



Condolences and Support to People of New Zealand

Ministerial Statement, Delivered by Prime Minister Hon. Henry Puna

Parliament of the Cook Islands, 9 April 2019

Honorable Deputy Speaker,

I rise before you to express on behalf of our Government and the people of the Cook Islands our most heartfelt condolences to all New Zealanders whom have weathered their darkest days following the tragic events that unfolded in Christchurch on the 15th March.

We stand in solidarity with New Zealand in condemning in the strongest possible terms these horrific attacks.

Our most sincere prayers and thoughts go to those of the Islamic faith and in particular the families and friends of the victims of this shocking and callous attack.

I commend the decisive leadership of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and her sincere empathy and aroa towards the victims, the victims' families, their community and the people of New Zealand.

Prime Minister Ardern rose above any attempt to besmirch the good name of the people of New Zealand and the eternal values of brotherhood and fraternity, captured in New Zealand's national anthem calling for God's defence from dissension, envy and hate and for God's blessing on men of every creed and race.

We take this time also to acknowledge the strength and resolve of the people of New Zealand, and we stand with them in that "they are not us", in reference to the perpetrators of this heinous crime, and neither should their dark shadow be allowed to dim the light of the many good and decent citizens of New Zealand and their government.

We commend as well the many who came to stand alongside New Zealand with an unfaltering and collective resolve that resonated around the globe as well as here. I am certain that as this Honourable House meets for the first time since that tragic day, we wish to affirm our steadfastness as a fellow member of the Realm of New Zealand, tied together by historic links, that we will stand with them, side by side.

For myself as Prime Minister and my wife, as well as our High Commissioner to New Zealand, it was humbling to be invited to the day of remembrance in Christchurch on Friday 22 March to demonstrate solidarity as we understood the necessity for our presence and not just words of comfort, in times such as these. Our presence to clearly demonstrate that 'we are one' – 'Ko tatou tatou'.

To our people of the Cook Islands, this Sunday, 14th of April, 6 pm at the National Auditorium, we will as a nation come together and remember and pray for God's healing on the families of the victims, their communities and New Zealand as a whole. Bishop Donoghue from the Catholic Diocese of the Cook Islands will lead our religious congregations in a service dedicated to Christchurch.

To the Government and people of New Zealand, today, as the scripture declares, when you rejoice we rejoice, and when you weep, we weep also. The Government, Parliament and people of the Cook Islands unanimously declare our steadfast and unequivocal support to the people and government of New Zealand. Ko tatou tatou – We are one.

NOTE: ASK FOR A MOMENT OF SILENCE IN REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE LOST AND MAIMED.