



POLITICS (/NEWS/POLITICAL)

Russia Sanctions Bill spurs debate on wider legislation

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P. **New Zealand now has the power to impose significantly harsher sanctions on Russia with a new law passed under urgency.**



Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the Russia Sanctions Bill with Foreign Affairs Minister Nanaia Mahuta on 7 March 2022. Photo: Pool / NZME

After just five hours the Russia Sanctions Bill was passed on Wednesday night with support from all political parties.

The new legislation focuses on punishing Russian president Vladimir Putin's regime over its invasion of Ukraine, but it has also spurred debate on a more general autonomous sanctions bill.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Nanaia Mahuta said the sanctions would allow the country to step up and join the international resistance to the Russian invasion.

Q. **"The Russia Sanctions Act provides a broad legal framework which enables New Zealand to impose economic sanctions targeting specific people, and companies, assets and services involved with Russia's aggression."**

"The Act means we could for example, stop the purchase or sale of property, the movement of ships and planes in New Zealand's waters or airspace, stop imports and exports, lending of money, or the movement of money."

National's Gerry Brownlee said this was a difficult time not only for Ukrainians but the entire world.

"As soon as Mr Putin brought out the nuclear card and made a suggestion that he may not be hesitant to use such weaponry put the whole world on notice," he said.

Brownlee introduced a very similar, but more general autonomous sanctions bill in 2017, which was voted down.

ACT deputy leader Brooke van Velden said it was still needed and sanctions against Russia should have been imposed weeks ago.

"Not just for Russia but for any other future country... we need to send a signal that we will fight back," she said.

The government's more targeted legislation was introduced after Russia vetoed sanctions against itself at the UN security council.

The government is looking into bringing in more general legislation but Green Party co-leader James Shaw warned such a law could undermine the UN system.

"The United Nations Security Council does not equal the entirety of the UN system and the General Assembly is of course a much wider body and a much more inclusive body and in this case it has very strongly condemned the Russian war in the Ukraine," he said.

Both the Greens and Te Paati Māori wanted the sanctions against Putin's regime to be put under constant review to see how they were affecting ordinary working Russians who had no say over what their leader chose to do.

Te Paati Māori co-leader Rawiri Waititi said that in the future Aotearoa must be more consistent about who it decided to punish.

"Why did our successive New Zealand governments not condemn the illegal US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, or Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine?"

None of the the MPs are under any illusion that the war on Ukraine will be resolved any time soon and are poised for further sanctions in the future.