

# New Zealand government witch-hunts Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa

Tom Peters  
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Over the past week right-wing media pundits, Zionists and government ministers in New Zealand have launched a hysterical campaign to demonise the Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa (PSNA), which has coordinated dozens of protest actions against the US-Israeli genocide in Gaza.

The manufactured outrage was triggered by a poster shared on Facebook by PSNA chair John Minto, which called on members of the public to contact the organisation if they knew of any Israeli soldiers visiting New Zealand. It stated: “We need your help to track them down so we can let them know they are not welcome here.”

The “genocide hotline,” as the PSNA calls it, is a deeply misguided stunt. Going after individual Israeli soldiers is a diversion from the urgent need to mobilise the working class against the New Zealand government, and the entire state apparatus, which is allied with US imperialism and supports the Zionist regime.

In a predictable manner, the PSNA’s tactic played directly into the hands of the government and the corporate media, which want to delegitimise and suppress the anti-genocide protests.

On January 28 the *New Zealand Herald* quoted the Zionist Jewish Council of New Zealand (JCNZ), which said the PSNA’s campaign “fosters a climate of fear, division and potential violence.” It demanded that the government intervene and that the police investigate.

The JCNZ openly backs Israel’s destruction of Gaza, which has resulted in the mass murder of more than 186,000 people, according to one estimate, most of them women and children.

Human Rights Commissioner Stephen Rainbow called for an “immediate end” to the “genocide hotline,” saying it “has the risk of a ripple effect which may cause harm in the community.” Rainbow is well-known for his pro-Zionist views. He has denounced anti-genocide protesters as “pro-Hamas” and in April last year wrote on Facebook that “NZ must stand firmly behind Israel” against Iran.

The host of the far-right Platform podcast, Sean Plunket, accused Minto of “launching a Jew hunt” and suggested that Facebook should censor him. Plunket has repeated every lie used by Israel to justify its slaughter of Palestinians, while slandering protesters—and the United Nations refugee agency

UNRWA—as supporters of “terrorism.”

The most unhinged response came from Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, the leader of the right-wing nationalist NZ First Party, who posted on X/Twitter accusing Minto of “fascism, racism, and encouragement of violence and vigilantism.” Speaking on Plunket’s podcast, Peters called the PSNA’s actions “illegal.” He also declared it was “ridiculous in the extreme” to suggest that the New Zealand government bore any responsibility for what has happened in Gaza.

These statements are false and brazenly hypocritical. Both the previous Labour Party government (which left office in November 2023) and the current National Party-led coalition, including Peters, defended Israel’s onslaught against Gaza as an act of “self-defence.” Wellington maintains friendly diplomatic relations with the regime in Tel Aviv, despite the International Criminal Court issuing arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes.

The current government and the Labour Party have also welcomed the election of Donald Trump, whose administration is shredding basic democratic rights, launching a campaign of terror against immigrants and calling for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza.

New Zealand is directly involved in the efforts to reshape the Middle East in the interests of US imperialism and Israel. New Zealand military personnel are assisting in the US-led bombing of Yemen, after Yemeni forces sought to block shipments that could support Israel’s war machine.

NZ First is a racist and xenophobic party, with a long record of demonising immigrants from Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere. On the very same day that Peters was attacking Minto and the PSNA, NZ First MP Shane Jones shouted in parliament “Send the Mexicans home!”—a remark directed towards Mexican-born Green MP Ricardo Menéndez March. On January 29, Jones, who is the minister for regional development, told *Stuff*, “He supports terrorism, turning up with a terrorist tea towel each day”—a racist reference to the Palestinian keffiyeh.

Any resistance or opposition to Israel’s genocide and its apartheid regime is smeared as “antisemitism” and “supporting terrorism.” While Israeli soldiers can enter the country freely,

one can easily imagine the howls of outrage from NZ First, ACT and the Zionists if any Palestinian fighters were thought to be visiting New Zealand.

