

★ FOR THE PROTECTION OF ZION TRUST ★

15 September 2022

Committee Secretariat

Petitions Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Petitions Committee,

I want to thank you for the opportunity to present the following submission to you entitled “**A New Zealand Embassy in Israel**”. The submission will speak for itself, but I thought you should have some information about who I am first.

I am the senior pastor of the Flaxmere Christian Fellowship Church in Flaxmere, Hastings. I currently also sit on three ‘Faith’ boards—two for New Zealand and one for the Asia Pacific region. I have invested my time and energy into the local community in Flaxmere for many years, setting up the Flaxmere Community Patrol while I was vice-Chair of the Flaxmere Planning Committee among other things.

I try to be balanced in my assessments and opinions, trying to get along with everyone. The nature of what I do in *FOR THE PROTECTION OF ZION* will bring me into conflict with that statement as the subject of Israel is by nature controversial, due I think to misinformation and a strong anti-Semitic current in our day.

The idea of having a New Zealand embassy in Israel is very important to me and the 2,610 signatories to the petition. I think it is a mistake on New Zealand’s part to ignore the new opportunities awaiting us in a changing Middle East.

I submit to you the following in the hope it will be considered with sincerity and impartiality.

Thank you again,



Nigel Woodley
Chief Advocate
FOR THE PROTECTION OF ZION TRUST

A New Zealand Embassy in Israel

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Following the tragedy of the Holocaust in the Second World War, New Zealand was among the nations who voted in favour of a Jewish State at the United Nations on 29 November 1947. Following that and about six months after Israel's independence New Zealand gave formal recognition to the Jewish State in January 1949. Since that time there has never been a New Zealand Embassy in Israel.

WHY SHOULD THERE BE AN EMBASSY IN ISRAEL?

- **Increased Trade**
- **We can be of greater influence by being 'on the ground'**
- **To be better informed on issues we implicate ourselves in**

Increased Trade

The only thing preventing increased trade with the State of Israel is a serious and sincere relationship. If we are serious about a trade relationship that could develop exponentially then we must have real representation. And that means a presence on the ground in Israel—at least a trade office to begin with, leading to an embassy with a resident ambassador.

In 2020 Israel exported \$111M to New Zealand. We exported just \$18.4M to Israel, mainly in packaged medicaments, other fruits, and therapeutic appliance. With Israel's GDP at almost double that of New Zealand's, it means there is a large market for opportunity we are not tapping into. A proper relationship would solve that, and that means a presence on the ground in Israel. (<https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/isr/partner/nzl>)

In 2015 when a decision was made to open an embassy in Bogota, Columbia, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray McCully stated: "Having a dedicated New Zealand presence on the ground in Bogota will help to support the development of strong business links, particularly investment in Colombia's agri-business and dairy sectors". (<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-zealand-open-embassy-colombia>). Perhaps the same opportunity for an embassy in Israel could also support the development of stronger business links. What comes first, the chicken or the egg? The market opportunities or the serious relationship? Increased exports or a resident embassy? According to Minister McCully in 2015 the resident embassy must come first.

An embassy on the ground in Israel would better serve us. Israel has a lot to offer New Zealand. Israel excels in science, technology, and is known as the start-up capital of the world. With over six thousand start-ups she rates as the greatest number of start-ups per capita in the world. It ranks third on the list of nations with the most companies on the NASDAQ, surpassed only by the United States and China. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8LQKBqBcpw>). It is to New Zealand's advantage to invest more in our relationship with Israel.

We can be of greater influence by being 'on the ground'

At present, our ambassador based in Ankara, Turkey relates diplomatically with the Israelis. This is problematic. Ankara is 1,500 kms from Israel. Turkey's culture is completely different from that of Israel's. Ideologically there is a huge difference between Turkey and Israel. Turkey is an Islamic country whilst Israel is a Jewish state. The two nations manage to keep a diplomatic relationship going which is often fraught by their differences.

Without the right information we will miss out on the opportunities that are waiting for us. But that information will only come when we take the relationship seriously enough to establish our own resident embassy in Israel. Both our nations are innovative, with small and advanced economies. We are both western democracies very different from the other nations of the Middle

East. For years Israel has been struggling within an ocean of predators to survive. I think we owe it to the Israelis to shake their hands on their home soil rather than wave at them from Ankara.

One thing unique to New Zealand is our Treaty Settlement process which began in the 1980s and is a pathway for addressing historical wrongs. This model could possibly be used to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is a strategic model that could give reconciliation to Israel and the Palestinians. If there was an embassy in Israel we would be better placed to engage in the conversation, explain the model, and perhaps provide leadership.

To be better informed on issues we implicate ourselves in

New Zealand can never appreciate the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict whilst it has removed itself to Turkey. To understand the conflict, it must have a resident ambassador who can see, sense and touch what is really happening. Some may ask, “Does New Zealand need to understand a conflict that is not its own?” Yes, we do, and we no longer have the luxury of staying out of the conflict. Every year New Zealand is asked to make important judgments at the United Nations regarding the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

New Zealand prides itself on its sense of fairness and balance regarding foreign policy. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is something we could do without—we are the furthest nation from Israel as you can get. However, we need to be well informed because the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council demands at times those judgments from us.

We have embassies in seven Islamic nations which have been historically hostile to the nation state of the Jewish People. One of those seven, Iran, has been repeatedly designated by the U.S. State Department as the world’s number one state funder of terrorism. It is the only UN member state to actively pursue a policy of the liquidation of another UN member state—Israel. As an important member among the family of nations, New Zealand could better use its mandate and influence at the UN by having a resident embassy in Israel and thus bringing some balance and fairness in its foreign relations.

SUMMARY

We should have proper diplomatic representation in a country that has a western style democracy like ours; believes in values like ours; and seeks genuine peace with her neighbours as we do. Despite the rhetoric often heard from Israel’s detractors, Israel desperately seeks to defend its citizens from unprovoked terror attacks while at the same time seeking dialogue with the Palestinian Authority, with whom it hopes to eventually make a negotiated settlement. Despite challenging security threats Israel continues to lead the world in technology, medicine, counterterrorism, land reformation, irrigation, and other areas. The spin off for New Zealand could be great in education, science, technology, viticulture, horticulture, agriculture, and all of this means increased trade. Both countries are innovative with growing economies and exports, and we have a lot in common. It would be to our gain to establish a resident ambassador and embassy within the State of Israel.

The Middle East is opening-up with major cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbours dawning a new era for these once historical foes. The future looks brighter now than it ever has. Because of Iran, Israel and her Arab neighbours are united in their resolve to resist the influence of the terror sponsoring state. If New Zealand sees the opportunities afforded by the warming of these relationships across the Middle East, then our nation could join in the carriages of blessing and prosperity that are following the steam-engine of “normalization”. The advantages and blessings following the Abraham Accords are something we should be part of. We should not miss the current opportunities now opening through a new Middle East.

New and bright relationships are being formed between Israel and its Middle East partners. Israel has signed normalisation agreements with UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. There are warming relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, as well as with other nations. New Zealand has major trade with some of these countries and it would be prudent to position ourselves to share in the new trading-block being formed through normalisation. A New Zealand embassy in Israel would position us for participation in the new era.

It is important that we open a resident embassy within the State of Israel!

THE CHANGING FACE OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN 2022

