

New Zealand government backs criminal war against Iran

Tom Peters
2 March 2026

New Zealand's National Party-led coalition government has lined up squarely behind the criminal US-Israeli onslaught on Iran, signalling once again that NZ's ruling class fully supports Washington's imperialist war to conquer the Middle East and impose its global hegemony.

In a statement dripping with lies and hypocrisy, Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Foreign Minister Winston Peters said on March 1: "We acknowledge that the actions taken overnight by the US and Israel were designed to prevent Iran from continuing to threaten international peace and security."

Echoing almost word for word the Trump administration's war propaganda, Luxon and Peters declared, "The Iranian people must be allowed to determine their future."

They cynically condemned Iran's retaliatory strikes targeting Israel and US bases in the Middle East, saying, "We cannot risk further regional escalation, and civilian life must be protected."

Speaking to Radio NZ (RNZ), Luxon called the Iranian regime "evil" and said "our position is the same as the Australian position." Australia's Labor Party PM Anthony Albanese has fully endorsed the US war.

To call Washington and Tel Aviv the guardians of "international peace and security" and protectors of "civilian life" turns reality upside down.

Israel's fascistic government, led by the wanted war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu, is continuing its genocidal war against the Palestinian people in Gaza, which has killed well over 75,000 people and reduced whole cities to rubble. The Trump administration, like the Biden administration before it, is fully complicit in these atrocities.

The renewed attack on Iran—like the 12-day war in

June 2025, which NZ also endorsed—is an unprovoked act of aggression. In addition to murdering Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other leaders of the Iranian government, US and Israeli bombs have killed hundreds of people, including around 200 children at the Shajareh Tayyebbeh primary school in Minab. Gandhi Hospital in northern Tehran has also been hit.

Asked whether he supported the bombing of the girls school, Luxon told reporters yesterday that it was "up to them [the US and Israel] to present what has happened there because I'm not in a position to judge that from sitting in New Zealand."

Effectively giving a blank check to imperialist aggression, Luxon declared that "any actions that stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon is a good thing." In fact, it is well-known that Iran is nowhere near having the ability to produce such weapons.

The aim of US imperialism is to reverse its economic decline by unleashing military violence across the planet, with catastrophic consequences. The US operations against Venezuela and Iran, and the ongoing war against Russia over Ukraine, are stepping stones in a broader strategy to secure energy supplies, shipping routes and regional dominance in preparation for war against China.

New Zealand, a minor imperialist power, is a key US ally in the Pacific region and part of the US-led Five Eyes global surveillance network. Like Australia, Canada and Britain, the NZ ruling class is determined to have its "seat at the table" in the violent carve-up of the world's resources and markets.

Successive governments have actively supported criminal US wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. The last Labour government deployed NZ soldiers to Britain to assist in training Ukrainian conscripts, and the present National government has sent military

personnel to assist in the US-led bombing of Yemen.

New Zealand is integrated into US and Australian warmongering against China. The government, with Labour's full support, aims to double military spending from 1 to 2 percent of GDP and is preparing to rapidly increase recruitment. This is being paid for with harsh cuts to public healthcare, education and other vital services.

With an election approaching in November, the opposition parties are highly conscious of anti-war sentiment among ordinary people and are trying to keep it under control. Former Labour PM Helen Clark called Luxon and Peters' statements "a disgrace" and denounced the attack on Iran as illegal.

In a mealy-mouthed statement, Labour leader Chris Hipkins did not condemn the US and Israel but said: "The attacks on Iran and the retaliatory strikes undermine international peace and security and put civilian lives at risk." He called on the Luxon government to "urge all parties—including close allies—to show restraint, pursue diplomatic solutions and first and foremost, protect the rights and safety of Iranian civilians."

Labour agrees, in other words, that NZ must remain a "close ally" of the fascist Trump regime as it rampages across the globe.

Hipkins and Clark have sought to rewrite history by again claiming that Clark's Labour government did not support the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In fact, it deployed dozens of army engineers to join the criminal war in order to protect NZ's commercial interests and ties with US imperialism.

Hipkins was prime minister when Israel launched its onslaught against the people of Gaza in October 2023. In words nearly identical to Luxon's recent statements, Hipkins said he was "not going to make a judgement" about Israel's bombing of civilians and slandered opponents of the genocide as anti-semitic.

Green Party co-leader Marama Davidson issued a statement calling the US-Israeli attack on Iran "an illegal and unprovoked act against the people of the region and any genuine pathway to peace." She declared that "Luxon's failure to condemn Trump's illegal actions again demonstrates his lack of leadership or moral courage."

The Green Party, however, spent six years in a coalition government with Labour from 2017 to 2023,

which strengthened the alliance with the US. The party backed the US-NATO war against Ukraine and argued for a major increase in NZ's military spending.

At a recent parliamentary committee hearing where Defence Force leaders demanded a rapid increase in recruiting, Greens MP Teanau Tuiono voiced no objections and stated: "I hear what you're saying around being combat ready."

The Greens, along with middle-class groups like the International Socialist Organisation and Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa, played a major role over the past two-and-a-half years in channeling mass protests against the Gaza genocide into futile appeals to the NZ and US governments to change course and stop supporting Israel.

Workers and young people must draw fundamental political lessons from the failure of this perspective. Despite the largest and most sustained anti-war and anti-genocide protests the world has ever seen, imperialist violence has only continued to escalate.

The plunge into World War III will not be stopped by appealing to the conscience of imperialist and fascist governments. It can only be halted by mobilising the working class internationally based on a socialist program to abolish the source of war: the capitalist system.

This struggle requires new organisations. In opposition to the union bureaucracy—which supports war and has prevented strikes against the Gaza genocide—workers must form rank-and-file committees that they themselves control. These committees must coordinate industrial actions across national borders to stop the production and shipment of weapons.

The most urgent task facing workers and young people is to build the socialist and internationalist party that is required to lead the revolutionary struggles that will inevitably erupt. We urge readers in New Zealand to contact the Socialist Equality Group and join the fight to build it as the NZ section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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