



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Additional Item: New Zealand's Approach to Israel / Palestine

Portfolio Foreign Affairs

On 11 August 2025, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** the update from the Minister of Foreign Affairs on recent statements from international partners regarding recognition of a Palestinian state;
- 2 **noted** the timeline and process for New Zealand to consider its position regarding recognition of a Palestinian state, ahead of the United Nations Leaders Week in late September 2025.

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Secretary of the Cabinet

Informal Note — Israel/Palestine: New Zealand's approach

1. A humanitarian crisis in Gaza

- After almost two years of war, Gaza is suffering widespread starvation, malnutrition, and disease – as a result of actions taken by both Israel and Hamas. Israel is not meeting its obligations under international law to allow the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians, and Hamas continues to act with flagrant disregard for human life, Israeli and Palestinian. In Gaza, more than 90 percent of the population is displaced, 94 percent of hospitals have been damaged or destroyed, formal education ceased in late 2023, and 500,000 people are enduring famine-like conditions. About 70 percent of the 60,000 people killed in Gaza have been women and children.
- Humanitarian support has been a key pillar of New Zealand's response to the conflict. We have contributed around NZ\$37 million since October 2023, compared (over the same period) to \$40 million to Ukraine, \$31 million to Myanmar and \$12.5 million to Sudan. Options for further humanitarian assistance, funded by New Zealand's international development cooperation (IDC) programme, can be developed as required.
- Since October 2023, New Zealand has called for Israel and Hamas to implement a ceasefire, for Hamas to release the hostages, and for both parties to allow for the safe, rapid, and unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid. New Zealand has also called on all parties of the conflict to abide by their obligations under international law.

2. Seeking a ceasefire

- Across this term of the Coalition Government, New Zealand has called for a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel.
- Despite ongoing attempts by the US, Qatar, and Egypt, and periodic pauses, a ceasefire in Gaza remains elusive. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with both political and military objectives, is fixated on destroying Hamas. Hamas remains entrenched in Gaza and will continue to fight while it believes the only alternative is handing Gaza to Israel. US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff withdrew from ceasefire negotiations on 24 July, citing a lack of progress and accusing Hamas of refusing to cooperate.
- Israel's political leadership, and a significant part of its population, are uninterested in reaching a political solution. If Israel returns to the negotiating table, any final deal will need to deliver two significant elements to Israel: security guarantees and normalisation of relations with Arab countries through the extension of the Abraham Accords. Saudi Arabia is pivotal to both s6(a)
s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- There are a series of comprehensive proposals on next steps after a ceasefire, including the Arab-sponsored Peace and Reconstruction Plan, which sets out a package for reconstruction and the elements to build a Palestinian state. s6(a)

3. Recognition of a Palestinian state

This section contains legally privileged advice.

- International agreement to create two states, one Jewish and one Arab, dates to the 1947 UN partition plan for Palestine. Israel was created as a state in 1948 when it declared independence, but the question of a Palestinian state has remained unresolved. This must be addressed to find an enduring solution in Gaza and the broader conflict.
- s9(2)(h)

- s9(2)(h)

Notwithstanding the challenges posed by occupation, the Palestinian Authority exercises some elements of de facto governance, including policing, provision of basic services, and conducting international relations.

New Zealand's approach to recognition

- s9(2)(h)
We do not generally make public declarations of recognition, preferring for this to be inferred through our actions. Our nuanced, flexible approach allows us to tailor our decision-making on recognition to the particulars of each specific case. Our practice is sufficiently flexible to allow the Government to decide, should it wish, to make a formal, explicit statement of recognition, or a less formal statement that New Zealand has decided to engage with Palestine in its capacity as a state.
- New Zealand engages in some ways with Palestine as if it were a state, albeit one that is not fully sovereign and one that we do not recognise as a state. This means we maintain a "Representative to Palestine" (not Ambassador) and have supported strengthening Palestinian governance institutions and participation in international organisations.
- New Zealand has traditionally considered that recognition of Palestine would require progress on elements of statehood, including effective governance and domestic security institutions, commitments to non-violence, strong regional support, and security guarantees for Israel. Palestine's inability to fully meet these criteria is at least partly due to Israel's occupation and its policies explicitly aimed at blocking the emergence of a Palestinian state. The Palestinian Authority has committed to elections and reform.

