

New Zealand Labour Party, Greens falsely posture as opponents of Iran war

John Braddock, Tom Peters
9 March 2026

Faced with widespread popular opposition to war, New Zealand's government has been thrown into a crisis over its support for the criminal US-Israeli offensive against Iran.

Following the 12-day war in June 2025, which NZ endorsed, the full-scale assault now underway is an unprovoked act of aggression and regime change operation. In addition to murdering Ayatollah Ali Khomeini and other leaders of the Iranian government, the US and Israel have killed over 1,000 Iranian civilians, including more than 150 children at a girls' primary school in Minab.

On March 1, NZ Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Foreign Minister Winston Peters echoed Washington's lies justifying the war. They condemned "Iran's nuclear programme, its destabilising activities in the region and elsewhere, and its repression of its own people."

In a widely derided "train wreck" press conference the next day, Luxon refused to say whether the attacks on Iran and assassination of its leadership during ongoing negotiations were legal or not. He declared it would be "up to the US and Israel to explain the legal basis for their attacks." Asked whether he supported the bombing of the school, Luxon said "I'm not in a position to judge that from sitting in New Zealand."

With an election approaching in November, Luxon's bumbling responses have intensified the crisis within the coalition government, already deeply unpopular after nearly three years of brutal attacks on jobs, wages and living standards. A Curia poll last week showed Luxon's National Party sinking to 28.4 percent support, and media commentators are speculating about a possible leadership challenge.

The opposition parties, conscious of powerful anti-war sentiment, are moving to keep any movement

under control by feigning opposition to the war. Former Labour PM and ex-UN official Helen Clark called Luxon and Peters' statements "a disgrace."

Current Labour leader Chris Hipkins told parliament on March 3: "The US and Israeli bombing of Iran is a clear breach of international law," with "no evidence that these attacks were a necessary act of self-defence." He added that "New Zealand has stood up before and we should stand up again now. New Zealand opposed the US invasion of Iraq and history proved that was the correct decision."

Hipkins' statements were echoed by Labour's former foreign minister Phil Goff (1999–2005), who wrote in a *Stuff* op-ed on March 4 that "regime change in the way the US is trying to do it has a poor track record." In Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan, he declared, "hundreds of thousands of people were killed without achieving better governance and improvements in the lives of the people." The government's stance is "further evidence that New Zealand has abandoned its independent foreign policy," Goff said.

The Labour Party is engaged in blatant historical falsification to cover up its own pro-war track record. NZ's then Labour-led government—which included the pseudo-left Alliance Party—was among the first to send troops to the Afghanistan invasion in 2001, in a bid to fully restore relations with the US following the "anti-nuclear" posturing in the 1980s, and as a quid pro quo for Washington's endorsement of its own neo-colonial operations in the Pacific.

Goff played a particularly foul role in NZ's Afghanistan deployment, glorifying the illegal neo-colonial war. In 2001 he told the UN Security Council it was necessary to bring to an end "the absence of legitimate government and law and order in Afghanistan in which terrorism, extremism and drug

trafficking has thrived.”

Helen Clark’s Labour government deployed 61 Defence Force (NZDF) personnel, including 35 army engineers, to Iraq in 2003 to protect NZ’s commercial interests and ties with US imperialism. From 2015–2020 over 100 NZ troops were again stationed there as part of a joint operation with Australia. A small number of NZ military personnel remained in Iraq until 2023.

The last Labour government, in which Hipkins was a senior minister and in 2023 served as prime minister, strengthened the alliance with the US and sent soldiers to Britain to assist in training Ukrainian conscripts. Goff, then New Zealand’s High Commissioner in London, publicised NZ’s role in support of the US-NATO war against Russia, in which hundreds of thousands of people have been killed.

Labour’s call for a supposedly “independent” foreign policy in which New Zealand serves as an “honest broker” between warring parties is a transparent fraud. Labour agrees that NZ must remain, in Hipkins’ words, a “close ally” of the Trump regime, which is rampaging across the globe and seeking to establish a fascist dictatorship in the US.

It should be recalled that in October and November 2023 Hipkins, then prime minister, openly backed Israel’s murderous assault on Gaza and slandered opponents of the genocide as antisemitic. There is no doubt that if NZ Labour was leading the government today, its position would be similar to that of the British and Australian Labour governments, which have lined up in support of the war on Iran.

Green Party co-leader Marama Davidson echoed Hipkins’ statements in parliament, calling on the government to condemn the strikes on Iran. She declared that “Israel and the United States are escalating the unchecked genocide of Palestinians into an all-out war in the Middle East. Their disregard for international law, human rights and the sanctity of human life is the greatest threat to peace on this planet.”

The Greens, however, spent six years in a coalition government with Labour from 2017 to 2023, which strengthened the alliance with the US. The party argued for a major increase in NZ’s military spending, and tacitly endorsed the Defence Force’s recent demand for a rapid increase in recruiting, as part of efforts to

integrate the country into US war plans against China.

Speaking in parliament, Davidson reiterated the Greens’ support for New Zealand’s decision “to condemn Russia, sanction Russia, and arm Ukraine” as part of the US-NATO war effort. The party takes the absurd and false position that the imperialist powers, which pose “the greatest threat to peace on this planet” by backing genocide in Gaza and bombing Iran, are simultaneously carrying out a “just” war to defend Ukraine. In reality, these are separate fronts in a rapidly spreading global war, led by the US, for the imperialist redivision of the world at the expense of Russia, China and Iran.

The nationalist rhetoric of Labour, the Greens and sections of academia and the media, calling for a more “independent” foreign policy, is a smokescreen and a fraud.

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 has relied since World War II on its alliance with the US in order to secure its “seat at the table” in the violent carve-up of the world’s resources and markets.

The only way to halt the escalating world war is through a mass movement of the working class, independent of all of the pro-capitalist parties. Such a movement must be international in scope, it must mobilise the vast social and political power of the working class, and be aimed at abolishing the profit system that is the source of war and reorganising society on socialist lines.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact