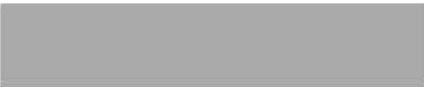




Headquarters
New Zealand Defence Force
Defence House
Private Bag 39997
Wellington Mail Centre
Lower Hutt 5045
New Zealand

OIA-2024-4932

3 April 2024



Dear 

I refer to your email of 22 February 2024 to the Ministry of Defence requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

information that the Ministry may hold and/or have passed on the Minister relating to reports that the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Gaza – which has 23 New Zealand graves from the First World War – has been bulldozed by Israel in its destruction of Gaza. And the status of the 23 NZ WWI graves

Information refers to:

Reports, memos, letters, notes, advice and emails

Material like tape recordings, videos, or computer records

Internal policies or guidelines for decision making

This was transferred to the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) on 26 February 2024, in accordance with the OIA.

The NZDF has no role or responsibilities in the management of Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries. Emails that were sent to the office of the Minister of Defence containing information about the CWGC cemeteries in Gaza are at Enclosure 1. Where indicated, information is withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(a) of the OIA to protect private information. Contact details are withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(k) of the OIA to avoid the malicious or inappropriate use of staff information, such as phishing, scams or unsolicited advertising. Other information has been withheld in accordance with section 6(b)(ii) as it was provided to the NZDF by an international organisation on a basis of confidence.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. This response to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

AJ WOODS

Air Commodore

Chief of Staff HQNZDF

Enclosure:

1. Emails

From: Beck, Darren
Sent: Thursday, 15 February 2024 8:09 a.m.
To: 'Jason Cox'; Taylor, Kevin; Ministerial Services
Cc: Nicholas, Michael, MAJ; McLeod, John; Bale, Nancy
Subject: FW: Commonwealth War Graves in Gaza [seemail]
Attachments: image004.jpg; image002.png; image003.png; image001.png

Categories: s.9(2)(a)

Thanks for chasing this one Nancy.

Update as below and attached Jason. Still some uncertainty so we will keep the RFI open and update as/when further info comes to hand.

Regards,
D

Darren Beck

Director Coordination - OCDF, Chief of Staff HQ NZDF
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

s.9(2)(k)

www.nzdf.mil.nz



From: Bale, Nancy
Sent: Thursday, 15 February 2024 7:53 a.m.
To: Beck, Darren <s.9(2)(k)>
Cc: s.9(2)(a) MAJ <s.9(2)(k)>; Taylor, Kevin <s.9(2)(k)>;
McLeod, John <s.9(2)(k)>
Subject: RE: Commonwealth War Graves in Gaza

Please find below the response from the CWGC Africa & Asia Area Director (which is for MCH and NZDF rather than any wider dissemination):

s.6(b)(ii)



Below is the media statement CWGC have been using for enquiries about this. This can be use this for any response to PSNA or elsewhere if required

"We are continually monitoring the situation in Gaza and Israel. The welfare of our colleagues and their families is our clear priority and we remain in regular contact with them. We are saddened by the recent damage to the Gaza War Cemetery and Deir El Belah War Cemetery, and when it is safe to do so, we will assess what future repairs will be needed. In the meantime, the CWGC will not be making any further comments."

From: Beck, Darren <s.9(2)(k)>
Date: Wednesday, 14 Feb 2024 at 10:33 AM
To: s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>
Cc: s.9(2)(a), MAJ s.9(2)(k), Bale, Nancy <s.9(2)(k)>
Subject: FW: Commonwealth War Graves

As below s.9(2)(k) Still awaiting 'official' response. Middle of a war zone so issue of confirmation more complicated.
D

Darren Beck

Director Coordination - OCDF, Chief of Staff HQ NZDF
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force
s.9(2)(k)
www.nzdf.mil.nz



From: Bale, Nancy
Sent: Tuesday, 13 February 2024 10:08 a.m.
To: Beck, Darren <s.9(2)(k)>
Cc: McLeod, John <s.9(2)(k)>; Ministerial Services <ministerialservices@nzdf.mil.nz>; Taylor, Kevin <>
Subject: RE: Commonwealth War Graves

Will do – Head of Global Relations CWGC confirmed that they will send us the information we need but then we hit the weekend in the UK. Have followed up this week and will come back to you once we receive the response.

