023\)](#)
- [Government to assist with departures from Tel Aviv \(12 Oct 2023\)](#)
- [Statement on the escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza \(8 Oct 2023\)](#)

Annex 4: Reported Israeli ground operations in Gaza



Annex 5: Map of the Gaza Strip

Source: BBC



Annex 6: Map of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories





18 November 2023

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For action by

19 November 2023

Israel-Gaza conflict: New Zealand position on calling for a ceasefire

BRIEFING Decision Submission
PURPOSE s6(a)

Recommended referrals

Prime Minister	For approval by	19 November 2023
Minister for Trade and Export Growth	For information by	20 November 2023
Minister of Defence	For information by	20 November 2023
Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities	For information by	20 November 2023
Minister of Police	For information by	20 November 2023

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
s9(2)(g)(ii)		Europe Middle East and Africa, and Australia	s9(2)(a)
s9(2)(g)(ii)		Middle East and Africa	s9(2)(a)

Minister's Office to complete

<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Noted	<input type="checkbox"/> Referred
<input type="checkbox"/> Needs amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Declined	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn
<input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events	<input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's notes	

Comments

Israel-Gaza conflict: New Zealand position on calling for a ceasefire

Key points

- The humanitarian situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate with death tolls amongst Palestinians now over 11,000, including thousands of children, increasing shortages of food, water and fuel, and concerning reports of attacks on medical facilities in Gaza, resulting in casualties amongst medical and humanitarian personnel.
- Public calls for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas are growing accordingly, including in New Zealand. With conditions on the ground nowhere near what a ceasefire (as defined by the UN) would require, these calls seem to only reflect a desire to stop the humanitarian catastrophe and the killing of civilians at this stage.
- A large number of countries worldwide have voiced their support for a ceasefire. Among Western European countries, Spain, Ireland, Norway, Iceland and Belgium have called for a ceasefire. France and Australia are increasingly referencing the concept of a ceasefire in their public statements. The US has repeatedly rejected the idea.
- New Zealand supports the goal of a ceasefire. We have called for steps towards a ceasefire s6(a)

s6(a)

s6(a)

s6(a)

- **Option One:** New Zealand could join a Leaders' statement with Australia and Canada, s6(a)

s6(a)

- s6(a)

- s6(a)

Israel-Gaza conflict: New Zealand position on calling for a ceasefire

s6(a)

s6(a) officials recommend s6(a) that we join
the statement proposed by Australia and Canada, subject to approval of the final text by
ministers. s6(a)
s6(a)

s6(a)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

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Israel-Gaza conflict: New Zealand position on calling for a ceasefire

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **Note** the situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate. **Yes / No**
- 2 **Note** that calls for a ceasefire are increasing domestically and internationally. **Yes / No**
- 3 **Agree** to New Zealand ^{s6(a)} appropriately respond to the massive humanitarian toll of the conflict. **Yes / No**
- 4 **Note** that officials assess that ^{s6(a)} **Yes / No**
 1. **Joining a statement with Australia and Canada**, ^{s6(a)}
^{s6(a)}
 2. ^{s6(a)}
 3. ^{s6(a)}
- 5 ^{s6(a)} **Yes / No**
- 6 **Agree** to proceed with Option One, as the most appropriate option at this time, noting that the final text ^{s6(a)} for the statement will be confirmed over the coming days. **Yes / No**
- 7 **Note** that officials will continue to monitor the situation and will provide ^{s6(a)} advice as the situation develops. **Yes / No**
- 8 **Refer** a copy of this submission to the Minister of Trade and Export Growth, Minister of Defence, Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities and Minister of Police. **Yes / No**
- 9 **Note** the Prime Minister has determined that the Leader of the Opposition should be consulted prior to a final decision being made, on the basis that a decision should not be deferred until the next Government is formed. **Yes / No**

Hon Grant Robertson	Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Foreign Affairs	Prime Minister
Date: / /	Date: / /

