

**Government Response to
the Petition of “Focus on Iran”
on
Support for Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as the leader of Iranian
opposition**

Presented to the House of Representatives

In accordance with Standing Order 380

Government Response to the Petition of “Focus on Iran” on Support for Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as the leader of Iranian opposition

Introduction

- 1 The Government has carefully considered the Petition Committee’s referral of the petition entitled “*Petition of Focus on Iran: Support Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as the leader of Iranian opposition*”. The petition requests that the House of Representatives “urge the Government to express its support for Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as the leader of Iranian opposition, that is, as the leader of all opposition efforts against the current Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran”.
- 2 The Government welcomes the Committee’s referral of this petition and thanks the petitioner for bringing this matter to the Government’s attention.
- 3 The Government responds to the report in accordance with Standing Order 380.
- 4 The Government has considered the petition as it pertains to New Zealand’s existing foreign policy settings. This includes New Zealand’s bilateral relations with Iran, which are currently restricted in response to Iran’s human rights violations and other destabilising activities.

Recommendations and government response

- 5 Petition Recommendation: That the House of Representatives urge the Government to express its support for Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as the leader of Iranian opposition, that is, as the leader of all opposition efforts against the current Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 6 Response: The Government remains deeply concerned by ongoing human rights violations in Iran, including restrictions on freedom of expression, political dissent, and the rights of women and minorities. New Zealand is also gravely concerned by Iran’s role in directing at least two antisemitic attacks against Jewish communities in Australia. The Government has condemned Iran’s actions in the strongest terms, including directly to the Iranian Ambassador in Wellington.
- 7 New Zealand currently maintains restricted engagement with Iran in response to Iran’s human rights violations and destabilising activities. Actions taken by New Zealand include suspending high level political engagement, removal of tariff preferences for Iran, and travel bans on Iranian officials involved in the death of Mahsa Amini and subsequent violent crackdowns on protestors. The Government has also raised its concerns directly with the Iranian Government, and made numerous statements with partners and in relevant international fora such as the United Nations Human Rights Council. The

Government will continue to monitor the situation closely and take further action as necessary.

- 8 Mr Reza Pahlavi is a prominent figure within the Iranian diaspora and has been vocal in advocating for a democratic and secular future for Iran. Mr Pahlavi plays an active part in the broader opposition movement.
- 9 As the written submission of the petitioner notes, there are diverse opposition factions in Iran, spanning secular democrats to reformists.¹ The Government respects the right of citizens of all countries to determine their own political future. As such, the Government does not take a position on the internal political leadership of foreign opposition groups. To do so could undermine the legitimacy of organic, citizen-led democratic processes abroad. Decisions about political leadership within Iran, or among its opposition movements, are matters for the Iranian people to determine.

Conclusion

- 10 It is not the role of the New Zealand Government to endorse or recognise any particular individual or group as the legitimate representative of an opposition movement abroad. New Zealand will continue to advocate strongly for human rights in Iran – through our direct bilateral engagement, in multilateral fora such as the United Nations, and by working closely with international partners. We remain committed to supporting the Iranian people in their pursuit of democratic freedoms, accountability, and human dignity.

¹ Petition of Focus on Iran: Support Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi as the leader of Iranian opposition, written submission, at page 1.