



BACKGROUND

DOCUMENTATION

***CANADA'S BILATERAL RELATIONS
AND INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST***

Canada has over the past two decades developed a comprehensive network of bilateral relations with individual countries throughout the region of the Middle East and the Maghreb. These relations reflect intensely felt cultural and religious links to the region, as well as the direct ties of family and friendship binding thousands of Canadians with the people of the Middle East (over 250,000 people from the Middle East and Maghreb have resettled in Canada since WWII). Of growing importance are the increasingly complementary commercial interests shared by Canada and several countries in the region. Canada has a record of active involvement in UN diplomacy and peacekeeping operations in the Middle East.

In support of these interests, the government of Canada maintains diplomatic relations with all of the countries of the Middle East and Maghreb, and operates resident Embassies in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq (operations currently suspended), Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Tunisia. Twelve Middle Eastern and Maghreb states operate Embassies in Canada.

Canada's substantial economic interests in the Middle East and Maghreb, which will benefit significantly from the maintenance of peace and evolution of stability in the region, are partially reflected in the attached trade statistics. The countries of this area comprise an export market of over \$1.5 billion for Canadian goods, and services bring the total to over \$2 billion.

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