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### UNITED NATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

During most of 1960 the Middle East was relatively quiet. Unfortunately the comparative absence of major incidents was not accompanied by any substantial measure of progress toward resolving the basic problems of the area, which constitute a continuing menace to peace and stability. Both in Arab-Israeli affairs and in inter-Arab relations, there were disruptive outbursts to serve as reminders that the present degree of tranquillity rests on a very delicate balance, and could be shattered by untoward developments, accidental or deliberate. On those occasions during the past year when violence seemed nearest the surface, the restraining influence of United Nations agencies, as in previous years, played a significant role in promoting relaxation of tensions. It has been primarily in support of these United Nations efforts that the Canadian Government has sought to contribute to the present security of the region and, thereby, to the prospect of lasting solutions to its fundamental problems.

With the exception of a dangerous flare-up last February in a demilitarized zone on the frontier between Israel and Syria, the differences between Israel and its Arab neighbours produced little open violence during the year. The incident, which occurred at Tawafiq, involved casualties on both sides; but more disturbing were the tensions it created all along the borders between Israel and the United Arab Republic. In this incident, as in so many similar situations in the past, the presence of members of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in the troubled area unquestionably played a vital part in bringing the violence to an end and preventing the spread of hostilities. Nearly half the Organization's strength of some 100 officers is maintained along this recurrently disturbed frontier; and several of the officers Canada contributes to the truce supervision body participated in the efforts to halt the fighting at Tawafiq.

At the same time, the presence of the UN Emergency Force on the Egyptian side of Israel's border with the southern region of the United Arab Republic may be regarded as a substantial factor in limiting the spread of the tensions that derived from the incident on the northern sector. Canada contributes about 950 of the 5000 men who make up this force. It should perhaps be emphasized that the importance of having United Nations observers or forces in the tense border areas lies not only in their function as a sort of buffer between the parties but also in the element of reassurance which the United Nations presence on the scene provides for both sides, mitigating to some extent the mutual apprehensions and suspicions which have so often contributed to open hostilities.

While actual border conflict between Israel and the adjoining Arab States was limited during 1960, no apparent progress was made toward resolving the Palestine problem, around which Arab-Israeli differences