

## Annex One: Summary and Extracts of Updates provided to Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 12 July to 26 October 2022

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Please note the large amounts of information have been withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i) and 9(2)(a) of the OIA.

The information in italics under the heading **Selected Extracts able to be released** contains extracts from the update.

### Informal Heads-up – 12 July 2022

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Contains detailed information regarding New Zealand nationals and their circumstances in Iran, as well as the consular assistance provided.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

#### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

*We are currently confirming the approach we will take internally. We will look to brief Ministerial offices following - we will share this advice with you for wider information/to ensure the system is across the issue as necessary.*

*One issue that we wanted to give you a quick heads up on is that we will be reaching out to (9)(2)(a) to seek information as it will be important to be able to categorically reject that the travellers work for the NZ Government in anyway.*

*Finally for your awareness, in future communications on this, in line with normal consular provisions, we will not use the couple's real name beyond an absolute need to know.*

*Please let me know if you need any more information at this stage. Otherwise see you at 5pm (and happy to discuss in the margins as helpful)!*

### Update 1 – 12 July 2022

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Contains detailed information regarding New Zealand nationals and their circumstances in Iran, as well as the consular assistance provided.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

#### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

*In line with standard consular protocols, the personal details of the individuals will be treated as need-to-know close-hold – [we have attached a summary of the facts. For the avoidance of doubt, these facts are for reference only and not for public comment].*

*Going forward we will refer to the couple as Jack and Jill and the case as Operation Mercury.*

- We have advised DPMC (Director NSSD) and at this stage agreed it is not necessary to call a Watch Group. We will keep relevant agencies informed on an as-needed basis.*

*... if it becomes public, it will make engaging with the Iranian system significantly more difficult*

*If there were to be any media inquiries, our suggested media line is:*

*We do not comment on consular matters for privacy reasons.*

*The following information is provided for reference only. It is not for public comment and should be protected for privacy reasons.*

## Update 2 – 15 July 2022

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Contains detailed information regarding NZ nationals and their circumstances in Iran, and consular assistance provided.

Contains information about previous New Zealand consular cases

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

*We attach an update for the Minister and Prime Minister on developments in, and action on, our sensitive consular case concerning... (6)(a) ... two New Zealanders in Iran.*

*Also attached is the Communications Plan which has been worked through between MFAT MEDIA and DPMC Comms.*

*Talking points/Q and As:*

*PM/Minister comment: We are aware of reports relating to two New Zealand citizens in Iran... (6)(a) ... I can assure you we are working through all available channels to get further information about their situation and to provide consular assistance.*

*A. We do not comment on consular issues*

*Q. What kind of conditions are they being held in and where?*

*A. We can't comment on that.*

*Q. Have they been charged with anything? If yes what is the charge?*

*A. We can't comment on that*

*Q. Have they made contact with you or their families? If so how are they?*

*A. We don't comment on consular issues*

*Q. Has there been a ransom request for their release? Does the Government pay ransoms?*

*A. We don't comment on consular issues*

*Q. What are New Zealand's relations with Iran like?*

*A. New Zealand has a longstanding relationship with Iran (our Embassy in Tehran was the first in the Middle East, established in 1975). While we may agree to disagree on some issues, the friendship between our nations remains. We continue to engage in dialogue on numerous issues in a mutually respectful manner.*

*Q. Is it safe for New Zealanders to go to Iran?*

*A. The advice on our SafeTravel website is "Do Not Travel To Iran". We ask New Zealanders to refer to SafeTravel before any overseas travel. [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)*

- *Thursday and Friday are the weekend in Iran. Monday is a public holiday. We expect limited traction with the Iranian system over this period.*

*Travel Advice*

- *The New Zealand Government travel advice for Iran is do not travel. There are currently 18 New Zealanders in Iran.*

- *DPMC and MFAT Communications teams have developed a media plan for the government*

## Update 3 – 18 July 2022

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Contains detailed information regarding planned consular assistance to the New Zealanders, personal information, information from partners and comments related to the situation and Iranian system.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 6(d), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Travel Advice*

- *The New Zealand Government travel advice for Iran is do not travel. There are currently 18 New Zealanders in Iran.*

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## Update 4 – 20 July 2022

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Contains personal information, information in developments in the New Zealanders' situation, comments on Iranian system, and consular assistance provided.

