

POLITICS ●

Te Pāti Māori co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer shuts down heckler at pro-Palestine march

3 hours ago



Zane Small



Watch: Māori Party co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer speaks to pro-Palestine march outside Parliament. Credits: Newshub

Māori Party co-leader Debbie Ngarewa-Packer shut down a heckler at a pro-Palestine march outside Parliament by reminding him he was a visitor on her whenua.

Ngarewa-Packer and co-leader Rawiri Waititi joined the Greens and some Labour MPs outside Parliament on Wednesday to support Green MP Golriz Ghahraman's push for New Zealand to recognise Palestine as a state.

It comes as fighting continues between Israel and Hamas, the group that governs the Gaza Strip, a territory considered to be occupied by Israel, however the extent of self-rule has led some to describe it as a de facto independent state.

New Zealand does not officially recognise Palestine as a state and has Hamas listed as a terrorist group. However, New Zealand does believe in the 'two-state solution', which envisions an independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel.

Ghahraman told the crowd Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories is what is "preventing Palestinians from freedom, from going to school, from getting healthcare during a pandemic, from building a pathway to peace".

"Rubbish!" a man draped in an Israeli flag could be heard shouting in response.

"This is the moment. We will keep fighting for a Palestinian state because this is about peace," Ghahraman said. "

Palestine is alive. It will be free and Palestinians will not be a mark in history as victims. Palestine will be free!"

The same man wearing the Israel flag could be heard saying, "2000 rockets, is that peace?" - a reference to rockets fired at Israel by Hamas. Israel has bombarded Gaza in response.

At least 220 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed and 12 people in Israel.

Ngarewa-Packer, who supported the Greens' motion to grant statehood to Palestine, told the crowd Te Pāti Māori stood in solidarity to "free" Palestine.

"We're very clear as survivors of colonisation that anyone that uses militarisation, anyone that uses colonisation to affect racism, are kino, full stop."

Ngarewa-Packer then shut down the heckler when he interrupted her.

"You, sir, are a visitor on my whenua. Mind your place! Mind your place! Because the aroha of my people have continued to manaaki the people who do the same to you that they do to us.

"We also fight voices in the hallways of this place that tell us we don't matter, that tell us we run two separate states, that tell us that we're separatists, that we're segregated. We're not. We're not, sir.

"We are merely tangata whenua, people who deserve to live with dignity."

Ngarewa-Packer said just because she's pro-Māori does not mean she's anti-Pākehā.

"Therein lies the real challenge - all we're asking for, in support for you, like ourselves, is freedom for Palestine - the freedom to be who we are.

"We need a Government that has the courage to stop racism - stop racism out here, stop racism over there, and stop racism in the whare in Parliament."

The heckler, Nigel Woodley, says he doesn't hate Palestinians, but "does love the truth".

"I am not a crazy zealot, but I admit I did look and sound like one on that day," he told Newshub.

"My wife and all my kids are Māori. I married late and Jo had the kids - we gained two more Māori boys through fostering. Half of my Church is Māori. A bit of respectful recognition on her part would be appropriate as I have been caring for her people in my whare on their whenua."

The Embassy of Israel in New Zealand says Hamas "pretends to represent Palestinians but is consistently depriving them of their most basic needs ever since it took Gaza by force in 2007, thus exposing their clear inability to provide stable governance for its civilians".

It said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will "continue to take action and will do so as long as necessary to restore quiet and security to the citizens of Israel".

Ghahraman tried to have her motion discussed in Parliament on Wednesday but there was objection. National and ACT didn't support. ACT's opposition was based on a tweet by a Green MP it considered to be anti-Israel.

Foreign Affairs Minister Nanaia Mahuta said the Government was "open to supporting a motion that recognised and supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood".

Mahuta said she understood the Greens were looking to create wording that "could be agreed by everyone".

While New Zealand does not recognise the State of Palestine, it accepts the Palestinian Authority, led by Mahmoud Abbas, as representing the people.

"We have a warm relationship with the Palestinian Authority," Mahuta said. "But as in line with the criteria of statehood under international law - we have not recognised Palestine as a State."

19 May 2021

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2021/05/te-p-ti-m-ori-co-leader-debbie-ngarewa-packer-shuts-down-heckler-at-pro-palestine-march.html>