Nancy Bale ([ia/she/her](#))

Senior Advisor HCP Programmes, Heritage, Commemorations and Protocol
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force
s.9(2)(k)
HQ NZDF, 34 Bowen St, Wellington 6011
www.nzdf.mil.nz



From: Beck, Darren
Sent: Monday, 12 February 2024 3:52 p.m.
To: Bale, Nancy <s.9(2)(k)>
Cc: McLeod, John <s.9(2)(k)>; Ministerial Services <ministerialservices@nzdf.mil.nz>; Taylor,

Kevin <s.9(2)(k)>

Subject: RE: Commonwealth War Graves

Thanks Nancy. Let us know when we get a formal response...some variable reporting going around at the minute.
D

Darren Beck

Director Coordination - OCDF, Chief of Staff HQ NZDF
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force
s.9(2)(k)
www.nzdf.mil.nz



From: Bale, Nancy
Sent: Friday, 9 February 2024 2:55 p.m.
To: Beck, Darren <s.9(2)(k)>
Cc: McLeod, John <s.9(2)(k)>; Ministerial Services <ministerialservices@nzdf.mil.nz>
Subject: RE: Commonwealth War Graves

I have requested info from the CWGC – in the meantime the below provides some useful info

“A second cemetery administered by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in central Gaza offers an even starker example. Mangled vehicles and destroyed roads lay all around the cemetery. But the graveyard itself, which contains the graves of mostly Christians and some Jewish soldiers from World War I, is intact.”

<https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/20/middleeast/israel-gaza-cemeteries-desecrated-investigation-intl-cmd>

See also the below press releases re CWGC staff and previous instances of damage

[100 year family tie ensures CWGC Gaza cemeteries flourish - January 2023](#)

[The Jaradrah family have been tending CWGC Gaza War Cemetery since it was first built with Head Gardener Ibrahim Jaradrah representing the fourth generation to work in a very challenging environment.](#)

[Gaza War Cemetery repaired after recent unrest - July 2021](#)

[Our team in Gaza has undertaken repairs after recent unrest in the region caused damage to one of our cemeteries.](#)

Nancy Bale ([ia/she/her](#))

Senior Advisor HCP Programmes, Heritage, Commemorations and Protocol
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force
s.9(2)(k)
HQ NZDF, 34 Bowen St, Wellington 6011
www.nzdf.mil.nz



From: Beck, Darren
Sent: Friday, 9 February 2024 2:10 p.m.
To: Bale, Nancy <s.9(2)(k)>
Cc: McLeod, John <s.9(2)(k)>; Ministerial Services <ministerialservices@nzdf.mil.nz>
Subject: FW: Commonwealth War Graves

Fact check thanks Nancy....

D

Darren Beck

Director Coordination - OCDF, Chief of Staff HQ NZDF
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

s.9(2)(k)

www.nzdf.mil.nz



From: s.9(2)(a)

Sent: Friday, 9 February 2024 2:07 p.m.

To: Ministerial Services <ministerialservices@nzdf.mil.nz>

Cc: Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE <s.9(2)(k)>; Beck, Darren <s.9(2)(k)>, s.9(2)(a)

s.9(2)(a) MAJ s.9(2)(k); s.9(2)(a)

>; Taylor, Kevin
<s.9(2)(k)>; Berry, Greer <s.9(2)(k)>

Subject: FW: Commonwealth War Graves

Afternoon All,

The office has received the below. Can we please:

- Confirm the accuracy of the information,
- Provides lines for the Minister.

Palestine Solidarity Network Aotearoa

9 February 2024

Media Release:

Israeli desecration of graves in Gaza includes damage to New Zealand war graves from WW1

PSNA is calling on the government to investigate reports that the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Gaza – which has 23 New Zealand graves from the First World War – has been damaged by Israel in its war on Gaza.

