

POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2015

PM: Good afternoon. So today I can announce the Government will welcome 750 Syrian refugees into New Zealand over the next 2½ years. We'll also contribute a further \$4.5 million for aid in the country. The pictures of thousands upon thousands of Syrians forced out of their own home by ISIL, desperately pouring into Europe, are heartbreaking scenes. As this situation has visibly worsened in recent days, New Zealanders have become more concerned. The Government shares this concern and is willing to do our part as good international citizens.

The proposal Cabinet agreed to today would see us dedicate 150 places for Syrians within the existing 2015/16 annual quota of 750. On top of that, we'll take in a further 100 Syrians over the coming months, with another 500 over the next 2 years. So that's a total of 750 refugee places specifically for Syrians over the next 2½ years. That means an additional 600 refugees over and above our existing quota to be welcomed into New Zealand over the next 2½ years.

The expected cost of this intake is \$48.8 million, which is on top of the approximately \$58 million we spend resettling quota refugees every year. What's important here is that we're able to back that offer with the appropriate support to help people to settle into life in New Zealand. That's why we've been careful to seek advice on issues like housing, translation services, health, and education support. We'll continue to work our way through that advice to ensure the appropriate infrastructure is in place.

Today's announcement comes on top of the contribution New Zealand has already made to the region. We have settled 121 Syrians since 2011 and contributed \$15.5 million in humanitarian funding for those affected by conflict in Syria and Iraq. We have been assisting with educating young people and building schools and refugee camps in Turkey. We also, of course, provide tens of millions of dollars in core funding to agencies like Red Cross, Unicef, and the World Food Programme. The extra \$4.5 million in aid we announced today will be used to further help cater for refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. That brings our aid contribution to a total of \$20 million.

Finally, while this is a Government decision, we've also seen churches today offering to step up, and there is a role to play for the wider community. New Zealanders who want to help can volunteer with resettlement programmes via the Red Cross and others. There will be other ways people can help, whether it be via financial donations, offers of employment, or potentially donated goods. They should contact the Red Cross about these matters. And, vitally, what these refugees need most is to feel welcome and safe in communities that are willing to help them settle into and start their new life.

Just in terms of the House this week, the Government intends to make progress on the Taxation (Land Information and Offshore Persons Information) Bill and the Passports Amendment Bill. On Wednesday morning the House will sit in extended hours to progress a number of settlement bills. Finally, in terms of my movements this week, I'm here today but, as you're probably aware, tomorrow I'll be in Papua New Guinea for the Pacific Islands Forum and I'll be there for the rest of the week.

Media: How will this intake of Syrian refugees be selected?

PM: Yeah, so we'll go through the normal process that we do. The UN will be at the forefront of that. They provide the services they already do in terms of validation—that they're actual refugees and they look at health and other issues. But also our officials are involved, and they apply the same vetting that we do already, which means that we can in fact, you know, either accept or reject anybody that comes. So our officials will be travelling, I think, to the region within the next 3 weeks or so.

Media: Is there a preference for refugees that come? Are they, like, currently in Syria or is there a preference for refugees that are in Europe?

PM: Look, I think there'll be a potential range of where people come from. Some will be in existing camps. Others could be from other locations.

Media: Why don't you take them all in one year?

PM: Primarily because of the pressure on the system. So these are people who are coming in in an emergency category, over and above other refugees we take. So the official advice I've had is what we're doing is already stretching the system. So if you take Māngere Resettlement Centre, for instance, it has a limited capacity to the number of people it can take. It currently takes people in tranches of, it's historically been, 120 per time. That's been expanded to 150 when all of the redevelopments done it might be able to handle a few more. So that's the first issue. And just the pressure on the ground for Red Cross and translation services and other things.

Media: Could you not have used the churches who have offered to—you know, they think they can take over 1,000?

PM: Yeah, so a number of issues there. I mean, firstly, if people come with English language skills, then, yes, that may well be the offer that we take up from churches. So the bulk of the people will probably go into Housing New Zealand homes, and I think initially a great many of the people will come to Wellington, because the biggest existing Syrian community's here in Wellington. There is also a Syrian community in Auckland, but obviously our housing resources are more stretched there. We'll look, I think, over time to establish another community around New Zealand somewhere, but if people have English language skills, and they can get access to the other services that they'll require, then they may be able to move more freely around the country.