Following the incitement against the PSNA, Minto wrote today that the organisation had been contacted by police to say that the right-wing extremist Destiny Church—which has held several pro-Zionist and anti-Muslim rallies—had “issued direct threats to ‘shut down’ the PSNA if the government and police won’t do it for them.”

Meanwhile, police confirmed to *Stuff* that they were investigating reports of a “threatening” statement made on social media, related to the PSNA campaign. No details were provided.

Minto defended the “genocide hotline,” writing on Facebook: “The focus is NOT on Israelis—the focus is on IDF soldiers and reservists here for ‘rest and recreation’ from the industrial-scale killing of Palestinians.” He also asserted that “This campaign will do more to save Palestinian lives than any other initiative we have taken so far in the campaign against Israel’s genocide.”

In fact, moral protests against individual Israeli soldiers will not accomplish anything of the sort. The campaign has, however, provided the pretext for pro-Palestine protesters to be abused in the media, threatened by right-wing thugs and targeted by police.

Regardless of the PSNA’s intentions, there is also an obvious risk that its “genocide hotline” could lead to the harassment of Israelis who are not soldiers, or who were unwillingly conscripted into the military.

The worldwide protests against the wars in Vietnam and Iraq avoided targeting individual low-ranking soldiers, because to do so would distract attention from the criminality of the politicians and generals who planned the wars and sent thousands of young men to kill and be killed.

Speaking to Newstalk ZB, Minto explained that the PSNA aims to persuade the government to ban Israeli soldiers from coming to New Zealand, in order to “put pressure on Israel to end the genocide in Gaza.”

The organisation falsely portrays the destruction of Gaza and the oppression of the Palestinians as mistaken policies that can be reversed with petitions, letter-writing campaigns, consumer boycotts, and various protest stunts, including hunger strikes.

This strategy of making endless appeals to imperialist governments to adopt a more humanitarian position—promoted by middle class protest organisations and pseudo-left groups throughout the world—has been a disastrous failure. For the past 16 months, Washington and its allies, including Britain, Germany and Australia, have responded by increasing their support for Israel and unleashing repression against protesters.

Imperialist support for Israel is bound up with the broader crisis of the world capitalist system, which is driving the US to assert its domination over the Middle East and to violently redivide the world.

With Israel’s support, Washington has waged a devastating proxy war for regime change in Syria and is now threatening war against Iran. Meanwhile, the US and NATO are at war with Russia over Ukraine and there are far-advanced plans for an even more devastating conflict with China. New Zealand and Australia, imperialist powers allied to the US, are integrated into all these wars and war plans.

Minto and the PSNA do not explain any of this context. To do so would cut across their relations with the Labour Party and its allies, including the union bureaucracy, the Greens and Te Pahi Māori, whose members are often given the platform at PSNA events. The last Labour government strengthened New Zealand’s alliance with Washington: as well as supporting the assault on Gaza, it sent troops to Britain to help train Ukrainian conscripts to fight against Russia.

Minto has indicated his support for the war against Russia, telling Newstalk ZB: “we wouldn’t accept Russian soldiers here for rest and recreation after the invasion of Ukraine.” He did not make any similar demand that Ukrainian military personnel, or soldiers from the US and other NATO powers, be barred from entering New Zealand.

It is absurd and false to suggest that the same forces responsible for destroying Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, as well as Gaza, are simultaneously waging a “just war” in Ukraine. In fact, the US and NATO directly provoked Russia’s reactionary invasion by backing a fascist-led coup in Kiev in 2014 which installed a viciously anti-Russian regime; they have deliberately prolonged the war in order to weaken Russia, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives.

Millions of people across the world have protested for more than a year against the Gaza genocide, but the movement has been led into a political impasse. Workers and youth must reject the bankrupt perspective of “pressuring” right-wing politicians and governments. What is required is the building of a conscious, socialist movement of the working class, based on the understanding that the only way to stop the Gaza genocide, and the developing world war, is to abolish the capitalist system, which is the source of imperialist violence and oppression.



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