

Finally, the last section examines issues deserving further consideration with respect to the CFDD, and offers policy recommendations intended to enhance Canada's support for inter-ethnic dialogue, both in the Middle East and worldwide.

(1) Canadian Peacekeeping in the Middle East - Historical Background:

Canada has traditionally recognized the Middle East as a region of global strategic significance. Since the start, Canada's involvement in the Middle East has been closely attenuated with efforts to mediate a negotiated settlement to the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Canada's traditional peacekeeping role in the Middle East has involved mediating between states, engaging in high-level diplomacy, and providing military troops to monitor and/or enforce border settlements, security zones, cease-fires, and other official agreements.

In the past fifty years, Canada has witnessed five major Arab-Israeli wars, along with serious military engagements, and continual border squirmishes between Israel and the Arab states. In the pre-state period, when tensions over land between Jewish and Arab communities were heightened, Canada became involved in the debate over the future of the British Mandate in Palestine (1918-1948). The United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947, which proposed the Partition of Palestine into two separate states, one Arab and one Jewish. Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson, played a significant role in mobilizing support for this Partition Plan. However, upon departure of the British and the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the regular armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq advanced into Israel and subsequent fierce and intermittent fighting ensued. Following the 1948 War, Canada supported international control of Jerusalem and called upon both Arab and Jewish forces to stop fighting and resolve their dispute peacefully. Canada also became a key player in the Palestinian refugee problem established by the War, acting as the fourth largest contributor of material support for 1948 refugees.

Since the UN partition debate and the pre-state period, Canada has served as a third party mediator in all military disputes involving Arab and Jews in the Middle East. For example, in 1956, Canada participated in the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) stationed along the border between Egypt and Israel following the Suez War in which Egyptian President Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Lester B. Pearson's role in this peacekeeping effort was honoured with a Nobel Peace Prize. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Canada helped mobilize support for Security Council Resolution 242 which called for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 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.