International momentum and progress towards recognition

- In the last year, there has been significant international momentum towards the recognition of Palestine, with 15 new states (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Slovenia, Armenia, Mexico, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, Malta, and San Marino) recognising or expressing an intention

to do so. Global leaders meet in New York for the UN General Assembly High Leaders Week in late September (Minister Peters will be representing New Zealand), and the recognition of a Palestinian state will be a major focus of discussion.

- In total, of the UN's 193 member states, 147 have already recognised Palestine. 46, including New Zealand, have not. Of these:
 - **4** have announced an **intention to recognise subject to certain commitments**: France, Canada, Malta, and San Marino.
 - **1** has announced an **intention to recognise in September unless Israel takes certain actions**: the UK.
 - **3** have explicitly said they are **leaning towards recognition in the coming months**: Portugal, Luxembourg, and Andorra.
 - s6(a)
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- The rapid shift in the approaches of partners such as France, the UK and Canada on recognition is being driven by two factors: horror at the situation in Gaza, and what it has demonstrated about the radically altered political direction now dominant in Israel; and Israel's statements and actions explicitly ruling out any prospect of a Palestinian state.
- Israel's decision to ensure its security through military action and permanent annexation eliminates any negotiated political solution and, as Prime Minister Netanyahu has said, accepts a permanent state of occupation and conflict. A number of our partners have concluded the conditions for a negotiated settlement have been so eroded that recognition is required to preserve the prospect of a viable Palestinian state, and a political solution that provides for the peaceful co-existence of Israeli and Palestinian states.
- The UK and Canadian announcements in the past few weeks are expected to influence other states – including Australia and some other European states – to shift towards recognition. Australia appears to be moving towards a decision to recognise at UN Leaders Week in late September. These partners are, in parallel, working to strengthen Palestinian governance institutions, with the intent being to make a Palestinian state viable.
- As momentum towards recognition grows, Arab states, traditionally Palestine's strongest supporters, have made public commitments to support Palestinian governance and reconstruction. These include unified governance of Gaza and the West Bank by the Palestinian Authority, with Hamas called upon to disarm and disband; and commitments

to mobilise financial and political support for Palestinian institutions. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

The UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco have already normalised relations with Israel.

- While to date New Zealand has had a similar approach on recognition of a Palestinian state to our close, like-minded partners, this is starting to change. Given fast-changing dynamics on the grounds and the shifts in the positions of others, it is prudent to consider options (set out in Annex below) to ensure the New Zealand Government is weighing up all the relevant factors. These are set out in the table below.
- This is a complicated, important issue which requires careful, formal consideration. For these reasons, following today's oral item in Cabinet, a formal policy paper on the issue of recognition will be developed, which will be taken to the Foreign Policy and Security Committee (FPS) on Tuesday 9 September and the full Cabinet on Monday 15 September. The views of the three parties in the Coalition Government will be sought as part of this policy development process. This envisaged timeline will allow Foreign Minister Peters to carry Cabinet's decision on recognition to the UN meetings in New York the following week (beginning on Monday 22 September).

New Zealand's drivers on recognition of Palestine

- The decision on whether to recognise Palestine is ultimately a political one. New Zealand's approach to recognition of Palestine must consider a range of factors, including: New Zealand's enduring support for a two-state solution and a need to ensure its preservation; New Zealand's reputation as a supporter of the international rules-based system with a balanced approach to the Middle East; New Zealand's relationships with close partners, including the United States and Australia; the conventional benchmarks for state recognition; consistency with international law; and, whether it is in our national interest to recognise now.
- There is considerable domestic public interest in New Zealand in Israel and Palestine-related issues, with New Zealanders holding strong opinions on both sides of the conflict. While not on par with those seen in the UK, US, or Australia, these issues catalyse regular public protests and are the foreign policy issues which induce the highest volume of Ministerial correspondence and Official Information Act requests. These issues can have implications for New Zealand's social cohesion.

Middle East and Africa Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
7 August 2025

Annex: Palestinian state recognition: options for consideration

s6(a)

Option
1. Status quo New Zealand's position remains that "recognition is a question of when not if" without committing to any timeframe for consideration.
2. Signalling openness to recognition New Zealand publicly states it remains committed to Palestinian statehood and that Cabinet will make a decision on recognition prior to UN Leaders' Week in late September.

