

PRESS RELEASE



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Protection of Canadians in the Middle East

The Honorable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs announced today that on May 23, the Canadian Embassies in Tel Aviv and Cairo were authorized to issue a warning to all Canadian citizens to leave these countries on their own responsibility if they did not have essential reasons for remaining. This warning was broadcast on May 24 by the CBC-International Service and BBC. At the same time prospective travellers to the Middle East were advised to delay their travel plans.

During the following week, the dependents of all Canadian staff members in Cairo and also a number of non-essential staff were moved to places of safe haven elsewhere. Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv was authorized to take similar action, but so far only some dependents have chosen to move out to Nicosia. At last reports no non-essential staff had yet left Tel Aviv.

Our Ambassadors in Tel Aviv and Cairo have today been instructed to tell all Canadian citizens (other than essential Embassy staff) to leave Israel and Cairo.

The availability of Canadian aircraft for use in evacuating Canadian citizens from Israel and the UAR has already been investigated.

Our Ambassadors have the required authority to act at their own discretion for the protection of Canadian citizens.

Through our Embassy in Beirut and by arrangement with the British authorities concerned action was taken on May 23 to ensure that Canadians in Jordan and Syria who had no essential reason for remaining were advised to leave. Canadians in Lebanon and Iraq have similarly been advised to be ready to leave at short notice. The discretionary authority of our Ambassador in Beirut to warn all Canadians to leave has been confirmed, and the British Government has been requested to include Canadians in any warning or followup action they take in neighbouring countries (e.g. Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Algeria) where we have no resident Embassies.