

We do believe that the Palestinian people should be represented in any discussions affecting their future, such as a Geneva Conference. In present circumstances, the PLO does speak for a significant element among the Palestinian people. It is, in fact, the only organization now in being that claims to represent the Palestinian people as a whole. The chief obstacle to the inclusion of the PLO in the peace process is that they remain dedicated in their formal position to the elimination of Israel and reject Security Council Resolution 242. This hardly means that they should not be spoken to at all or that the Secretary-General was wrong to include the PLO in his consultations, or that we should vote against an otherwise satisfactory resolution because it envisaged that he would do so again. How else can we hope to get the PLO or some successor organization to change their policy but by involving them at least in some part of a consultative process? They will not disappear if we simply try to pretend they don't exist.

I should like, in closing, to mention also our vote against the resolution on the rights of the Palestinians. We regarded this resolution, which laid down a timetable for the implementation of so-called "inalienable rights of the Palestinian people", as seriously prejudging, and as an obvious attempt to influence unilaterally, the outcome of future Middle East negotiations. Consequently we opposed it. Thus, in this rather more typical instance, we not only took the same position as Israel but our reasons for doing so served to illustrate some important aspects of our policy.

Conclusion

May I now reiterate what is already so obvious and clearly demonstrated since the founding of the state of Israel: Among Canadians generally, as within the Government of Canada, Israel's right to an independent future is fully accepted and supported. There is a strong basis for this support. This is not to say that the Canadian perception of the tragic Arab-Israeli conflict is identical either with the Israeli perception or with the perception of Israel's Arab neighbours. Perhaps 20 years of Middle East peacekeeping responsibilities entitle us to certain views of our own on this subject. Those views have been and remain securely grounded in Resolution 242, to which Israel has also subscribed. We remain convinced that, with good will on all sides, the stage is set for peace with security and peace with justice and that Israel, which sets for all of us an example in democracy, dynamism and sacrifice, can achieve before the end of this decade what it has fought for so hard and so long and at such terrible cost.

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