



Statement in solidarity with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Palestine

Friday 9 February 2024

#ToitūTeTiriti

#FreePalestine

#CeasefireNow

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#HandsOffYemen

Statement

The Aotearoa Plastic Pollution Alliance (APPA) condemns the violence, genocide, and ecocide currently being inflicted by the Israeli Government against Palestinians and their territories, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank.

APPA equally condemns the New Zealand Government who, simultaneous to their efforts to unilaterally redefine Te Tiriti o Waitangi and erode the rights of Tāngata Whenua here in Aotearoa, have failed to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza while supporting strikes against Yemen in the name of restoring global trade.

Context

Settler-colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples, pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, and [ecocide](#) are all consequences of imperialist systems of oppression, extraction, and destruction.

Furthermore, militarism and the [military-industrial-complex](#), which uphold the existing global balance of power, are key drivers of material extraction and plastic pollution,¹ while [wars are significant polluting events](#).² As we have seen time and time again, and as we are witnessing in Palestine right now, invasion and warfare only generate further social and ecological destruction on top of the inherent harm of the dominant global consumer capitalist system.

[Plastics and petrochemicals are intimately connected to geopolitics](#). Modern consumer capitalism relies on plastics to function, and plastics themselves depend on the extraction of raw materials, such as oil. The pipeline from extraction to consumption props up billion dollar industries, while eroding environmental health and human rights at every step. The ability to undertake these polluting activities, at the expense of both people and the planet, [requires control over \(Indigenous\) Lands and Oceans](#).³ This control enables corporations and colonial powers to establish extraction facilities, install refining infrastructure and production plants, set up trade routes, and secure prime retail real-estate and disposal sites for waste. This global linear take-make-waste architecture was embedded during European imperialist expansion. It remains inseparable from the imperial and colonial ideologies of entitlement that, via Papal Laws such as the widely-implemented [Doctrine of Discovery](#), underpin many political systems and settler-colonial governments today.

¹ Plastics came of age during WWII when nations such as the US placed massive investment in plastic production to cheaply produce articles of warfare. After the end of the war, this new plastics and petrochemical industry was directed towards consumer products and goods and materials for other sectors as well. Read more about this in: Karis Johnston (2018) "[Legacies of War: How the Commercialization of Plastics in the United States Contribute to Cycles of Violence](#)" (2018). Capstone Collection. 3107; and Joel Tickner, Ken Geiser & Stephanie Baima (2021) [Transitioning the Chemical Industry: The Case for Addressing the Climate, Toxics, and Plastics Crises](#), Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development, 63:6, 4-15.

² Read more about the Toxic Remnants of War [here](#).

³ Adam Hanieh describes how securing oil for US and European petrochemical industries in the middle of the 20th century depended on effective Anglo-American control over territory in the Middle East and concludes that "[A direct thread thus connected the emergence of a synthetic world with patterns of colonial domination](#)" (pp.41-42)



The connection between our current global economy, environmental destruction and colonial violence is highlighted by the Palestinian-led [Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement](#) and its participant NGOs, who list [many multinational corporations as complicit in upholding the Israeli government's apartheid, occupation and genocide](#). Many of these corporations are major users of plastic and [recidivist plastic polluters](#).

The current siege and blockade of Gaza (facilitated by decades of occupation and apartheid) has reached the point that [Gazans are starving](#), unable to sustain themselves on their own land. A severe shortage of fuel as well as [the destruction of solar panels installed on rooftops on buildings across the strip](#), has [compelled some Gazans to burn plastic for cooking and in order to stay warm over winter](#), adding to the multifaceted public health and environmental risks they face.⁴ [Restricted access to piped water supplies has created a reliance on bottled water, which itself is in short supply](#).