Media: What's happened in the space of a week? When we asked you last week at this press conference would you take an emergency intake and you dismissed it, and yet in a week you—

PM: Well, I think over the course of the last week or so, what you have seen is much more graphic displays of a problem that's been there for, actually, bluntly, a long period of time. But it's been more pronounced as people have poured into Europe, and I think you've seen lots of countries, actually, reflect on that—the United Kingdom, over the weekend, made a change; I think Australia's looking to potentially take more people. So, I mean, my own view is that New Zealand is generous when it comes to refugees. We take an annual quota. There's only 22 or 23 other countries that actually do that. This is only the second time in recent history I can think of of us taking people as an emergency category. The last time was 1999 for Kosovo. So even when Helen Clark took people off the *Tampa*, she took them as part of the 750. So, you know, I think New Zealand's been doing a lot of different things, but I accept fully that the position is more pronounced anyway over the course of the last week or so.

Media: So on a per capita, per GDP basis is our response proportionate to what other developed countries are doing?

PM: Well, there's a range of reasons why other countries sometimes take more. They get more asylum seekers in some of those countries. But, as I said, I think there's only 22 or 23 countries that are in that category of taking a permanent UNHCR programme.

Media: No, I was meaning generally on a per capita, per GDP basis New Zealand ranks quite lowly. I just wondered in response to this current crisis, then—

PM: What does it do to it? Yep.

Media: —the measures you've announced today: are those are they proportionate to what other developed countries are doing?

PM: I haven't seen any of that data. I don't know. The Minister's office might be able to provide you with that some time.

Media: Prime Minister, you think this is the right number? Is this going to help, or is this symbolic? What do you think?

PM: Well, I mean, I think it's more relative to if you think about it in terms of the overall issues that these Syrian refugees are facing. I mean, there's, as we've said, hundreds of thousands of them, but I think it's proportionate to what we're capable of handling easily and still providing, you know, a top-quality service for people that come. It may well be—I mean, we know that a lot of the Syrians want to return home, if they can. I mean, obviously, that's dependent on, amongst other things, ISIL not being a threat to them as they currently are. But I think most people would say, well, on an annual basis of taking 750 moving to, you know, broadly an extra 600 over the course of the next 2 and a bit years, that's a fairly proportionate response.

Media: So does this take the pressure off in terms of that review for the Government next year because it is set up for the medium term? So, I suppose, what does it mean for the review of the actual quota?

PM: Yes. So I've been reluctant to just bump up the overall number, as you've seen. I've rejected that notion on numerous occasions in recent times. And I stand by the view that we should have a proper review of that, and that will take place in the middle of next year—I think it starts in the middle of 2016. What does it mean long term, in terms of our capacity to have a permanent increase? I don't know, at this point. I mean, one of the issues, of course, would be if we went up to a number—let's say 1,000—and that looked like it maxed out our capacity to deal with refugees in a thorough, professional way like we do, then that might not give us the flexibility of ever having an emergency budget. That's one thing we have to consider, but it's only one factor. So we'll have a thorough review and we'll start that next year.

Media: Because also, you know, potentially another country may have a crisis where they need a response too. So at the moment this is just people from Syria. So does this leave any flexibility for crises in other places and other people that may need help?

PM: Well, the advice I've had at the moment is that this is stretching the system. It doesn't mean that you can never do more or you can't expand that capacity. But at the moment the advice I've had is it stretches the system, and, you know—

Media: So this'll pretty much be it in terms of what New Zealand would be able to cope with over the next, say, 3 or 4 years?

PM: It's always possible to do more. I mean, needs must sometimes, but, for instance, Māngere, I think, needs further work if it's going to handle more than, you know, the 150 at one time, for instance. So there's those practical issues. It is everything—translation services, you know, whether people can get jobs; all of those other issues.