Contains personal information and information received from partners.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

- *The communications plan continues to be updated as needed and shared with PMO and the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.*

## Update 5 – 21 July 2022

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Contains personal information, information in developments in the New Zealanders' situation, comments on Iranian system, and consular assistance provided.

Contains personal information and information received from partners.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 6 – 22 July 2022

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Contains personal information, information on developments in the New Zealanders' situation, comments on Iranian system, and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 7 – 24 July 2022

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Contains personal information, information on developments in the New Zealanders' situation, comments on Iranian system, and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 8 – 25 July 2022

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Contains personal information, information on developments in the New Zealanders' situation, comments on Iranian system, and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 9 – 26 July 2022

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Contains personal information, information on developments in the New Zealanders' situation, comments on Iranian system, and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 10 – 27 July 2022

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Contains personal information, information on developments in the New Zealanders' situation, comments on Iranian system, and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 11 – 28 July 2022

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Contains personal information about the New Zealanders and details of consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Now that it is the Iranian weekend, we may not see significant developments for a while. Officials continue to plan next steps in case escalation required.*

*With Thursday and Friday being the weekend in Iran it is now unlikely that there will be any news until Saturday at the earliest.*

## Update 12 – 1 August 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system and personal information including the New Zealanders' situation and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

**Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Officials continue to plan next steps in case escalation required.*

*MFAT has observed an uptick in public comments on the couple's Instagram page in recent days raising questions about their whereabouts.*

## Update 13 – 2 August 2022

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Contains information from and about the Iranian system, personal information including the New Zealanders' situation and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 14 – 3 August 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

**Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Tomorrow (Wednesday Tehran time) is the last day of the Iranian working week. Should there be no developments overnight*

## Update 15 – 4 August 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

**Selected Extracts able to be released**

*It is now a long weekend in Iran (the public holidays of Tasoua Hosseini and Ashoura – the second most important on the Iranian calendar). Given the long weekend*

## Update 16 – 12 August 2022

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Contains personal information including location, summary details and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate material on Operation Mercury Background

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

**Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Our intention is to provide this reporting at least once per week. We will be in more frequent contact in case of substantive developments.*

## Update 17 – 19 August 2022

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Contains information from and about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 18 – 26 August 2022

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Contains information from and about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 19 – 31 August 2022

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Contains detailed personal information about the New Zealanders and their situation.

Contains information withheld under section 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 20 – 2 September 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 21 – 9 September 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system and personal information about the New Zealanders and their situation.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under section 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Ministerial phone call*

*A phone call between Hon Nanaia Mahuta and her Iranian counterpart H.E. Dr Hossein Amir Abdollahian is scheduled for 7.30pm NZT on Monday 12 September.*

## Update 22 – 15 September 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 23 – 23 September 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

## Update 24 – 30 September 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

*We are reviewing our media strategy in light of potential developments.*

## Update 25 – 7 October 2022

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Contains comments about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a), 9(2)(g)(i) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Recent developments*

- *There have been no significant developments since the last update prepared for Ministers on Wednesday. (I have reattached that update for completeness).*

*Many of New Zealand's Iranian community 10,000 are of dual nationality and retain close links with Iran.*

### **TALKING POINTS FOR PM/MFA WHEN STORY BREAKS AND THEY HAVE CROSSED THE BORDER:**

- *We have been providing consular assistance to two New Zealanders in Iran, and I can confirm they have now left the country. Consular officials have been in close and regular contact with them and their families. I can't comment further on this case due to privacy concerns*

### **If asked:**

- *Consular officials have been providing support to the New Zealanders and their families since we became aware of the situation. We do not comment on consular issues.*
- *We don't comment on consular issues.*
- **[Exactly how were you helping them/what did the Government do]** *Officials have been providing daily consular support to these individuals and their families since we became aware of their situation. I'm not going to provide any further details for privacy reasons.*
- **[What kind of conditions were they being held in and where]** *I can't comment on that.*
- **[Have they been charged with anything? If yes what is the charge]** *I can't comment on consular issues.*