3. Conditional s6(a)

New Zealand joins Canada in stating that we will recognise Palestine subject to seeing a tangible commitment to progress from the Palestinian Authority before September.

4. Leverage

New Zealand joins the UK in threatening to recognise Palestine unless certain conditions are met by Israel.

5. Commit to recognition

New Zealand follows France and declares our intent to recognise Palestine in September without preconditions.

Proactively Released by the
Minister of Foreign Affairs



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Report of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee: Period Ended 12 September 2025

On 15 September 2025, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee for the period ended 12 September 2025:

FPS-25-MIN-0019

Recognition of Palestine: Options for New Zealand
Portfolio: Foreign Affairs

CONFIRMED

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Secretary of the Cabinet



Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee

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Recognition of Palestine: Options for New Zealand

Portfolio Foreign Affairs

On 8 September 2025, the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee:

- 1 **agreed** to take a preliminary decision that New Zealand continue to hold its current position that, while it is a matter of when, not if, it would be premature to recognise the State of Palestine at this time while questions remain about the State's viability and legitimacy and while Hamas continues to hold hostages, terrorise Gaza, and threaten Israel;
- 2 **agreed** that the Minister of Foreign Affairs will finalise New Zealand's position in consultation with the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, ahead of announcement;
- 3 **agreed** that the Minister of Foreign Affairs will announce New Zealand's position at the United Nations General Assembly Leaders' Week in New York in the week beginning 23 September 2025;
- 4 **noted** that the communication of New Zealand's position will be clear, balanced, and will state that New Zealand continues to support a two-state solution, and does not endorse violence or terrorism on either side.

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Rt Hon Winston Peters (Chair)
Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Todd McClay

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of the Chair of FPS
Officials Committee for FPS
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee

Recognition of Palestine: Options for New Zealand

Proposal

- 1 That Cabinet agree New Zealand should continue to hold its current position that while it is a matter of when, not if, it would be premature to recognise the State of Palestine at this time while questions remain about the State's viability and legitimacy and while Hamas continues to hold hostages, terrorise Gaza and threaten Israel.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 New Zealand's Foreign Policy Reset, agreed by the Coalition Government in February 2024, did not identify the Middle East as a foreign policy priority [FPS-24-MIN-002]. However, the issue of recognition of Palestine will have some impact on a number of our priority relationships under the Reset, including Australia, the United States and in South East Asia.

Executive Summary

- 3 Since partition in 1948, Jews and Palestinian Arabs have had conflicting territorial claims in the Middle East. New Zealand's long-standing approach to this issue has been grounded in the idea that Israelis and Palestinians should live side-by-side in peace, both with an internationally-recognised state. While Israel achieved statehood in 1948, the Palestinians remain stateless. New Zealand, along with our close partners on Middle East issues (e.g. Australia, Canada and UK), has traditionally believed that the creation and recognition of a Palestinian state should be an outcome of a comprehensive political settlement negotiated between Israelis and Palestinians. But many attempts brokered by the international community over decades to conclude such an outcome have failed.
- 4 The international debate on Palestinian statehood has shifted among some of our key partners over the past year, as the humanitarian costs of Israel's military response to Hamas' October 2023 terrorist attack have mounted. Recognition of a state that cannot, under occupation, meet a common test for recognition (i.e. effective control of a defined territory) is unorthodox. However, Hamas' appalling terrorism and the dominance of Israeli political and religious extremists are together rapidly reducing any prospect of a two-state solution. This has convinced some of our closest international partners – notably Australia, Canada, France and the UK – that recognition of Palestine is the only viable option to maintain the international community's long-standing support for a two-state solution. The State of Palestine's status will be a major theme of UN Leaders Week in New York from 22-28 September.