Media: How much of a difference did the public pressure and opinion make? I mean, how much of a difference did the photo of the little boy Aylan on the beach make to this—

PM: Well, it builds public support, because there will be a range of views. There will be, you know, a range of views. Some people will, you know, create the argument "Well, there are potentially 58 million people in refugee camps. What about the plight of others?". You know, there'll be "Are there threats from taking people from other countries?". There'll be all sorts of different views, and for the most part most people's hearts melt when they see those types of pictures. I mean, the very early part of last week I started talking to some Ministers about what's the capacity and options of things we could do. By the latter part of the week we started dealing with that with officials. But we'd already started the conversations before that picture, but there'd been many other pictures.

Media: Did that picture make a difference though?

PM: Oh, I think in terms of public support, it might have, but we'd already started those conversations prior to that.

Media: Will you—will the Government knock back the Greens attempt for their bill to be introduced tomorrow? Or—

PM: Yes. I mean, look, in the end, I mean, these are really serious matters and I don't want to be flippant about these things, but it's very easy for Opposition parties just to get up and say "Double the quota.", or someone in the weekend was reported in the media saying "Bring 10,000." With the greatest of respect, do they actually understand what that actually would do to the system in New Zealand? It's not just that we are not a heavily populated country; we've actually got to be able to house people, we've got to be able to give them services, we've got to be able to do all of those things. So I personally think that, you know, you've got to do these things professionally. And, as people can see, this is, I reckon, a pretty good contribution. It's costing the better part of \$50 million. We're bringing in, you know, 750 people affected by this current crisis. We've had 28 years of the same annual quota, so it's not like previous Governments of any other political persuasion have been, you know, lifting the quota. You know, I think we are responding in a proportionate way.

Media: So can the system cope then with that extra 100 in coming months. Can the system, what we've got in place now, actually deal with it?

PM: So the advice I've had from the officials is they can cope with what I've proposed today, but it's stretching the system.

Media: Does that mean you will rely on support that people are offering at the moment when the public attention is on it, and are you concerned that those offers of support will go away?

PM: Well, inevitably these things are more heightened when the media coverage is so intense, and over time some of that might dissipate a little bit, but we take people on face value. I'm not at all questioning the churches. If they say that they've got some capacity and they want to help, we'll be taking up that offer for them to help. But practically we also have to do our very best to allow people to settle well in New Zealand, and that means that communities work well, for instance.

You know, there'll be some that might go to Auckland because they'll have family members, because there is a Syrian community in Auckland, but, for instance, in Wellington, there's quite a big Syrian community. But we can't simply put people, for instance, that might need intensive service support and have no language skills with a family in a parish somewhere in New Zealand where they can't access those supports. That's just the practicality of what we're dealing with.

Media: Prime Minister, in terms of the wider problem, obviously any country taking refugees doesn't actually solve the problems in Syria. We've seen, you know, the United States with the air strikes in Syria, and Australia now considering whether to use their fighter jets in air strikes in Syria. Do you think that there is a place for military action and intervention by the West in Syria to help solve this problem?

PM: Well, I think it's a very difficult question to give a definitive answer to, because there's no question that if you had more military capability on the ground in the very short term you could make some progress. But the challenge always is the long-term issue, and I think that's why President Obama and others have been very reluctant to put boots on the ground. Because while, in the very short term, you can potentially deal with some of the ISIL people, what we know is that builds often generations of resentment and revenge, and that's not so easy to deal with.

So I think, in the end, we've been strongly of the view that the people of Iraq—or, more challenging, Syria—but the people of Iraq have to take control of their own destiny. It's why I think the steps that we're taking to train people is the right step.

Yeah, when we went to Parliament earlier in the year, as you all know, we didn't get much support from other Opposition parties. Those same Opposition parties have been very quick to criticise me over the last week or so, but the truth is a lot of those people are leaving Syria, for instance, because of ISIL, and what we're trying to do as New Zealanders is train people to try and degrade ISIL. So they sort of want one side of the version of events, but they don't want the other.

Media: And what about al-Assad though? You know, should he be removed in your opinion?

PM: Well, there are two reasons why people have left Syria—because, in truth, they've left over the last 5 years and it hasn't always been ISIL. The Assad regime's been another big issue, and we have real concerns there, as you well and truly know.

Media: Do you think that resentment and revenge that you referred to would eventuate from air strikes or just boots on the ground in Syria?

