

28 March 2024

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

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

OIA 29183

Tēnā koe

I refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on 1 March 2024. You requested:

- "1 - What process did our government undertake when seeking to make the decision to suspend funding?*
- 2 - What reporting, if any, are such international humanitarian organisations funded by our government, required to submit to? And if any, how often?*
- 3- Within those reports, if any, was our government aware of any shortcomings in the delivery of funded services? Or issues pertaining to the organisation as a whole?*
- 4- Has our government received any official documentation and/or supporting evidence, which could substantiate the purported claims of UNRWA employee involvement in October 7 attacks?*
- 5. Have we given UNRWA a fair opportunity to manage the said individuals according to their own crisis management policies? If so, what conversations have been had, in this vein, with UNRWA about their response and our expectations moving forward?*
- 6. Has this been considered in the case of UNRWA? Both in respect to the dire consequences of suspending such funding, and the need to fill a gap in those service being delivered? If.... My point 5, above, was appropriately considered by government, already."*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the Ministry) has responded to each of your requests in turn.

"1 - What process did our government undertake when seeking to make the decision to suspend funding?

New Zealand has not paused or suspended funding to UNRWA. 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 its 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 allegations made against twelve UNRWA employees on 26 January 2024.

2 - What reporting, if any, are such international humanitarian organisations funded by our government, required to submit to? And if any, how often?

New Zealand provides funding to a number of multilateral organisations, including UNRWA. We require these organisations to provide annual consolidated reporting about their operations. In addition to receiving formal reporting, New Zealand officials also regularly engage with international humanitarian organisations, including UNRWA, on their operations. Annual and other reporting by UNRWA may be accessed here: <https://www.unrwa.org/resources>

In addition, mechanisms independent of UNRWA provide assurance and further information. The United Nations Board of Auditors provides an external audit of UNRWA and other UN Funds and Programmes each year. Their reports are accessible here: <https://www.un.org/en/auditors/board/auditors-reports.shtml>.

Multilateral organisations, including UNRWA, are also periodically assessed by the Multilateral Organisation Performance and Assessment Network (MOPAN). MOPAN's most recent assessment of UNRWA is available here: <https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unrwa2017-18/>, and an updated assessment is expected soon.

3- Within those reports, if any, was our government aware of any shortcomings in the delivery of funded services? Or issues pertaining to the organisation as a whole?

UNRWA operates in a highly challenging context. Periodically, concerns are raised around UNRWA's adherence to neutrality and alignment with UN values, in particular in relation to its education programme and facilities. The Ministry has previously assessed that UNRWA has systems in place to deliver education and other services, in a way that aligns with UN principles and values, and to investigate and respond to allegations as they arise.

4- Has our government received any official documentation and/or supporting evidence, which could substantiate the purported claims of UNRWA employee involvement in October 7 attacks?

The Ministry has not received official documentation or evidence which could substantiate these allegations. It is important these allegations are properly understood and investigated urgently by the UN system.

5. Have we given UNRWA a fair opportunity to manage the said individuals according to their own crisis management policies? If so, what conversations have been had, in this vein, with UNRWA about their response and our expectations moving forward?

The Ministry strongly supports the UN's investigation into the allegations, and the UN Secretary-General's appointment of an independent Review Group, led by Catherine Colonna, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, to assess whether UNRWA is doing everything within its power to ensure neutrality and to respond to allegations of serious breaches when they are made. We are engaging with partners on the process, including through our UN Mission in New York and other diplomatic posts. We will be looking for evidence that the

processes are thorough, and that the allegations will be dealt with appropriately. We will also be looking for assurances that necessary safeguards are in place.

The Ministry has zero tolerance for violence and extremism, including hate speech. We have made clear our expectations that UNRWA adheres to UN principles such as neutrality, and to UN values such as tolerance and non-discrimination, in delivering its services.

6. Has this been considered in the case of UNRWA? Both in respect to the dire consequences of suspending such funding, and the need to fill a gap in those service being delivered? If... My point 5, above, was appropriately considered by government, already.

In the context of 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 an end to the fighting and for further urgent steps towards a sustainable ceasefire, and for all parties to abide by international law.

New Zealand has provided a total of NZ\$15 million in financial support to the humanitarian response, comprising the following contributions: NZ\$7.5 million to the World Food Programme; NZ\$5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross; and NZ\$2.5 million to the United Nations Children's Fund. We have welcomed action taken by the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly calling for safe, unhindered, and expanded humanitarian access. 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.

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



Owen Thornber
for Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade