

16 March 2022

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OIA 27953

Tēnā koe John Trafalgar

I refer to your email of 11 March 2022 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

Please advise whether New Zealand has any plans to close its embassy in Moscow, in light of Russia's invasion into Ukraine. If so, when or if not, why not?

New Zealand has consistently made clear its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We repeat our call for Russia to act consistently with its international obligations, cease military operations in Ukraine, withdraw its troops and return to diplomatic negotiations as a pathway to resolve this conflict. We join the international community in calling on Russia to ensure all possible steps are taken to protect civilians, in line with international humanitarian law. We remain in close contact with partners, including on measures being considered by the international community. We are united.

At this time we do not intend to close the New Zealand Embassy in Moscow, which leads New Zealand's diplomatic outreach to Russia and, therefore, plays a crucial role in ensuring that New Zealand's perspective is understood by the Russian Government, and that New Zealand's voice is part of the global diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in Ukraine. The Embassy also provides essential consular support to New Zealanders in Russia.

The New Zealand Government has taken other significant and unprecedented steps to demonstrate our unequivocal condemnation of the unprovoked and unjustified attack by the Putin regime on Ukraine, including travel bans, export controls, suspension of diplomatic activities and new legislation applying sanctions. Information about New Zealand's response can be found here: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/countries-and-regions/europe/ukraine/russian-invasion-of-ukraine/>

Please note that we may publish this letter (with your personal details redacted) on the Ministry's website.

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 blue ink, appearing to read "Julie Anne Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Julie-Anne Lee
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade