



ODESC

Officials' Committee for Domestic
and External Security Coordination

Israel/Hamas Conflict Watch Group #1 Minutes 19 October 2023 1400hrs Cabinet Committee Room

Attendees

Agency	Attendee
	9(2)(g)(i)
DPMC	
Education	
GCSB	
MBIE	
MEC	
MFAT	
MoD	
MoH	
MSD	
NZDF	
NZSIS (incl CTAG)	
Police	
Public Service Commission	
Te Puni Kokiri	
Te Whatu Ora	

Introduction

1. On 19 October 2023, the ODESC System convened the first Watch Group regarding the Israel/Hamas conflict. The purpose of the Watch Group was to ensure consistent understanding of risks; ensure domestic security arrangements were sufficient; clarify roles and responsibilities for social cohesion activities; and ensure a holistic approach was being taken for community support.

Situation, Intelligence, and Activity Updates

2. Agencies confirmed that the terrorism threat level and the threat of violent protest in New Zealand both remained assessed as low. Agencies noted that ^{6(a)} [REDACTED] it seemed highly likely that a ground incursion into Gaza would occur in the very short term. ^{9(2)(g)(i)} [REDACTED]
- s 6(a)
3. Concerns were raised that an Israeli ground incursion into Gaza could also cause the conflict to spread beyond Gaza and Israel.
4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) provided specific updates on their activities and current focuses.
5. MFAT
- MFAT advised that they had stood up an Emergency Coordination Centre in response to the conflict.
 - MFAT's initial focus was strategic communications and a consular response supporting New Zealanders to evacuate the area.
 - MFAT noted that the effects of the conflict on social cohesion in partner countries could forecast the effects in New Zealand. They had tasked New Zealand diplomatic Posts in Europe and the Middle East region to talk to partner governments about the effects on social cohesion in their countries, and what steps they were taking to mitigate these. MFAT advised they would share the outcomes of the tasking with agencies.
 - MFAT emphasised the need for clear, simple, and consistent government messaging.
6. NZDF
- NZDF noted that they currently had Liaison Officers based in ^{6(a)} [REDACTED].
 - NZDF's focus was on working with MFAT to provide options to Government. The options would be based on scenario work and forecasting, and could include prepositioning assets and/or people.
 - NZDF was also supporting consular efforts, safety of consular staff, and NZDF personnel deployed on the ground in the region, including at the United Nations Truce Supervision Operation on the border between Lebanon and Israel.
 - ^{6(a), 6(b)(i)} [REDACTED]
7. Relevant agencies were coordinating intelligence activity to develop the domestic threat picture. This included threat discovery, identification of potential threat escalation, foreign intelligence, and assurance relating to known persons of interest. Agencies were confident the right channels had been established, and that communities were raising threat information with agencies.

8. Agencies also noted upcoming events of relevance to the overall security context. These included:
- The Coronial Inquiry into the Christchurch masjidain attack, beginning the week of 23 October.
 - An inter-faith meeting being facilitated by the Ministry for Ethnic Communities (MEC) was scheduled for 6-8 November.
 - He Whenua Taurikura (Counter-Terrorism Hui) was scheduled for 5-6 December.
 - Internationally, the Christchurch Call 2023 Leaders' Summit was scheduled to be held on 10 November in Paris.
9. Police advised that they had specific security operations in place for the Coronial Inquiry and He Whenua Taurikura.
10. MEC advised that their efforts were focused on bringing New Zealanders together, through messaging and working with faith leaders. The scheduled inter-faith meeting was still expected to go ahead. The Chair noted that the Human Rights Commission (HRC) had also reached out to offer support. MEC would confirm that they were connected with the HRC.
11. MEC's chief executive had asked for messaging for other public service chief executives to use in communications with their staff if needed, acknowledging that New Zealand has affected kaimahi across the public service.
12. MEC noted the importance of neutrality when working with affected communities. Agencies noted that the term 'neutral' in and of itself has connotations in this conflict.

Key risks and implications

13. The Watch Group canvassed several risks and issues arising, and the mitigations underway, particularly with regards to domestic safety and security. ^{9(2)(g)(i)}
14. ^{9(2)(g)(i)} . Police's priority for mitigation was reassurance and engagement. They also continue to support planned protests, and emphasised the importance of timely and sensitive responses to reports of hate-related activity. Agencies noted that assessments identified misinformation and disinformation as a key driver of discontent and undermined social cohesion.
15. The Ministry of Education (MoE) advised that they had been in contact with Jewish and Muslim faith-based schools, some of whom had requested more safety and security support than others. They had also engaged with Palestinian communities and were receiving reports of Palestinian children being harassed online and in person in schools. MoE was undertaking discrete community engagement rather than direct messaging to the sector, given the sensitivities. The Watch Group noted that international partner advice was that universities were becoming a hub for protests and related activity as well.

