



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA AND UN RESOLUTIONS CONCERNING ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST

An Address by Mr. Fernand Leblanc, M.P., to the Eighth National Public Affairs Seminar of Hadassah-WIZO, Montreal, June 15, 1977.

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The subject of Canada's voting record on UN resolutions is, of course, as I fully appreciate, of lively concern to this audience. I am all the more pleased to be examining this subject with you today as there is always a danger that our votes on specific complex UN resolutions, often procedural in nature, will be misinterpreted — or rather overinterpreted — as meaning more than they really do. Let us be clear from the start that Canada's basic policy has not changed and will not change; those who add up the *minutiae* and cry "tilt" are mistaken.

Perhaps I should first outline Canada's policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict — a policy that seeks, as you know, to consider the issues on their merits without automatically espousing the position of either party. As well, it is our policy to support the search for all available means to arrive at an early negotiated settlement that will put an end to 30 years of bloodshed, satisfy the legitimate concerns of all the parties and provide the surest guarantee for Israel's future security, which is a fundamental requirement. We recognize, of course, that Canada is not a prime mover in the Middle East. What we do or say may be helpful or unhelpful, but our influence is necessarily limited. We do not have the power to shape events.

Canadian policy towards the Middle East

For years the substance of our policy towards the Middle East has comprised two basic elements: upholding the right of existence of all states of the Middle East, including Israel, to a sovereign and independent existence, and the carrying-out of our peacekeeping role consistent with an objective and balanced approach towards the various issues arising out of the Middle East dispute. More recently, we have recognized, in addition, that the Palestinian people have legitimate aspirations, which require a political solution. Finally, the Government is determined to put new efforts into strengthening relations with all the states of the region, and to do so, wherever possible, independently of the vicissitudes of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

We are keenly aware that there are two sides to the Arab-Israeli dispute, and that it is Israel, on the one hand, and its Arab neighbours, on the other, whose concerns and vital interests must be satisfied. Hence our support for a peace settlement that will safeguard the sovereignty and independence of both Israel and its neighbours and will be seen by them to do so.

Canada's support for Israel is of long standing. It was manifest in our early recognition of the state of Israel, proclaimed after passage of the UN partition resolution in