The Guardian newspaper reports:

“The damage has also included an ancient Roman cemetery and the Commonwealth war cemetery, where more than 3,000 British and commonwealth soldiers are buried after dying in battles during the first and second world wars”

There are 23 graves of New Zealand soldiers in the cemetery.

Id	Surname	Forename	Initials	AgeAtDea	Rank	Regiment	Secondary Unit	CountryOfService	Cemetery
650395	HUMPHREYS	JAMES SAMUEL	J S	24	Trooper	Canterbury Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
650415	JACKSON	FRANCIS HERBERT	F H	26	Trooper	Canterbury Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
650465	KAMATI			26	Private	New Zealand Maori (Rarotongan Coy.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
650894	MORGAN	LINDLEY MIDDLETON	L M	0	Trooper	Auckland Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
650324	HIDE	FRANK GILBERT	F G	22	Sapper	New Zealand Engineers		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
649942	DUNIPACE	JOHN	J	0	Sapper	New Zealand Engineers		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
650219	HAGUE	ALFRED WILLIAM	A W	0	Trooper	Wellington Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
650750	McIVOR	ALLAN HORTON	A H	21	Trooper	New Zealand Mounted Machine Gun Squ		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
651542	TUTAVAKE			0	Private	New Zealand Maori (Pioneer) Battalion		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
651659	WILKINSON	GEORGE	G	33	Lance Cor	Canterbury Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
651493	THOMSON	ALLAN JAMES CARROLL	A J C	0	Trooper	Canterbury Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
649480	BISHOP	ALFRED ERIC	A E	0	Trooper	New Zealand Mount 1st Bn.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
649621	BURROW	EDWARD BENJAMIN	E B	26	Trooper	Canterbury Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
649649	CARDOZO	SYDNEY CHARLES	S C	26	Trooper	Wellington Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
649737	CLEAR	WILLIAM TIPPING	W T	36	Trooper	Canterbury Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
651119	QUICK	ROBERT GARFIELD	R G	24	Trooper	New Zealand Mounted Machine Gun Squ		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
649506	BOLES	KEITH	K	22	Trooper	Auckland Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
2897970	NATRASS	ARON JOSEPH	A J	23	Gunner	New Zealand Artillery 51 Field Regt.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
2897904	HOBBS	ERNEST WILLIAM	E W	37	Warrant C	New Zealand Infantry 23rd Bn.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
650913	MULHOLLAND	ARTHUR	A	0	Serjeant	Canterbury Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
650384	HUGHES	CHARLES	C	0	Trooper	Wellington Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
2897993	RODALL	ERNEST MATHEW	E M	33	Lance Cor	New Zealand Infantry 19th Bn.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY
649672	CAULFIELD	THOMAS	T	0	Trooper	Wellington Mounted Rifles, N.Z.E.F.		New Zealand	GAZA WAR CEMETERY

