

Middle East

New Zealand and the Arab / Israel conflict

The New Zealand Government has long maintained an even-handed and constructive approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and will continue to do so. New Zealand upholds Israel's right to exist within secure and recognised borders. At the same time, New Zealand considers that the Palestinians have the right to self-determination and to a viable and territorially [contiguous state](#).

In this context New Zealand has endeavoured to play a constructive role through peacekeeping deployments, humanitarian aid contributions and diplomacy. New Zealand supports the negotiation of a just, enduring and comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East, in line with relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions – including UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338, and the principles derived from successive agreements between the two parties. Any change or departure from the pre-1967 borders would have to be subject to agreement by both sides.

In late 2002 the Quartet (the UN, US, EU and Russia) agreed on a Roadmap towards a peaceful resolution of the Arab Israel conflict. New Zealand welcomed the Quartet Roadmap as providing the best framework for a durable and comprehensive peace between the parties. While New Zealand may not be a major player in this region, we have made clear our support for re-engagement in the Roadmap for peace process, and the efforts of the Quartet in this regard.

The Roadmap sets out 3 clear phases, timelines, target dates, and benchmarks aimed at progress through a series of reciprocal steps by the two parties. As a performance-based plan, progress depends upon the good faith efforts of the parties, and their compliance with each of the obligations.

Q: What is New Zealand's position on Jerusalem?

A: New Zealand does not recognise Israel's annexation of Jerusalem in 1980, nor does it recognise that city as the capital of Israel. New Zealand considers that the city's final status can be resolved only in the context of negotiations between the parties.

Q: What is New Zealand's position on the Syrian Golan, and the West Bank?

A: New Zealand considers the Golan Heights, and the West Bank to be occupied territory.

Q: What is New Zealand's position on settlements in the occupied territories?

A: New Zealand considers that Israel has no mandate in international law to build permanent settlements in occupied territory. We regard the settlements as an obstacle to peace. New Zealand advocates the building of trust, not settlements.

Q: Does New Zealand recognise a state of Palestine?

A: New Zealand has a policy of implied recognition of states, that is, it allows recognition to be inferred from the nature and extent of our dealings with that state, unless there is good reason to depart from this.

In the case of a future Palestinian state, recognition will be considered when the Palestinian leadership has formally declared statehood. It has not yet done this. At that time, New Zealand would examine whether it satisfied the conditions which must be fulfilled before a state can be said to exist under international law, and respond accordingly.

Q: What is New Zealand’s position on the election of Hamas to the Palestinian Authority?

A: The New Zealand Government has acknowledged that the Palestinian elections reflected the will of the Palestinian people and must be respected. At the same time, the New Zealand Government has made it clear that Hamas must renounce violence and recognise Israel’s parallel right to exist in peace and security. In concert with key international players, including the European Union, New Zealand will continue to urge both sides to desist from any action that would threaten the viability of an agreed two-state solution.

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Q: Does New Zealand provide any assistance to the Palestinian people?

A: New Zealand provides assistance for the essential and well-regarded humanitarian programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In addition, New Zealand provides core funding for a number of other humanitarian and international voluntary agencies – including the United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and the Red Cross Family - all of which play a key role in the provision and delivery of humanitarian assistance in the region.

Q: How does New Zealand vote in the United Nations?

A: New Zealand is not a member of the Security Council.

In principle, New Zealand does not support the introduction of political issues and related texts in most specialist forums, where the issue raised is not of direct relevance to the work of the agency concerned.

In the General Assembly and some specialised agencies, however, New Zealand supports resolutions which are balanced and would contribute to the peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. For some time New Zealand has been part of a large majority of countries that each year in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) supports a range of resolutions relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Read [further details on the various resolutions and how New Zealand voted](#).

Q: Does New Zealand have peacekeepers in the region?

A: New Zealand has longstanding commitments to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), the first UN peacekeeping operation which was established in 1948 and has military observers based in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, and to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), a non-UN force created as a result of the 1979 Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel.

New Zealand currently has 8 personnel serving with UNTSO, based in Israel, Lebanon and Syria, including the Chief of Staff, Major General Clive Lilley, and has 26 personnel serving with the Multinational Force and Observers, at the border of the two countries in the Sinai Peninsula.

Q: Would New Zealand impose sanctions on either party ?

A: It is not New Zealand's intention to impose sanctions against either side unilaterally. A trade embargo against Israeli or Palestinian goods would put New Zealand in breach of its international obligations, unless it was mandated by the United Nations Security Council.

New Zealand's strong preference is to continue to work through multilateral channels in support of constructive initiatives that will bring about a sustainable peace

Q: What about the human rights dimensions of the conflict?

A: Neither side is conforming to international human rights norms.

New Zealand has made known to the Israeli authorities its deep concerns about ongoing reports of breaches of human rights norms in the occupied territories.

New Zealand has also made it clear to the Palestinian Authority that it has obligations towards its people and those in neighbouring states.

New Zealand has condemned the extensive breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law by Israel and by Hezbollah during the recent conflict centred on Lebanon.

In the context in which it has been used, the term "contiguous" relates to the need for an independent Palestinian State to have enough territory and resources to make it politically and economically viable, and that each of the parts have territorial connectivity. [Back](#)