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MID-EAST SITUATION

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, today issued the following statement regarding recent reports of public executions in Iraq:

The Canadian Government is seriously concerned with the recent events in Iraq in which fourteen Iraqi nationals, nine of whom were of the Jewish faith, have been publicly executed on charges of espionage. It is the view of the Government that events of this nature, deplorable in themselves, both retard and diminish the prospects of achieving a just and lasting settlement of the unfortunate Arab-Israeli dispute which is engaging the attention of the entire international community.

The Government wishes to associate itself strongly with the position of the Secretary-General of the United Nations expressed in the following terms, after he learned of the executions:

"In the view of the Secretary-General, mass trials and executions are always to be deplored and are particularly abhorrent and dangerous when they are carried out in such a way as to inflame the emotions of the populace ... the Secretary-General did not question the right of the Government of Iraq to put on trial any of its own citizens as were apparently all of those convicted nor could he attempt to appraise the validity of the charges. The Secretary-General fears that the repercussions from this unhappy development will also be likely to impede efforts toward a peaceful