Alongside their ongoing human rights abuses and war crimes over decades of illegal occupation in Palestinian territories, the Israeli Government's current military actions are causing extensive and long-term ecological damage resulting from the destruction of most of Gaza's built environment (including critical infrastructure, such as wastewater treatment plants); the emission of tonnes of carbon dioxide; pollution of air, water and soil from bombs and other munitions; and deliberate attacks against existing and vital biodiversity, such as heirloom olive groves that Palestinian families have been custodians of for hundreds of years.⁵

⁴ This is not the first time that the Israeli blockade against Gaza has precipitated an energy crisis that has led Gazans to resort to using plastic for fuel - a practice that locals understand carries risks, but which they have little choice but to undertake. See for example reports from 2014 <https://electronicintifada.net/content/amid-crisis-gazans-convert-plastic-fuel/13374> and 2022 <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220826-in-risky-recycling-venture-gazans-burn-plastic-for-fuel>.

⁵ See, for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/09/emissions-gaza-israel-hamas-war-climate-change>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/5/is-israels-war-on-gaza-also-hurting-the-climate>

Positionality: Why we're speaking up

Environmental organisations have a responsibility to call out systemic injustices that perpetuate social and ecological harm, whenever and wherever they occur. We have a responsibility to recognise the māmae and intergenerational trauma caused by colonialism and call for its healing in a way that enables people and the planet to live in peace and justice, rather than repeating cycles of violence or exploitation.

APPA exists to prevent plastic pollution in Aotearoa, Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa, and beyond. The [APPA kaupapa](#) (constitution) commits us to restoring the mauri of Papatūānuku, Tangaroa, me ngā Whanau Atua, and protecting all living beings from the existing and future adverse impacts of plastic pollution. We are deeply committed to honouring Te Tiriti at all times, in all spaces, and in all the work that we do. Our kaupapa centres Te Tiriti o Waitangi, along with rangatiratanga, manaakitanga, whakawhanaungatanga, kaitiakitanga, kotahitanga and whakapapa.

APPA's constitutional kaupapa and the day-to-day mahi of our members reflect the fundamental truth that when the Land is well, the people are well. All people deserve to live in safety, self-determination and environmental justice, free from oppressive violence, pollution and prejudice, and to be secure in the knowledge that their children and children's children will too.

Therefore, APPA stands with Tāngata Whenua in Aotearoa, Palestine, and across the world against white supremacy, colonial racism, consumer capitalism, and other violent ideologies of entitlement. By fuelling disconnection between humans and the natural world, these ideologies and the socio-political-economic systems they underpin directly threaten human rights to life, security and a safe environment.

As an organisation located in a settler colony, we recognise settler colonial violence when it erupts elsewhere. In Aotearoa, settler-colonial violence and social dysfunction is currently being exacerbated by the New Zealand Government's baseless fear-mongering and hostility towards te ao Māori, te reo Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. These actions reflect the ongoing



legacy of violence, human rights abuses, and Tiriti violations by the Crown against Iwi and Hapū. Tāngata Whenua in both Aotearoa and Palestine share a whakapapa of resistance against colonial violence and it is our collective responsibility to call for justice.

We cannot be free until we are all free and the Land will never be well until those Indigenous to the Land are well and their right to self-determination is upheld.

Effectively addressing these interconnected socio-ecological issues requires us to reject and dismantle dominant and oppressive systems of power and re-embed our communities in the natural cycles of te Taiao, with full Indigenous sovereignty and free self determination.

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Acknowledgements

This collaborative statement reflects the perspectives of our diverse membership, which includes Tāngata Whenua, Tāngata Moana, Tāngata Tiriti, and Tauīwi with whakapapa from across the world, including Palestine.

While we take the responsibility of addressing these crucial kaupapa seriously, we must acknowledge our delay in issuing a statement. As a volunteer-run organisation, we needed to ensure that our statement is not only timely but also accurately reflects our collective rōpū.

APPA looks forward to these discussions becoming more mainstream as Aotearoa and the world continue to move towards decolonization, tino rangatiratanga, and a future that prioritises safety and justice for all.
