

Ref: 221558

7 March 2023

Ali Anwar
via fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe Ali,

Response to your request for Official Information

On 7 February 2023 you requested the following information from the Human Rights Commission (“the Commission”) under the Official Information Act 1982 (“OIA”):

All communications between Paul Hunt and the following zionist lobby groups:

- *Israel Institute of New Zealand*
- *New Zealand Jewish Council*
- *Community Security Group.*

When making this request, you advised that you are writing an article “*about Paul Hunt’s repeated attacks on anyone who criticises the so-called ‘state’ of ‘israel’s attacks on the indigenous population of the nation of Palestine that it occupies.*”

Statements about the Chief Human Rights Commissioner

At the outset, we do not accept your assertion that the Chief Commissioner, Paul Hunt, has made repeated, or indeed any, attacks on persons who criticise Israel.

Under the Human Rights Act, the functions of the Commission include to encourage harmonious relations between individuals and diverse groups in New Zealand society, and to promote racial equality and cultural diversity.¹ To fulfil these functions, both the Chief Commissioner and the Race Relations Commissioner, Meng Foon, continually engage with individuals and groups from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds across Aotearoa society. While the Commissioners have engaged with members of the Jewish community, they have equally worked alongside representatives from other ethnic communities in Aotearoa including the Palestinian community.

The Commission is acutely aware of the grave human rights situation experienced by persons in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Gaza and Israel, and the impacts this has on affected communities in Aotearoa. In a [statement](#) issued in 2021, the Chief Commissioner and Race Relations Commissioner acknowledged the terrible harm and suffering experienced by people in these territories, while urging affected communities to do everything they can to foster respectful relationships.

Neither the Chief Commissioner, nor any representative of the Commission, has attacked anyone who criticises Israel. The Commission does not expect everyone to agree with each other. But in a plural democratic society, grounded on Te Tiriti o

¹ Human Rights Act 1993, s 5(1)(b) and (c).

Waitangi and human rights, public discussion must be respectful of diversity.

Request for communications

On 16 February 2023, we wrote to you to advise that your OIA request for communications between the Chief Commissioner and the above-listed organisations would be difficult to meet without substantial collation or research. We asked that you consider refining your request, such as by limiting it to only cover correspondence between the Chief Commissioner and these organisations within the last year (i.e. 7 February 2022 to 7 February 2023). You did not respond to this request.

Accordingly, without a response from you and due to resourcing implications which would unduly interfere with the Commission's other operations, we have made the decision to limit our response to your request by providing you with communications between the Chief Commissioner and the above-listed organisations between 7 February 2022 and 7 February 2023. A copy of this correspondence is **attached**.

Some redactions have been applied to the documents that are included in the bundle. The relevant OIA withholding provisions relied upon are noted within the redacted portions, in particular under s 9(2)(a) of the OIA to protect the privacy of natural persons. We consider it is in the best interests of the Commission's staff and individuals representing the Jewish community organisations to withhold their names and contact details. With the exception of the Chief Commissioner and Race Relations Commissioner, we are therefore withholding the names and contact details of all other named individuals.

Three documents have also been withheld in their entirety, as they are subject to an obligation of confidence in terms of s 9(2)(ba) of the OIA. These three documents comprise two bulletins and one monthly report sent by the Community Security Group ("CSG") to the Chief Commissioner. The Commission has a duty of confidence in respect of security bulletins and reports received from the CSG. Waiving confidentiality of these communications without consent from CSG would breach this duty of confidence and prejudice the future supply of similar information to the Commission.

In reaching these decisions, the Commission considers that, in the circumstances, these reasons for withholding are not outweighed by other considerations which render it desirable, in the public interest, to make the information available.

Alternative avenues

If you are not satisfied with this response, under the Official Information Act you are entitled to complain to the Ombudsman's Office. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or on freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Philippa Moran

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New Zealand Human Rights Commission | Te Kāhui Tika Tangata