- **[Was this why you asked you had a bi-lateral phone call with the Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister on 13 September]** I have had a call with my counterpart, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, during which this matter was discussed.
- **[What kind of deal did you do to get them out?...9(2)(g)(i)...** There has not been any "deal" with Iran. New Zealand has a long-standing and robust position on human rights issues globally, including with respect to Iran. I have conveyed New Zealand's views on human rights issues in Iran publicly, across multiple fora and bilaterally.
- **[Has there been a ransom request for their release? Does the Government pay ransoms]** It is a matter of government policy not to comment on ransom demands or otherwise. What I can say is that the New Zealand government has a long-standing policy of not paying ransoms and that policy has been consistently applied.
- **[Did the couple get special treatment?]** No. The New Zealand Government provides assistance via MFAT to New Zealanders overseas in a large variety of circumstances
- **[What are New Zealand's relations with Iran like]** New Zealand has a long-standing relationship with Iran (our Embassy in Tehran was the first in the Middle East, established in 1975). While we may agree to disagree on some issues, the constructive relationship between our nations remains. We continue to engage in dialogue on numerous issues in a mutually respectful manner.
- **[Is it safe for New Zealanders to go to Iran]** Currently we are aware of 24 New Zealanders in Iran. The advice on our SafeTravel website is "Do Not Travel to Iran". We ask New Zealanders to refer to SafeTravel before any overseas travel [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)
- **[What would you tell New Zealanders thinking about travelling to Iran?]** The advice on our SafeTravel website is "Do Not Travel to Iran". We ask New Zealanders to refer to SafeTravel before any overseas travel [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz)
- **[Was this why you asked MFAT to meet with the Iranian Ambassador in Wellington on 30 September]** We asked for the meeting to convey our concerns over the death of Mahsa Amini and the resulting human rights protests.
- **[Why did the Government assist the couple given that its SafeTravel advice on Iran was and is Do Not Travel]** The New Zealand Government provides assistance via MFAT to New Zealanders overseas in a large variety of circumstances. I want to take this opportunity to stress the importance of all New Zealanders adhering to MFAT's Safe Travel advice.
- **[How many officials have been working on this case and for how long?]** A number of officials have been involved as required.
- **[Will you be seeking financial compensation from the couple for officials' time, given they ignored SafeTravel advice]** No. The New Zealand Government provides assistance via MFAT to New Zealanders overseas in a large variety of circumstances.

- **[Was New Zealand's position on the current human rights protests in Iran compromised because of this case]** New Zealand has a long-standing and robust position on human rights issues globally, including with respect to Iran. I have conveyed New Zealand's views on human rights issues in Iran publicly, across multiple fora and bilaterally.
- **[Are you aware of any New Zealanders in a similar position either in Iran or other countries?]** We don't comment on the details of consular cases.

**EXISTING TPs FOR BEFORE THEY ARE RELEASED:**

**Holding line – to be used until further notice:**

Any information about New Zealanders overseas is a private matter. I have no comment to make.

**If the story breaks (and following discussion):**

We are aware of reports relating to two New Zealand citizens in Iran. We are providing consular assistance to the New Zealanders. Consular officials are also in close and regular contact with their families.

**If asked - if story breaks:**

**Duplicate information, see page 90.**

**[Have they made contact with you or their families? If so how are they]**

Consular officials from our Embassy in Tehran have been in regular contact with them.

**[Have you summoned the Iranian Ambassador in Wellington]** MFAT officials have discussed this issue with the Ambassador. However, currently the situation is being handled by New Zealand officials on the ground in Iran. New Zealand's Ambassador in Tehran is working with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant agencies on the ground. Our Tehran team is also in regular contact with the New Zealanders.

**[Have you, as Minister, spoken to your Iranian counterpart on this matter]** I have had a call with my counterpart, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, during which this matter was discussed.

## Update 26 – 12 October 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

### **Selected Extracts able to be released**

#### *Recent developments*

- *There have been no substantive developments in Operation Mercury since our 5 October situation report.*
- We will provide timely reporting in case of any substantive developments.

## Update 27 – 18 October 2022

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

**Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Please see below and attached an update on Op Mercury, provided ahead of the usual weekly schedule due to (positive) substantive developments:*

**Update 28 – 20 October 2022**

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Contains detailed personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under section 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

**Selected Extracts able to be released**

*MFAT expects to immediately receive further media enquiries, and will provide lines confirming the two New Zealanders have left Iran, are safe and well, and that we will not comment further for privacy reasons.*

**Update 29 – 25 October 2022**

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Contains information about the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

**Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Please see attached today's Op Mercury update. Please note in particular the considerable social media and media activity outlined towards the end of this update.*

*Travel advice*

- *That updated advice will reconfirm the Do Not Travel advisory that has been in place since early 2020*
- *The travel advisory update will be accompanied by a press release reiterating the existing 'do not travel' setting for Iran*

**Update 30 – 26 October 2022**

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Contains information from the Iranian system, personal information about the New Zealanders and consular assistance provided.