5 s6(a)

But Israel's words and deeds and Hamas' bloody intransigence have convinced those countries that recognising Palestine is an important way of protecting the two-state solution. In taking this position, they join 147 other states which have already recognised Palestine. These countries argue that recognition of a Palestinian state is the best available tool to isolate Hamas and to build a Palestinian leadership that will engage seriously and peacefully with Israel.¹

6 s6(a)

– in the sense that there is in fact currently no legitimate and viable government with effective control over the territory claimed by the Palestinian people, and there remains contention over the borders, the population and the government of Palestine (all key ingredients of a future state). It is also the case that s6(a)

Israel and Hamas' positions have only become more strident and intransigent. This raises questions of whether any practical connection actually exists between the international community's recognition of Palestine and the stated goal of "protecting the two-state solution". s6(a)

7 New Zealand has two options to consider:

- **Maintain current approach:** Continue to indicate that while it is a matter of when, not if, it would be premature to recognise the State of Palestine at this time, as questions remain about the state's viability and legitimacy – and because Hamas continues to hold hostages, terrorise Gaza and threaten Israel.
- **Recognition of Palestine, with conditions:** Recognise the State of Palestine, whilst simultaneously making clear that New Zealand's engagement with the Government of Palestine (i.e. the Palestinian Authority) would continue to be conditioned on the exclusion of Hamas from present and future Palestinian governance structures and respect for Israel's right to exist in peace and security.

8 Palestinian recognition is a lose-lose issue for New Zealand. While our decision will not make a material difference to outcomes in the Middle East, neither of these options are risk-free.

9 If New Zealand opts to maintain its existing position on recognition, this would generate a positive response from the United States and Israel. It would, however, leave us isolated from most of our key partners (excepting the United States, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and most Pacific Island countries). s6(a)

¹ More details of the reform package being led by France and Saudi Arabia are provided in Annex 1.

s6(a)

- 10 But joining Australia and other key partners in recognising the State of Palestine also carries risks. A decision to recognise the State of Palestine would prompt questions, faced by our partners in the UK, Australia and Canada, about how we can recognise the State of Palestine when many elements of statehood are missing, and when Hamas – an organisation New Zealand has designated as a terrorist entity – still governs Gaza, refuses to release hostages, and is determined to destroy Israel. The US and Israel are vigorously opposed to recognition, s6(a)
- Hamas will also attempt to claim our recognition as a victory.
- 11 New Zealand should maintain its current (“when, not if”) position on recognition, while:
- Emphasising that we continue to push for: an immediate ceasefire to end the human suffering, the unfettered access for humanitarian supplies into Gaza, for all sides to uphold international law, a two-state solution as a result of a comprehensive political settlement, and an end to illegal settlement activity and current military action by Israel; and
 - Making clear what New Zealand would need to see in order to recognise the State of Palestine, including:
 - Real progress in terms of the viability and legitimacy of a future State of Palestine, rather than mere commitments to do so;
 - The release by Hamas of all hostages; and
 - The disbanding and disarmament of Hamas and renouncement of violence and terrorism by all Palestinian political leaders.

Background

- 12 In 1947, a UN Committee recommended partitioning Palestine into two independent states: one Jewish and one Palestinian. The partition immediately led to conflict. In the decades since, Israel has expanded its territory and now occupies 85 percent of the original territory of Palestine.² Palestinians are divided physically and politically between the West Bank and Gaza. Hamas, an Islamist terrorist group backed by Iran, took control of Gaza in 2007. The West Bank is run by the internationally-recognised Palestinian Authority, which is led by Fatah, a Palestinian political party that recognises Israel and wants a two-state solution.

² See Annex 2 for maps illustrating the expansion of Israeli control over time.

- 13 New Zealand's long-standing approach to this conflict has been grounded in five key points:
- The need for a two-state solution;
 - The need for negotiations to reach a final peace deal;
 - Israel's right to exist in peace and security;
 - The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; and
 - Respect for international law.
- 14 Historically New Zealand has seen recognition of Palestine as most effective if it comes as the result of a negotiated settlement between the parties. This was premised on an assumption that both parties would continue trying to advance a peace process. While peace talks have been politically possible (albeit unsuccessful) in the past, the dynamics in the conflict have changed in the almost two years since Hamas' 7 October 2023 terrorist attacks on Israel. Those attacks demonstrated in the most violent way that Hamas remains determined to destroy the state of Israel. Its terrorist acts, including refusal to release Israeli hostages, have shown absolute disregard for Israeli and Palestinian life.
- 15 At the same time, the growing political influence of Israeli religious extremists, compounded by the shock of the 7 October attacks, have led the Israeli Government to formally declare opposition to a two-state solution. Israel is taking active steps to remove the prospect of any Palestinian state now or in the future. It has restricted the flow of humanitarian aid entering Gaza and openly discussed expelling and relocating the population of Gaza. Alongside its actions in Gaza, Israel has accelerated the construction of illegal settlements in the West Bank, severely limited internal movement and begun the process of fragmenting the West Bank. In the words of Israel's Defense Minister, these steps aim "to bury the idea of a Palestinian State".
- 16 New Zealand has demonstrated its opposition to these extremists on both sides by designating Hamas in its entirety as a terrorist organisation and by sanctioning Israeli Ministers taking tangible steps to undermine the two-state solution.

