

Discussion of an international peace conference threatened to split the fragile Israeli coalition government in February-March 1987. During a visit to the United States, Prime Minister Shamir maintained that an international conference could not substitute for direct talks between Egypt, Israel, Jordan and representatives of the Palestinians living in the territories. His position conflicted with that expressed by US Secretary of State Shultz who stated that any approach, including an international conference, leading to direct negotiations between Arabs and Israelis should be explored. While Shamir was in the United States, Foreign Minister Peres travelled to Egypt for meetings with Egyptian President Mubarak. He expressed his continued support for an international conference that would serve as a brief prelude to direct negotiations, and tried to narrow differences with Egyptian officials regarding Soviet participation, the duration of the conference, and Palestinian representation. Peres returned to Israel with a joint pledge to push for an international conference in 1987 leading to direct negotiations among the parties.

Current Canadian Position

The Government of Canada has consistently supported the independence and integrity of Israel within secure and recognized boundaries. However, it does not accept the extension of Israeli jurisdiction over the Holy City of Jerusalem. The legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to a homeland in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, currently occupied by Israel, are recognized and the Government maintains diplomatic contact with the PLO at a less-than-ambassadorial level - formal recognition of the PLO is conditional on the latter's acceptance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 with its implicit recognition of Israel's right to exist, and its renunciation of terrorism. Pending a settlement of the Palestinian question, the Government contributes to refugee support through the United