

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade assistance for New Zealanders abroad not unreasonable

Legislation	Ombudsmen Act 1975
Agency	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Ombudsman	John Belgrave
Case number(s)	W52293 (previously unpublished)
Date	2006

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) provided advice to complainants held by school authorities in China—acted in accordance with international consular practice as set out in Vienna Convention—MFAT assistance limited to providing information and cannot interfere with decisions made by other countries

The complainant believed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) has not assisted their family adequately when family members were held by school authorities in China and were seeking repatriation to New Zealand from Hong Kong.

The NZ Embassy in China spoke to the complainants by telephone while they were in China and understood from them that the local police had been contacted and had visited the school.

The New Zealand Consulate-General in Hong Kong facilitated contact with the complainants' mother in New Zealand for payment of airfares to New Zealand. The Ombudsman considered that MFAT had acted in accordance with international consular practice as set out in the Vienna Convention. The Ombudsman advised the complainant that MFAT assistance is limited to providing information and guidance and facilitating contact with family, friends and others to help New Zealanders who are in trouble overseas to resolve their own problems. MFAT cannot interfere in decisions made by other countries and is not funded to repatriate New Zealanders. The complaint was not sustained.

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