New Zealand's approach to state recognition

- 17 s9(2)(h) statehood is understood to require a permanent population; a defined territory; an effective government that exercises legal authority over its population and territory; and the capacity to conduct international relations with other States.³ The standards for statehood in s9(2)(h) are useful benchmarks. However, recognition of a State is ultimately a political choice. New Zealand has full flexibility to determine

s9(2)(h)

when and how to recognise another state. New Zealand's current practice is to take a case-by-case and pragmatic approach to recognition of states.

- 18 The Israel/Palestine case is uniquely complicated. There are no clear precedents for a case where a state whose creation is widely supported by the international community faces decades-long occupation. s9(2)(h), s6(a)
- 19 Recognition of a state which is under occupation and cannot exercise all elements of sovereignty is unorthodox. s9(2)(h)
does not have a single, unified government, it does not fully control its own territory and population, and its borders are in dispute and need to be negotiated with Israel. These significant gaps between the benchmarks of statehood and the current situation on the ground for the Palestinian people are at least partly due to Israel's ongoing military occupation and policy of proliferating illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory, with the explicit intent of blocking the emergence of a Palestinian state.
- 20 Notwithstanding the challenges of occupation, the Palestinian Authority exercises some elements of governance in the West Bank, including provision of basic services and conducting international relations. We already engage in some ways with the Palestinian Authority as if it were a state, albeit one that is not fully sovereign. We maintain a "Representative to Palestine"; officials meet regularly with Palestinian Authority counterparts; and New Zealand Ministers have had both calls and meetings with the Palestinian Authority President and his Ministers. We have supported the strengthening of Palestinian governance institutions and Palestinian participation in international organisations.

International support for recognition

- 21 New Zealand's current position on recognition of Palestine places us in a minority of the international community. Palestine is already recognised by 147 states, three quarters of the world's countries – including Ireland, Norway, Mexico, India, Türkiye, all Arab states, and almost all ASEAN states. In the past year, 16 new states have recognised Palestine or indicated their intention to do so imminently. Those close partners of New Zealand who currently do not recognise Israel include the United States, Germany, Singapore, South Korea, Japan and most Pacific Island countries.
- 22 Among those with a clear position on the subject, New Zealand is now among 28 countries which have neither recognised Palestine nor expressed an intention to do so soon. In addition to Israel and the United States, those 28 countries comprise:
- s6(a)

- s6(a)

Recognition Options

23 Against this background, we have two options to consider:

- **Option One: Maintain current approach:** We could continue to hold the position that while it is a matter of when, not if, it would be premature to recognise the State of Palestine at this time while questions remain about the State's viability and legitimacy and while Hamas continues to hold hostages, terrorise Gaza and threaten Israel.
- **Option Two: Recognition of Palestine, with conditions:** Recognise the State of Palestine, whilst simultaneously making clear that New Zealand's engagement with the Government of Palestine (i.e. the Palestinian Authority) would continue to be conditioned on the exclusion of Hamas from present and future Palestinian governance structures and respect for Israel's right to exist in peace and security.

Option One: Maintain current approach

24 The main arguments for maintaining our "when not if" approach are:

- s6(a)
in the sense that there is in fact currently no legitimate and viable government with effective control over the territory claimed by the Palestinian people, and there remains contention over the borders, the population and the government of Palestine (all key ingredients of a future state). s6(a)
- New Zealand should not contemplate recognition of the State of Palestine while Hamas – which New Zealand has designated as a terrorist organisation, and remains the de facto government of Gaza – continues to hold hostages, terrorise Palestinians, and threaten Israel.
- Recognition is open to political manipulation s6(a)
- There is no obvious link between more of the international community recognising the State of Palestine and the claimed objective of protecting the

⁴ s6(a)

two-state solution. s6(a)

choosing to recognise Palestine is having the opposite effect – i.e. of encouraging Hamas to resist negotiation (in the belief it is winning the global propaganda war) and of pushing Israel towards more intransigent and maximalist military positions.

