

The many direct contacts between Israeli and Canadian leaders are not only a reflection of the close human ties that bind our countries. They also reflect the primordial concern of successive Canadian Governments for the security and well-being of the State of Israel. This has been a fundamental element of Canadian Middle East policy since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. It expresses the real sense of solidarity of Canadians with a democracy which we genuinely and deeply admire.

There are few areas where Canada has been more involved over the decades, than in the Middle East. Our concern for peace in the region is also naturally a concern for Israel. We support all constructive efforts to move from confrontation to negotiation of regional issues. We remain hopeful at the prospect of talks with the Kingdom of Jordan. We welcomed the Taba arbitration agreement. At the Ifrane and Alexandria Summits, we were stirred by the courageous and farsighted leaders who were willing to take risks for peace. In my visit to the region in April and in my meetings with Israeli leaders, I have made clear the earnest desire of the Canadian Government to contribute in any way possible to the search for a lasting peaceful settlement based on the legitimate rights of both sides: security for Israel through recognized borders and a homeland for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

We have demonstrated our readiness in practical ways. On March 31 of this year, at the request of Israel and Egypt, Canada became a member of the Ten-Nation Multilateral Force and Observers which supervises the application in the Sinai of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Our contribution is in the form of a helicopter squadron and staff officers, totalling 137 men and women. We also participate in UNDOF, on the Golan Heights, and in the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) which has its headquarters in Jerusalem. We intend to continue our support to peacekeeping in the Middle East.

Of course, our concern over the Middle East is not restricted to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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