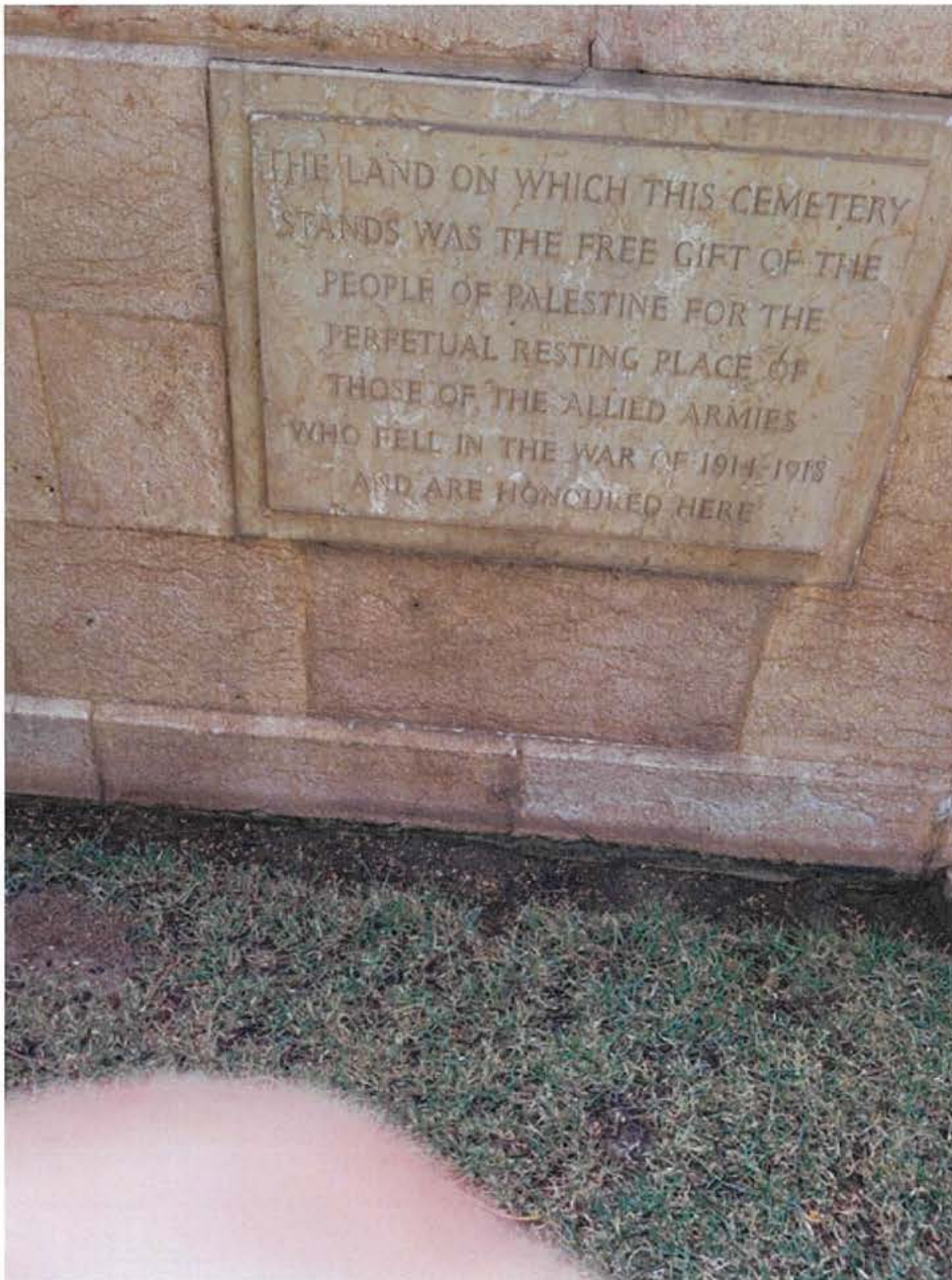
Earlier reports show appalling and deliberate damage and bodies desecrated in at least 16 other cemeteries across Gaza and Canada reported damage to the war cemetery where Canadian soldiers lie alongside New Zealanders. According to a CNN report:

Cemeteries are given protections as “civilian objects” under international law and are afforded special protections, with limited exceptions.

“Israel has always flouted international law and the desecration of cemeteries adds to the long list of its war crimes in Gaza” says PSNA National Chair John Minto.

“We are asking the government to investigate this report of damage to our soldiers’ graves as we continue to call on the government to speak out against other Israeli war crimes such as collective punishment of Palestinians and the credible risk of genocide in Gaza as ruled by the International Court of Justice”

The land for the cemetery was gifted by the people of Palestine.



We are not aware that any New Zealand politician has ever visited these graves in Gaza so perhaps the Prime Minister will turn his back on Israeli desecration of our history as he has on the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza.

s.9(2)(a)

s.9(2)(a) (WGCDR)

NZDF Private Secretary | Office of Hon Judith Collins KC MP

Attorney-General | Minister of Defence | Minister for Digitising Government

Minister Responsible for the GCSB | Minister Responsible for the NZSIS

Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology | Minister for Space

Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques



s.9(2)(a)

| Website: www.Beehive.govt.nz
Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

Authorised by Hon Judith Collins MP, Parliament Buildings, Wellington

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