- We have one opportunity to recognise Palestine and it would make sense to do so with greater prospects for peace and negotiation.
- s6(a)

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Option Two: Recognition of Palestine, with conditions

25 Proponents of recognition of Palestine make five key arguments:

- There is an urgent need to take action to prevent the prospect of a Palestinian state from disappearing.
- Recognition is the best means to build a strengthened and reformed Palestinian Authority committed to a two-state solution and respecting Israel's security needs. Recognition could lock in the commitments made by the Palestinian Authority to undertake reform, and seek to engage Israel on a revitalised peace deal.
- Recognition is the key to undermining extremism and removing Hamas from power in Gaza. Empowerment of the (moderate) Palestinian Authority is the best way to isolate Hamas.
- Recognition will also lock in wider regional and international commitments to strengthen Palestinian institutions. This includes supporting governance, de-militarisation, and the reconstruction of Gaza.
- Recognition is the pre-requisite for the remaining Arab states (most importantly Saudi Arabia) to recognise and normalise relations with Israel. This will in turn unlock regional integration, which is the ultimate security guarantee for Israel.

26 Other major arguments that have been advanced for why New Zealand should recognise Palestine are:

- Recognition best accords with our traditional approach to the region, by providing a clear endorsement of the two-state solution and a rejection of Palestinian and Israeli extremists seeking to extinguish it.
- Recognition best protects our international reputation as an even-handed, principled country with an independent foreign policy underpinned by support for the rules-based order. s6(a)
- Recognition will best protect our strategic and trade and economic interests in the Middle East and South East Asia. s6(a)

- 27 s9(2)(h) the concept of recognition of states is distinct from that of recognition of governments. If we choose to recognise a State, there is a separate question as to the extent we subsequently engage with that State's government. There are some states we recognise but with which we have limited diplomatic relations. Where New Zealand has concerns about the legitimacy of a government in a particular state, we have the option of demonstrating this through constraining our diplomatic relations. We currently follow this approach with Afghanistan, Myanmar, and s6(a)
- 28 New Zealand could therefore choose, with respect to Palestine, to recognise the State of Palestine, while simultaneously making clear that New Zealand's engagement with the Government of Palestine (i.e. the Palestinian Authority) would continue to be conditioned on the exclusion of Hamas from present and future Palestinian governance structures and respect of Israel's right to exist in peace and security.
- 29 In particular, New Zealand could state explicitly that while we are recognising the State of Palestine, we will not at this stage be:
- Establishing formal diplomatic relations with Palestine;
 - Accrediting Ambassadors between New Zealand and Palestine;
 - Increasing political-level engagement with the Palestinian Authority; or

- Increasing cooperative agreements with the Palestinian Authority.

New Zealand's recommended approach

- 30 It is recommended that New Zealand should maintain its current ("when, not if") position on recognition of the State of Palestine. There remain too many questions about aspects of the future State of Palestine to make it credible or justifiable for New Zealand to recognise it now. s6(a)
- The ongoing presence of Hamas as the de facto Government in Gaza – an integral part of the State of Palestine – also makes recognition at this time unjustifiable.
- 31 It will be important to clearly articulate our views on the overall issue of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians so that our approach to recognition is not misunderstood here or internationally. In particular, the announcement of New Zealand's position on recognition should:
- Emphasise that we continue to push for an immediate ceasefire to end the humanitarian suffering, the unfettered access for humanitarian supplies into Gaza, for all sides to adhere to international law, a two-state solution as a result of a comprehensive political settlement, and an end to illegal settlement activity and current military action by Israel; and
 - Make clear what New Zealand would need to see in order to recognise the State of Palestine, including:
 - Real progress on the viability and legitimacy of a future State of Palestine, rather than mere commitments in that direction;
 - The release by Hamas of all hostages; and
 - The disbanding and disarmament of Hamas and renouncement of terrorism by all Palestinian leaders.