PM: It can happen on both ways. That's why when the air strikes take place, my understanding—I mean, we're not obviously actively involved in those—but my understanding from asking my people about that is they're very careful about the way they undertake those air strikes to make sure that there's the minimum amount of civilian casualties involved. They're not—they're quite well planned.

But that is always the challenge, you know. We've seen that in the past. You saw it with the Taliban. You can fight these kinds of enemies, but the way to do that has to be very sophisticated.

Media: Do you think al-Assad needs to be removed as leader of Syria if Syria is to go forward?

PM: I think he is one serious issue, but I think you also have to see it alongside that ISIL is, as well.

Media: Looking at the fresh money that's going into your response to the refugee crisis—\$48.8 million—what would you say to those critics that who say “We're going to spend in the next 2½ years less than double what we're going to spend on the flag referendum in the next few months.”

PM: Yeah, OK. So it's \$81,000 per person over the next 3-year period, notwithstanding that there will probably be ongoing costs. History tells you that there are ongoing costs with refugee resettlement. So there's a lifetime of costs potentially for some people. But anyway, other costs just on our system overall. So annually now that will mean instead of spending around about \$60 million, we're spending something in the order of \$75 million or \$80 million.

Yep, I accept the view that some people think that democracy shouldn't be honoured when it comes to a constitutional matter like a flag, but I personally think that would be very arrogant of me as Prime Minister to simply change the flag without reference to people. I could do that but—

Media: It was more a question about the adequacy of the response. If we're prepared and can find the money for the flag referendum, which has got its own validation and its own arguments, it's a judgment surely on the extent of our response to this crisis if we're spending less than double on this humanitarian crisis?

PM: I think costs is one issue. In reality, it's actually the broader issues of making sure that you can actually give people the services and support. But you can look at that in a great many things we do. I mean, you could look at any expenditure the Government undertakes as part of its \$70 billion - odd it spends a year, and you'll find a range of people who will say we spend too much or too little in one area versus another.

Media: On refugees on a per capita basis Australia has over the past several decades taken in somewhere between three or four times the refugees as New Zealand. Why do you

think successive New Zealand Governments have taken in less in terms of a refugee intake than successive Australian Governments?

PM: I don't know.

Media: With regards to Whānau Ora a new report's been released today. Have you read it? And what did you make of it?

PM: Well I haven't read it but I have seen reports of it. So, on the one hand, I think it is good because what it says is that people are accessing more services, it looks positive in terms of the outcomes that the Minister's reporting that are characterised in the report. It's not surprising actually that people are accessing more services, because if you think about what is at the heart of Whānau Ora it's navigators, and those navigators allow and ensure, actually, that the families involved get, in a way, better access and better understanding of the services available to them.

I don't think it takes away though from the Auditor-General's report when she highlighted a number of issues and I think the work that we are doing around commissioning agencies and others to improve the results of Whānau Ora is just as valid. But it is good that the report at least argues the strong case that things are improving.

Media: Do you think it will help to clear up some of the confusion around what Whānau Ora actually is?

PM: I don't know. Depends on whether people read the reports or not. I mean I think a lot of people have a different range of views of Whānau Ora and what it's really all about. I've got my own concept in my mind of how it works and how it operates, I've had an opportunity to see it firsthand and I think it is a new way of dealing with issues but I think there is a place for it.

Media: The actual report doesn't contain any sort of hard data in terms of, you know, those outcomes. Is that satisfactory? Do you think they should have gone further and included data?

PM: I think I'd just include it as one part of the general debate on Whānau Ora. It isn't going to stop people asking further questions and ultimately further reports being done. As I said, the Auditor-General's report, which made some pretty valid statements from what I can see, has been followed up and there is a lot of change that's either occurred along the way prior to the report being written or afterwards, really around particularly the commissioning agencies and how that works, and how much is being spent on the navigators vis-à-vis administration.

Media: Will the Government continue to support Whānau Ora and not implement any changes?

PM: It is our intention to continue supporting Whānau Ora, and certainly the Minister has got as quite a major focus and he's working very intensively on it.

Media: Do you have any thoughts on the French agent apologising for his role in the Rainbow Warrior bombing?

PM: Outside of just watching the news last night—I didn't actually see the *Sunday* programme on it. I mean ultimately it obviously happened a long time ago so if it goes any further that's a matter for other agencies not for me.

