

As long as the Arab-Israeli dispute goes on, there will be a continuing need for the kind of practical and immediate help which UNRWA provides in the areas of relief, health and education.

Unfortunately, it looks as though the Arab-Israeli dispute will continue as a source of tension, instability and unpredictability in the area for some time to come.

The possibilities open to a country like Canada to make a contribution to a political settlement in such circumstances should not be exaggerated. Probably the most useful thing we could do would be to maintain and develop channels of communications with the parties involved so that we can bring a different and perhaps helpful perspective to the problems they face.

With this in mind, Canada has traditionally pursued a balanced policy between the Arabs and Israelis. We see merit in many of the arguments put forward by both sides. However, we have avoided taking positions on what the ultimate outcome should be of the negotiations that will have to take place between the parties concerned if there is ever to be a settlement.

This means that we have declined to give our support to attempts by either side in the dispute to prejudge the outcome of the eventual negotiations. Our objection to such attempts applies whether they be unilateral actions on the ground or resolutions in international fora that seek support for eventual negotiating positions.

We have tried to convince both sides of the advantages of the political, rather than the military approach to the resolution of their dispute.

Our position is solidly based on Security Council Resolution 242 with its careful balance of obligations on the two contending sides: for the Israelis, withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967; for the Arabs, acceptance of the right of all states to live within secure and recognized boundaries and that includes Israel. Despite the vagueness of the resolution, in its essence, it calls for basic advantages and disadvantages on both sides.

If there is to be a just peace in the Middle East, we believe the legitimate rights and concerns of the Palestinians have to be realized, including their right to play a full part in negotiations to determine their future and their right to a homeland within a clearly defined territory, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.