

New Zealand government refuses to condemn Trump's Gaza takeover

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New Zealand's far-right coalition government has joined its trans-Tasman counterpart, the Australian Labor government, in refusing to condemn US President Trump's plan to take over and ethnically cleanse Gaza.

Trump first outlined his plan for the imperialist annexation and depopulation of the Gaza Strip on February 4. Gaza's remaining population would be exiled from their homeland and, as the WSWs observed, "scattered in camps in the desert or in remote countries and islands, to live in misery and die."

In their place, Trump and Israel's indicted war criminal Prime Minister Netanyahu plan to build hotels and casinos. He foresees a "long-term ownership position" with the obliterated Gaza transformed into the "Riviera of the Middle East."

After meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan at the White House on February 11, Trump declared: "We don't have to buy [Gaza]. There's nothing to buy. We will have Gaza.... We're going to take it." The Palestinians will be barred from returning.

These declarations, which are in clear and direct violation of international law, are the type of crimes for which the Nazis were prosecuted after World War II. Trump's boasts implicate not only the fascistic US leader, but American imperialism's allies and supporters. Silence over such a monumental historical crime is *de facto* endorsement.

New Zealand's National Party-NZ First-ACT coalition government has demonstrated its craven fealty to the Trump administration. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Winston Peters told Radio NZ (RNZ) on February 7 that "at this point in time Secretary of State [Marco] Rubio is still explaining to us what that means."

Peters is clearly amenable to any US-dictated plan for

"reconstructing" Gaza. "It is how you reconstruct Gaza," he told RNZ, "And if you look at it from that point of view, looking at the horrific damage there, then there might have to be plans that we practically have to agree with, because it is very difficult to reconstruct when people are in the same situation and needing to be looked after."

New Zealand's alignment with the White House is further underscored by its refusal to oppose Trump's sanctions against the International Criminal Court (ICC). Trump has given himself broad powers to freeze assets and impose travel bans against ICC staff and their families, in response to the court's decision to issue arrest warrants against Netanyahu and his former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

On February 7, 79 UN Member States issued a public statement of support for the ICC, declaring Trump's sanctions were a threat to the "independence, impartiality, and integrity" of the international justice system. Despite New Zealand's past posturing as a "strong" supporter of the ICC, the government has not endorsed the statement.

New Zealand's political establishment warmly welcomed Trump on his election victory and inauguration and pledged to strengthen the alliance with the US.

As a minor imperialist power with interests throughout the Pacific and internationally, New Zealand has, since World War II depended on the backing of the United States to maintain its domination over territories such as the Cook Islands and Samoa. It is integrated into US-led wars. The current government has sent military personnel to assist with the bombing of Yemen, and to Britain to provide training for Ukrainian conscripts in the US-NATO war against

Russia.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon was asked during a February 10 press conference if he had “any thoughts on the US president threatening to take, potentially by force, Greenland off of Denmark, the Panama Canal off Panama? How does that fit in with New Zealand’s interests?” Luxon refused to answer, saying, “I won’t be doing a running commentary on comments from the US president.”

The ACT Party, meanwhile, has used Trump’s expansionist threats to demand doubling New Zealand’s military budget from 0.9 to 2 percent of GDP. “Leaders like Trump have sent a blunt message: allies who don’t pull their weight shouldn’t expect protection,” two ACT MPs declared in a statement. The grovelling before Trump over Israel is simply a continuation of this agenda.

The Labour Party has maintained a contemptible silence over Trump’s Gaza plan. Leader Chris Hipkins, when he was prime minister in 2023, fully supported Israel’s genocidal actions against Gaza and slandered pro-Palestine protesters. Labour MPs have repeatedly been booed at pro-Palestine rallies—which has not stopped Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa from holding out hopes that a future Labour government could take steps to hold Israel to account.

A section of the political establishment has expressed limited and hypocritical opposition to the government’s stance.

Green Party co-leader Chlöe Swarbrick called for the government to condemn Trump’s plan and said Peters’ comments were “really disappointing and unfortunately unclear.” The Greens, however, were part of the last Labour-led government, which strengthened military and intelligence ties with US imperialism.

Former Labour prime minister (1999–2008) and ex-UN official Helen Clark has posted on X declaring her support for the ICC and emphasising that until now, there has been “bipartisan support” in the NZ political establishment “for its independence,” implying that the government is solely responsible for the silence.

Clark’s chief concern is over Trump’s threats to the ICC and the so-called international “legal order.” This has included reposting a comment by Germany’s Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock—whose government fully supports the genocide in Gaza and the US-NATO war against Russia over

Ukraine—hypocritically claiming that international law “provides the groundwork for prosperity and peace.”

As prime minister, Clark was responsible for sending New Zealand troops to join the criminal US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, which destroyed whole societies. Her alignment with these wars gained approval from then US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who effusively told her the two countries were, after a period of strained relations, “very, very, very good friends.”

Similar toothless comments have been put forward by Otago University Professor Robert Patman, who is the media’s “go-to” expert on foreign policy. Patman told RNZ on February 8 that Trump’s plan for Gaza was “truly shocking and absolutely appalling” and New Zealand should be “robust” in its response.

Like Clark, Patman, who has been vociferously demanding NATO expand its military operations against Russia, is most concerned about the US, the most powerful country in the world, “dismantling an international rules-based system that [it] has done so much to establish.”

It is absurd to maintain that the fate of two million oppressed Palestinians can be resolved by appeals to the imperialist powers, including New Zealand, to uphold the moribund “rules-based” order. These “rules” were established by the United States following World War II in order to maintain its global hegemony.

As the WWSWS has explained, Trump has “proclaimed a new era of colonial barbarism and brutality, in which whole peoples, in their millions, will be sacrificed upon the altar of imperialist domination.” It will produce a descent into global war last practiced by Hitler’s Reich’s Chancellery in Nazi Germany.

Trump’s program of social counter-revolution and war is shared by New Zealand’s ruling elite and its political parties. The rise of the far-right and fascism, genocide and world war, can only be stopped by a socialist movement of the international working class to abolish the capitalist system, which is the source of war, dictatorship and inequality.



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