Media: Is the matter closed to you as far as you're concerned, or are there still active warrants?

PM: I don't know. You'd have to ask the Police. Theoretically, if there was to be any follow up from that it would be ultimately a matter for the Police to determine whether they believe that there is a case that they would want to pursue and that they then need to think through everything from the time that's elapsed to the capacity to prosecute that potential case. But that's a matter for them; Governments obviously don't make those calls.

Media: Thirty years on is there any tension still between France and New Zealand over this bombing?

PM: I don't think so. I think it has been accepted—largely what's happened is not that contested now from what I can see. And in the end like all these things that happen sometimes in life, you have to try and put them behind you.

Media: Given, though, we seem to now know who that is, would you like to see more action taken, something being done to try and get some of that closure?

PM: Well I think ultimately the Police would need to look at that matter. They would need to determine could they take a prosecution, is it likely to be successful, does the passage of time in any way change that factor, could they get the person to New Zealand to stand trial. There are just a range of different factors they would need to consider, and it would be wholly inappropriate for me to dictate to them that they should do that.

Media: Prime Minister, signs are that if Australia does accept more Syrian refugees, it'll come from within the existing quota. Did you consider giving all the refugees—to come from existing quota, or do you think that's appropriate at all?

PM: No, I took the view that I thought we should probably do it on top of the existing quota. Our quota is 750. There's still a lot of people around the world—massive numbers that we can't accommodate, obviously—that are in desperate need of help. And so by taking them on top of our existing 750 we're at least trying to balance that there are many, many other people whose plight isn't so much in the public domain at the moment but sort of a very legitimate and genuine reason to want to come to New Zealand. So for us I think it fits more neatly on top of our existing quota.

Media: Did you speak to Tony Abbott or anyone within the Australian Government about that, or do you think you'll talk about it at the Pacific Island Forum this week?

PM: Look, I spoke to him, or text him, over the weekend just to give him a heads-up of what we're doing so he wasn't blindsided by what we did but it was a pretty brief conversation. It was to just let him know that I was going to make an announcement on Monday.

Media: Is that so you were in time with both making announcements about this?

PM: I don't know what announcement he is making, he didn't indicate that, I just—look we're friends and just as a matter of courtesy that I just told him what we are doing.

Media: New Zealand likes to envisage itself as being part of Asia. Do you think there'll be any backlash in Asia from our ready response to the refugee crisis in Europe as opposed to our no similar matching response to the plight of, say, the Rohingya refugees in Malaysia and the Sri Lankans who are coming through Asia? Would they see this as a sign of New Zealand's ties—still significant ties—are to Europe rather than to Asia?

PM: I don't think so. I mean if you think about the international coverage that the Syrian crisis had in the last week or two I think most people would see that it's had a huge amount of global prominence. I look at a lot of international TV stations and the likes, it's not just New Zealand media that's been running this issue. So I think A, they would understand that but B, I think, you know, if anyone was to ask me—I doubt they would, but if they did—the response I'd give them is the same one I gave you guys, which is to say that by maintaining the existing quota, and then adding people on top of that, we're trying to at least balance and reflect that there are a great many people in need. I think if we were just including them solely as part of our existing quota then you could at least make the case that we're being a little unfair about that.

Media: So is there still places in that quota for refugees from the camps in Malaysia?

PM: In the 750, absolutely, yeah, yeah.

Media: Just on Pacific Islands Forum, fisheries is one of the areas where it's been pitted to actually make some concrete decisions. Will New Zealand be pushing for a change to the current quota system, catches, and what involvement we have in policing?

PM: Yeah, so, fisheries is likely to be a significant area of discussion over the course of the few days, partly A, because, as I say, it's a very large resource for them, secondly they're concerned about it from a poaching perspective, but also sustainability does matter to us. We think the quota management system works very well. It's the sort of technology and intellectual advice, if you like, that we could potentially give to the people of the Pacific Islands so that they could better manage their resources. That will be part of the overall discussion that we'll have.

Media: Climate change is also being pitted as another one. Do you think given New Zealand and Australia have, you know, set their targets that you'll actually be able to come to much agreement?

