

New Zealand government refuses to condemn illegal US bombing of Iran

Tom Peters
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New Zealand's right-wing coalition government is refusing to condemn the illegal US bombing of nuclear facilities in Iran and the continuing war being waged by Israel in collaboration with US imperialism.

A few hours before US President Donald Trump announced the attack, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon—who was in Europe to attend the NATO war summit—called for “diplomacy” to end the Israel-Iran war, stating: “more military action [is] going to make the region more destabilised and cause more catastrophe and more human suffering.”

Afterwards, however, on June 23, Luxon echoed the fraudulent pretext for the US-Israeli bombardment. He told a media conference, “We do not want to see a nuclear armed Iran. But now there is an opportunity, as we look forward from these strikes, to actually get around and use diplomacy and dialogue and negotiation to actually get a political solution in place.”

Luxon did not explain how unprovoked acts of war by the US—in addition to Israel's murderous bombardment of Iran and assassinations of top officials and scientists—created an “opportunity” for peace. The opposite is the case.

The prime minister's statements are an endorsement of the gangster-like methods of the Trump administration, which is working with Israel to topple Iran's regime and to control all the resources of the Middle East. This is seen as a stepping stone to war against China, which US imperialism considers the main threat to its global domination.

Conscious of widespread and deeply-ingrained anti-war sentiment, and outrage over the ongoing US-Israeli genocide in Gaza, the New Zealand government is continuing to feign neutrality and non-involvement in the war with Iran. Acting Prime Minister David Seymour, from the far-right ACT Party, told the media

that he would not “rush to judgement on the rights and wrongs of the situation.”

On June 24, Foreign Minister Winston Peters informed parliament that the United States had made a “statement to the UN Security Council that it was acting in collective self-defence consistent with the UN Charter.” Asked whether the New Zealand government agreed with the US position, Peters replied: “we [will] wait till we get the evidence” about how close Iran was to being able to build a nuclear weapon.

It is well-known that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon or any ability to build one in the near future. Israel is estimated to have 90 nuclear weapons and the US has thousands.

The fact is that the Luxon administration is firmly aligned with Washington. New Zealand military personnel are stationed in the Middle East, where they are assisting in the US-led bombing of Yemen in defence of supply lines for Israel's military as it carries out genocide in Gaza.

Peters has refused to say whether New Zealand personnel have been involved in US-Israeli operations against Iran or had prior knowledge of them. As a member of the US-led Five Eyes network, New Zealand's spy agencies routinely share intelligence with their counterparts in the US, UK, Australia and Canada.

The opposition Labour Party and its allies, the Greens and Te Pahi Mori, have declared that the US attack on Iran violated international law and called on the government to condemn it.

Labour leader Chris Hipkins told parliament: “There is no clear justification, there is no credible claim of imminent threat, and there is no UN mandate. ... New Zealand should not drift from our values simply because the actions come from one of our traditional

allies. We do not believe in a world where might makes right, and where power justifies impunity.”

The opposition parties are seeking to channel rising public anger and ensure that it does not develop into a mass anti-war movement, independent from and opposed to all the capitalist parties.

In reality, Labour’s “values” are no different to those of the National Party and its allies: they are both parties of big business and imperialism. The last Labour government—which included the Greens—strengthened the alliance with US imperialism and sent troops to Britain to help train Ukrainian soldiers to fight in the NATO proxy war against Russia.

The Labour Party has pledged its support for the government’s plan to vastly increase military spending and integrate New Zealand into the build-up to war against China.

Hipkins falsely claimed that in 2003 the then Labour government led by Helen Clark “took a principled and courageous stand by opposing the illegal invasion of Iraq... We were told then that it was in our economic interests to look the other way. We didn’t, because we knew that legality matters, principle matters, and international rules matter.”

This is a complete rewriting of history. The Clark government postured as opponents of the initial invasion of Iraq, while strengthening ties with US imperialism, including by sending troops to take part in the illegal invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.

In 2003, 61 New Zealand army engineers were deployed to Iraq to assist in the occupation of that country. According to US embassy cables released by WikiLeaks in 2010, the troops were sent after it was made clear that New Zealand dairy giant Fonterra risked missing out on lucrative supply contracts in Iraq. In other words, the “economic interests” of big business convinced the Labour government that it had to join the war.

There is no doubt that if Labour was in government today it would act no differently from the National Party-led government. Notably, the Labour government in Britain and the Albanese Labor government in Australia have both given full-throated support to the US bombing of Iran.

It should also be recalled that when Hipkins was still prime minister in October and November 2023, he and the Labour Party government supported Israel’s

genocidal onslaught against the population of Gaza. Asked what he thought about Israel bombing hospitals, schools and refugee camps, Hipkins told the media he was “not going to make a judgement” about whether this breached international law—using the same language now being used by the Luxon government to avoid any condemnation of the war crimes against Iran.

The genocide in Gaza and the escalating war against Iran are part of a developing world war, which includes the US-NATO war against Russia and the military build-up against China. New Zealand, a minor imperialist power in the Pacific, is supporting US imperialism on all these fronts, so that the NZ ruling class can share in the division of the spoils.

The fight against war requires a struggle against the capitalist system and all its political parties, including Labour and its allies. It must be based on the fight to unify the working class internationally in a struggle for the socialist reorganisation of society.



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