Contains duplicate information.

Contains information withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(g)(ii) of the OIA.

Briefing for virtual meeting with H.E. Dr Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Monday 12 September, 7:30pm NZT attached to this update (summary supplied)

**Selected Extracts able to be released**

*Please see attached today's Op Mercury update, focusing on J & J's successful departure from Iran.*

*There are currently 19 New Zealand citizens registered on Safetravel as being in Iran, though we estimate the number of unregistered New Zealanders to be much higher,*

*including dual Iran-New Zealand citizens. Those registered will all have been sent the travel advisory that was updated this morning, in addition to three SafeTravel messages sent to registrants in recent weeks highlighting increased risks associated with recent protest activity.*

*On 12 September, Minister Mahuta held a virtual call with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian*

*Minister Mahuta then raised Operation Mercury*

*Please find attached a slightly updated version of the brief for tonight's call with the Iranian FM, to reflect the latest developments on the Mercury case.*

*We can also give her a verbal update tonight before the call.*

Released under the Official Information Act

## Annex Two: Summary of documents in scope of your OIA request provided to Minister of Foreign Affairs 12 September to 28 October 2022

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Summaries provided in accordance with section 16(1)(e) of the OIA.

Please note information that is outside the scope of your OIA request has not been summarised.

Information within the documents summarised has been withheld under sections 6(a), 6(b)(i), 6(d) and 9(2)(a) of the OIA.

### Briefing for virtual meeting with H.E. Dr Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Monday 12 September, 7:30pm NZT

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Date: 12 September 2022

#### Summary:

The purpose of this briefing was to prepare the Minister of Foreign Affairs for her virtual meeting with H.E. Dr Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Minister was briefed on a number of topics to raise on this call. These topics included raising the ongoing consular case involving two New Zealanders in Iran to seek an update from the Iranian Foreign Minister on when the case might be resolved and our citizens allowed to leave Iran.

### Submission: Iran – Joint Statement at United Nations Human Rights Council

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Date: 29 September 2022

#### Summary:

The purpose of this briefing was to seek Ministerial decision on whether Aotearoa New Zealand should sign up to a joint statement on recent events in Iran in the context of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The paper presented the Minister with analysis and advice on various positions that Aotearoa New Zealand could take. The paper noted that Aotearoa New Zealand's policy choices with respect to Iran are likely to continue to involve complex considerations over the coming weeks/months, particularly while officials managed Operation Mercury - the ongoing consular case involving two New Zealanders in Iran.

## Formal Message: MFAT Makes Representations with Iranian Ambassador on Human Rights

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Date: 1 October 2022

### Summary:

This Formal Message reported on a meeting organised at Aotearoa New Zealand's request between Senior MFAT officials and the Iranian Ambassador to Aotearoa New Zealand on September 30 2022. In this meeting officials conveyed Aotearoa New Zealand's concerns over the death of Mahsa Amini, the circumstances in which it happened and the response to spontaneous public demonstrations that have broken out in Iran over the incident. Officials also raised the importance of protecting women's rights and freedom of expression. Officials took the opportunity to seek an update from the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the ongoing consular case involving two New Zealanders in Iran.

## Submission: Iran – Joint Statement by the Freedom Online Coalition

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Date: 7 October 2022

### Summary:

The purpose of this briefing was to seek Ministerial decision on Aotearoa New Zealand's approach to the proposed joint statement by the Freedom Online Coalition on internet shutdowns in Iran. The paper presented the Minister with analysis and advice on various positions that Aotearoa New Zealand could take, in particular advising that the content of the statement is in line with Aotearoa New Zealand's policy positions, including internet freedoms, but noted that the timing of the statement was challenging considering that Operation Mercury - the ongoing consular case involving two New Zealanders in Iran – was active at the time. The paper noted that Aotearoa New Zealand's policy choices with respect to Iran continue to involve complex considerations and trade-offs while officials managed Operation Mercury.

## Submission: Iran – Resetting New Zealand's engagement

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Date: 28 October 2022

### Summary:

The purpose of this briefing was to seek Ministerial approval for resetting Aotearoa New Zealand's engagement with Iran in response to the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran following the death of Masha Amini. The paper noted that responding to recent developments in Iran had involved complex considerations and trade-offs while officials managed Operation Mercury.