PM: Well there's bound to be a discussion, I mean it's one of the big five issues that'll be on the table. I mean, I imagine a great many of the Pacific leaders will be going off to Paris at the end of the year. I'll be more than happy to talk about, from New Zealand's perspective, what we've done and what we're doing. I think a lot of people understand the makeup and profile of our emissions target, but we'll be talking about that. For instance, in recent years we've held the energy summit in New Zealand around renewable energy. We've rolled out a lot of those projects around the Pacific so we'll be talking to the leaders about how well that's working, the effectiveness of it, for instance. So yeah, there's bound to be discussions.

Media: Do you expect those to be quite heated though? Many of those Pacific Islands are not happy with Australia and New Zealand.

PM: My experience is that they're not heated discussions. But, you know, they're open dialogue, but they're generally not heated.

Media: And are you expecting an awkward reception from Nauru's leadership?

PM: Ah, well I don't know if it'll be awkward, but we'll certainly be having a discussion. And personally I think the decision that the Minister of Finance reached was the absolute—the Minister of Foreign Affairs reached, I should say, was absolutely the right one.

Media: Most of the Pacific leaders last week agreed to limit global temperatures to 1.5 degrees as opposed to 2 degrees. What's your view on that?

PM: Well we've got a well-established position, and we won't be moving from it.

Media: There's been relatively high support in the polls for the deployment to Iraq [*Inaudible*] whatever it is. Do you think there is scope for New Zealand to do more there in future?

PM: I don't think we should do more. I think, again, like every response, whether it's to the crisis of Syrian refugees, to the, you know, the need to try and help support the people of Iraq to look after and defend their own country, there's a proportionate response, and I think we've hit that at about the right place. I think what the poll—people who've been surveyed in the poll are reflecting is that actually New Zealand is a global citizen, we do need to try and give all the support we can for the people of Iraq to actually be able to defend themselves and that's what's being reflected in those numbers.

Media: The *Weekend Herald* ran a story about a youth camp on Great Barrier Island, which was run by a trust contracted by CYFS—

PM: Yeah this is 40 years ago, is that right?

Media: No, I think it ended in 2000-something—don't ask me.

PM: That's not 40 years ago! 40 residents, but I think it was a long time ago though.

Media: The Government's now looking at again having private providers in social services such as CYF. What sort of safeguards or monitoring would be needed to protect the children in the care of private providers contracted to CYF?

PM: It would be my expectation that the Government will retain the vast overwhelming bulk of services when it comes to people under the care of Child, Youth and Family. The Minister—I think has actually received, but she's going to report to Cabinet pretty soon in terms of the recommendations from Paula Rebstock. But inasmuch as if there was any role to be played by private sector providers, then I would expect there to be a high level of conditions that are met, or a high benchmark, for making sure that they maintain and deliver the services at the level that we expect. So, you know, I think that can all come down to the nature of the way those contracts are written.

Media: Judging by talkback radio, there's a widespread belief that for every single refugee that comes in under the quota, there is a vast multiple of family members who come in under family reunification. Can you clarify—just on average—how many more people come in per refugee by way of family reunification? Is it a multiple or many more times?

PM: On the best advice I have, of the 750 that we take, about 350—so about half the number again—come in family reunification. There are about 200 or 250 other people that come in a variety of different forms of essentially—they're claiming refugee status at the airport. That number's been reducing.

Media: That's asylum seekers?

PM: Yeah, exactly. There's some debate—some people make the argument that then later on there are other people who come as family reunification that sit outside of that core group. And I just don't have a handle on those numbers. I can't tell you whether that's true. I simply don't know. But the best advice I have is of the 750, directly related to them is about half that number again.

Media: So that perception that it's a multiple of many more times is erroneous.

PM: Well, on the advice that I have, that would be a correct statement. Like I say, I just don't know, for instance, if a young person comes here on the *Tampa* for instance, we bring them in as part of the 750, and then they get another family member that might come along later on down the track. Ten years later if another brother comes in, where does that get counted? I suspect not against the 350, but, look, I don't have good information on that.

Media: And the rationale for that is that it's a part of the successful settlement process?