Israel-Gaza conflict: New Zealand position on calling for a ceasefire

Report

The complexity of views on ceasefires

1. There is currently significant confusion and disagreement over calls for a ceasefire, partly because of different uses of the term 'ceasefire'.
 - At a diplomatic level, the term 'ceasefire' is defined by the UN as a suspension of fighting agreed upon by the parties to a conflict, **typically as part of a political process**. It is intended to be long-term and often covers the entire geographic area of the conflict. Its aim is usually to allow parties to engage in dialogue, including the possibility of reaching a permanent political settlement. Critically, ceasefires only take place when both (or all) parties to a conflict agree, usually on the basis that key demands set by both sides are met.
 - At the public level, various civil society groups and political leaders are actively calling for a ceasefire to reflect that they simply want the fighting and killing to stop. Allegations of "ethnic cleansing" s6(a) and "genocide" s6(a) s6(a) are sometimes made. s6(a) and this has increased in response to the media coverage of dire humanitarian circumstances in Gaza.
 - s6(a)

The policy problem of ceasefires

2. Despite divisions over core issues of the Israel-Hamas conflict, achieving an end to hostilities and an enduring ceasefire as quickly as possible is an important objective of the international community.
3. The conditions for a formal ceasefire described in language developed by the UN do not currently exist. There are two immediate challenges with calls for a ceasefire: the parties to the conflict do not want it, s6(a) s6(a) complicated further by the complete lack of trust between the parties
4. s6(a)

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s6(a)

5. s6(a)

International positioning on ceasefires

6. A large number of countries worldwide have voiced their support for a ceasefire. s6(a)
s6(a)

7. s6(a)

8. s6(a)

9. A table outlining the positions of a wide group of countries is included as Annex 1.

A possible New Zealand approach

10. New Zealand's current position on a ceasefire in Gaza can be summarised as follows:

- We support efforts to get to a ceasefire, as soon as possible.
- All parties to the conflict have a responsibility to create the conditions for a ceasefire to be possible. The obligations are not one sided.
- There is ultimately no military solution to the underlying issues leading to the current conflict.
- We support humanitarian efforts, and in particular substantive practical humanitarian steps (such as humanitarian pauses), as the most urgent priority, and the most realistic prospect to help civilians on the ground until conditions can be met for a ceasefire.

Israel-Gaza conflict: New Zealand position on calling for a ceasefire

- All parties must protect civilians in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law.

11. s6(a)

12. s6(a)

- Protection of civilians, especially vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, is the overarching priority of international humanitarian law, s6(a)
- Civilians no longer have viable options to flee the fighting to areas of safety;
- Safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access in Gaza has become impossible to maintain;

13. s6(a)

14. s6(a)

15. s6(a)

Joint statement with Australia and Canada (recommended)

16. s6(a)
s6(a)

The statement is currently in draft and the latest version we have is annexed for information (Annex 2). s6(a)
s6(a)

17. This statement is consistent with New Zealand's current policy settings, s6(a)

s6(a) Officials note that the text of the statement is still being negotiated and is subject to change.

Israel-Gaza conflict: New Zealand position on calling for a ceasefire

s6(a)

18. s6(a)

19. Few countries that have called for a ceasefire have laid down a set of conditions. The majority have called for a ceasefire to stop the humanitarian catastrophe and the killing of civilians. s6(a)
s6(a)

s6(a)

20. s6(a)

21. s6(a) officials recommend as an immediate next step that we join the leaders' statement proposed by Australia and Canada, subject to approval of the final text by ministers. s6(a)
s6(a)

22. A leaders-level statement reflects the importance that New Zealand places on the situation in Gaza. s6(a)
s6(a)

23. s6(a)

24. s6(a)

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Israel-Gaza conflict: New Zealand position on calling for a ceasefire

Annex 2: Draft joint statement on the Hamas-Israel conflict

s6(a)

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