Social cohesion

- 32 Recognition of Palestine is not a "top tier" issue for the vast majority of New Zealanders.⁵ Nevertheless, there remains considerable domestic interest in Israel and Palestine-related issues. Some New Zealanders hold strong opinions on the conflict, on both sides. While not on par with public action seen in the UK, US, or Australia, these issues have catalysed regular public protests and can have implications for New Zealand's social cohesion. s6(a)

The New Zealand Government's communications about its position on recognition of Palestine will need to take account of social cohesion and the potential for further, and increased, public protest in reaction to it. Relevant government agencies, including the Ministry

⁵ In the August 2025 IPSOS New Zealand Issues Monitor, only 2 percent of respondents chose "defence/foreign affairs/terrorism" as amongst the top three issues facing New Zealand. This compares to 60 percent who chose inflation/cost of living.

of Foreign Affairs and Trade, NZ Police, the Ministry for Ethnic Communities and the New Zealand intelligence community, are working together on this.

Financial Implications

33 There are no financial implications of this proposal.

Legislative Implications

34 There are no legislative implications.

Consultation

35 This paper was drafted by the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, following the oral item taken by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Cabinet on 11 August 2025 [CAB-25-MIN-0274]. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided input. All three political parties in the Coalition Government have had the opportunity to express their views on the issue of recognition of Palestine as this paper was prepared. A draft of this paper was shared, for consultation, with FPS Ministers and the three parties of the Coalition Government.

Communications

36 The Minister of Foreign Affairs will announce New Zealand's position on this issue.

Recommendation

The Minister for Foreign Affairs recommends the Committee:

agree that New Zealand should continue to hold its current position that while it is a matter of when, not if, it would be premature to recognise the State of Palestine at this time while questions remain about the State's viability and legitimacy and while Hamas continues to hold hostages, terrorise Gaza and threaten Israel.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Winston Peters

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Annex 1: Recognition as part of a reform package

Proponents of recognition of Palestine view it as one aspect of a wider package of measures to build momentum for a ceasefire, restart the political process between Israel and Palestine, and normalise Israel's relations with its region. This plan, led by France and Saudi Arabia,^{s6(a)}

The main aspects of this plan, as presented by Saudi Arabia and France, are:

Recognition of a Palestinian state	Recognising Palestine is intended to refocus global attention on a plan for a political resolution to the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict, of which the conflict in Gaza is the latest manifestation.
Stabilising Gaza and demobilising Hamas	Under the plan, Arab states have for the first time endorsed a process for Hamas' disarmament and demobilisation. Post-conflict, transitional governance arrangements will be established in Gaza, and an international stabilisation force deployed to establish and maintain security. (Egypt and the Gulf states will play a key role in reconstruction of Gaza, post-conflict.)
Reforming the Palestinian Authority	Under the plan, the Palestinian Authority has agreed to hold new elections within 12 months and to accelerate governance reforms. Many states engaging in the plan are outlining conditions and expectations of the Palestinian Authority for political and governance reforms, as well as providing support to the Palestinian Authority to build institutional capacity.
Restarting the political process	Any negotiation between Israel and the Palestinians must be founded on protection of Israel's security. This includes an active stabilisation programme for Gaza, demobilisation and disarmament of Hamas, building domestic political systems and dialogue, and economic integration with the region. As a package this will build the conditions where Israel will have greater confidence in engaging in a peace process.
Normalisation of Israel's relations with the Arab world	The major incentive for Israel's participation is the normalisation of relations with the Arab and wider Islamic world, with normalisation of Saudi Arabia the key final prize. Normal diplomatic relations in Israel's region is one of Israel's key long-term strategic priorities.

Annex 2: Israel-Palestine: territorial shifts over time

British Administration 1917-48



During the British administration of Palestine, the Jewish population increased significantly from approximately 56,000 in 1918 to 608,000 in 1948.

UN Partition Plan 1948



In 1947, a UN Special Committee recommended partitioning Palestine into two independent states, one Jewish and one Palestinian Arab. This plan gave Israel 55% of the territory of Palestine.

After the 1967 War



After the 1967 War, Israel took control of Gaza and the West Bank and began settlement construction. Israel now controls approximately 85% of Palestine.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank today