PM: What, family reunification? Yeah, absolutely. I mean, we have—if you look at the general test, I mean, it's where the nucleus of the family is, and so ironically if you have less siblings and you have more of them in one country, we accept the others in. But it's not just refugees that that works for. A great many migrants come to New Zealand every year. It's natural that they want to have their family members with them, and over time, the nucleus of their family migrates, say, from South Africa to New Zealand or some other country that come in.

Media: Do you feel a personal connection with this given your family history?

PM: Well, I mean, I accept my mother was effectively an Austrian-Jewish refugee, and she obviously had the benefit of family reunification to get herself into the United Kingdom, and that completely changed her life. And if she hadn't had that, there's a very strong chance she would have been persecuted and gone to the concentration camps like some of her family members did. Look, in the end, I have a responsibility to do what I think is right for New Zealand and what works for New Zealand, and there are many things I do in relation to that, but I take advice obviously about what I think works and what we as a country can handle.

Media: The UN Commissioner for Refugees has just said that its organisations are financially broke having to deal with this crisis in Europe. Is there any chance that New Zealand can spare any more cash in the following months to try and help out in that situation?

PM: Well, I guess what I would say is that the move from 15.5 million to 20 million will be welcomed. It's an extra 4.5 million. I can't tell you what might happen in the future. I mean, as this thing escalates and the situation worsens, anything is possible, but at the moment, that's the appropriate step. Again, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is trying to balance a number of other initiatives he has.

Media: Does New Zealand contribute annually to that budget—to the UN—

PM: You'd have to ask him. We give to a number of those different NGOs, but exactly the breakdown and how that works, you'd need to ask the Minister.

Media: Is there any circumstances under which you'd consider changing the flag referendum to include the Red Peak Flag or anything else?

PM: No, in a nutshell. I mean, we've gone through a really open process. I mean, the Flag Consideration Panel basically in the end selected four. They came to us. Yes, the Government could have overruled them, or Cabinet could have overruled those. We didn't really feel terribly comfortable doing that. Red Peak was one of those in the narrowed-down list of 40. You know, ultimately that's the process that we've gone through.

I mean, I know people say—firstly, I'd have to change the law to go back to allow another flag to be added if we want to have more than four, or I'd have to unilaterally decide that one of the four that was selected has to be dropped out for that to come in. If I was to do that, then there'd probably be a group that would say "Well, I want another version or another flag." I mean, in the end, you know, the Cabinet—the panel, the independent panel, considered all of those shortlisted 40 and came up with its own recommendations. It is what it is, really.

Media: What do you think about the momentum we seem to be seeing particularly on social media around that? Around the Red Peak?

PM: Well, I think this whole debate is going to generate a lot of discussion over the course of the next, you know, 4 or 5 months. One of the reasons why I've been, you know, trying to encourage people to go and check out my Facebook post on the flag has been because I've simply been trying to make some of the points to negate some of the arguments that people put up that are either, I think, incorrect or here's another perspective on. So at the moment I think it's quite early days in terms of what ultimately might happen. It's very difficult to know, you know, whether people will ultimately decide they want to embrace change; if they want to embrace change, what they want to change to.

I mean, we are going through a very open and interactive process. I'm trying to think of another country that's done it this way. Pretty much every other country's just got up and said "Here's your new flag.", as far as I can see. I mean, there may be many other examples, but I can't think of many. So it's going to be an interesting debate. But if the debate does nothing else but generate a sense of what national pride and passion and patriotism means, then it's a very healthy debate to be having.

Media: Tim Groser's in the Gulf this week trying to get some movement on the free-trade deal. Are the Saudis warming up any? Are they any more interested?

PM: I haven't heard any response from him yet, so we'll see how it goes.

Media: But you haven't got a sense of any movement since your trip to Riyadh?

PM: Not yet, no.

Media: Are you concerned about the lack of competition for building supplies as highlighted by last night's *3D Investigates* programme?

PM: I didn't see the programme. What I'd say is that one of the things the Government has done, though, to try to make sure there's more competition in building supplies, was the change to the anti-dumping laws that we made. I don't know whether the points that were highlighted last night—how real they are and whether those actually do get passed on to consumers or don't. There's certainly arguments both ways, but in the end if people really feel as though the system isn't delivering for them, you know, there's a number of avenues they could follow to try to push that argument along. OK.

conclusion of press conference