

War in exchange for a formal peace negotiation and permanent borders between the parties. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Canada participated in the resumed UN peacekeeping force in the Sinai Desert and in the UN Disengagement Observation Force on the Golan Heights, positioned on the border between Israel and Syria. This early history of Canadian involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict reveals Canada's position as a mediator in inter-state military disputes. This peacekeeping role was appropriate for a period in which inter-state hostilities governed the region.

However, the start of the Middle East Peace Process in 1991² brought about new opportunities and challenges for extra-regional involvement in the Middle East. One of Canada's most significant roles has been as Gavel-holder of the Refugee Working Group (RWG), a committee designed to deal primarily with the plight and humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees. In this role, Canada has continued its commitment to social, political and economic issues such as family reunification, public health, child welfare, and development.³ Canada has also been involved in other multilateral endeavors, such as the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group, for which Canada chairs the discussion on Maritime Confidence-Building Measures, and Canada has held workshops for Middle Eastern naval forces.⁴

In addition to these diplomatic endeavors, Canada has increasingly focussed on civil society and non-governmental organisations as allies in the attempt to establish peace in the region. This

² In 1991, the Madrid Peace Conference set the stage for a series of bilateral and multilateral negotiations between Israel, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and the Palestinians. Canada has been a consistent and active non-regional participant on the multilateral track.

³ Since the establishment of the RWG, Canada led a series of international missions to Jordan (1994 & 1996), to refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza (1998), and to Lebanon (1994 & 1997) to obtain first hand information about conditions in the refugee camps as well as to publicize the issue to the international community.

⁴ In addition, Canada is a member of the Multilateral Steering Group, which oversees all five working groups.