

NEW ZEALAND (/NEWS/NATIONAL) / COVID-19 (/NEWS/COVID-19)

Destiny Church's Brian Tamaki pleads not guilty over anti-lockdown protest

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Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki has pleaded not guilty to organising an anti-lockdown protest in breach of Covid-19 alert level restrictions.



Destiny Church leader Brian Tamaki. (file) Photo: RNZ / Dan Cook

On 2 October more than 1000 people gathered in Auckland's Domain at a time when restrictions limited gatherings to weddings, funerals and tangihanga with no more than 10 people.

Tamaki and co-accused Paul Thompson appeared in the Auckland District Court via audio-visual link this morning.

They are charged with intentionally failing to comply with the Covid-19 Public Health Response Act 2020 by organising and attending a gathering in an outdoor place in breach of alert level 3 restrictions.

If found guilty, they could face up to six months in prison and a \$4000 fine.

Defence lawyer Ron Mansfield QC represented Tamaki at the hearing and entered not guilty pleas on his behalf.

Thompson's lawyer Sue Grey entered not guilty pleas for her client.

Judge Brooke Gibson remanded the pair on bail, on the condition they would not organise or attend gatherings in breach of current alert level restrictions, or use the internet with the purpose of organising or encouraging non-compliance of the rules.

Most of the hearing cannot be reported due to suppression under the Bail Act 2000.

The matter would be next called in January next year.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Director-General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield and Auckland Mayor Phil Goff are among those who have criticised the event.