16. Agencies discussed social cohesion more broadly and noted that community engagement was occurring with a number of public service agencies, often with multiple agencies at a time, but there had not been any cross-faith meetings yet; MEC's inter-faith meeting would potentially be the first since the onset of the conflict.

17. ^{9(2)(g)(i)}

18. ^{6(a), 6(c)}

Communications and messaging

19. Agencies noted that due to the nature of the dynamics surrounding the conflict, communications needed to be carefully crafted, down to individual word choices. Individuals, communities, and international partners were all keeping a close eye on government communications regarding the conflict.

20. Following the Inter-Agency Working Group held on 11 October, DPMC Communications had set up a communications coordination group with other agencies. The focus had been on community messaging, which currently sat with MFAT. There was an additional focus on staying connected to other agencies and supporting communities. DPMC encouraged any agencies, who were not part of the group but wanted to be, to get in touch with DPMC's strategic communications team.

Next meeting

21. The Watch Group determined there was no need to meet again at this time, and agreed that the triggers agreed by the Inter-Agency Working Group held on 11 October remained extant. Three new triggers were added, indicated below in **bold**.

Triggers for consideration of escalation relating to domestic security concerns:

s 6(a)

s 6(a)



Triggers for consideration of escalation relating to the international/diplomatic response:

s 6(a)



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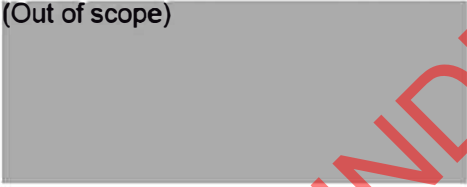
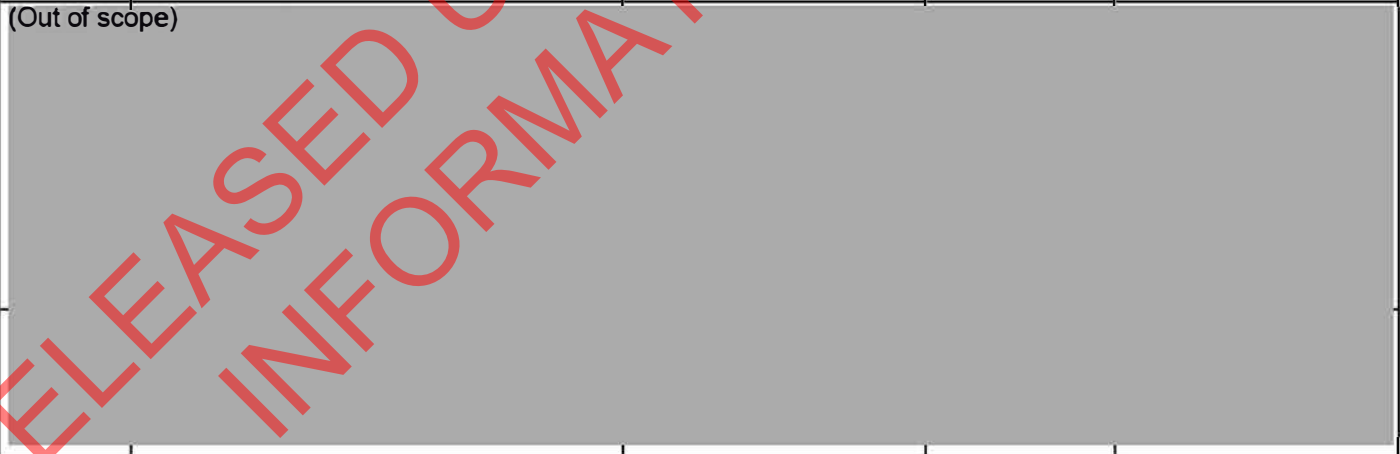
**HON Erica Stanford
MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION**

MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND EMPLOYMENT OFFICIALS' MEETING
Wednesday 24 January 2024
9.00am – 9.30am
5.3 Executive Wing, Parliament Building

AGENDA

Attendees: Carolyn Tremain, Nic Blakeley, Alison McDonald, Jivan Grewal, Stephen Vaughan

Apologies:

#	Topic	Person	Purpose	Oral/Paper
1.	Policy Update (Out of scope)  - Palestine	Jivan Grewal	Discussion	Oral
(Out of scope) 				

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**HON Erica Stanford
MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION**

MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND EMPLOYMENT OFFICIALS' MEETING
Monday 19 February 2024
1.30pm – 2.30pm
5.3 Executive Wing, Parliament Building

AGENDA

Attendees: Carolyn Tremain, Nic Blakeley, Alison McDonald, Jivan Grewal, Stephen Vaughan, Libby Gerard, Lee Gerrard, Fiona Whiteridge, Alejandra Mercado

#	Topic	Person	Purpose	Oral/Paper
	(Out of scope)			
3.	Any other business - Gaza refugee process (Out of scope)	Hon Erica Stanford/Officials	Update	Oral

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