



STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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RELIEF FOR PAKISTANI REFUGEES IN INDIA

A Statement in the House of Commons on November 17, 1971,
by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the
Honourable Mitchell Sharp.

Canada has shown its deep concern for the plight of the Pakistani refugees in India by the contributions made by the Federal Government, provincial governments and voluntary agencies for their relief in the last few months. We have been concerned not only for the refugees themselves but for the Government of India, upon whom the burden of responsibility for relief falls. It is difficult for anyone to come to grips with the dimensions and complexity of the problems caused by the greatest mass movement of mankind in modern history. These problems have both human and political aspects; it is to the human aspect that I am now addressing myself.

The response of the Indian Government and the people has been magnificent and their efforts to ensure that relief supplies and materials are provided and effectively distributed are beyond praise. India has had to bear a disproportionate share of the burden. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, through whom all United Nations assistance is being co-ordinated, has appealed for further contributions from the international community to meet this great humanitarian need.

To date, the nations of the world have provided approximately \$240 million through multilateral and bilateral channels for refugee relief in India. Some \$125 million of this amount has been pledged through the United Nations system. This amount has proved inadequate to support the massive relief program that is required and to mitigate its adverse effects on the development program of India. Without additional assistance, many of the significant developmental achievements which have been made over the past two and a half decades will be jeopardized and, unless renewed efforts to share the burden are undertaken by the international community, the presence of large numbers of refugees will continue to aggravate political tensions in the subcontinent.

In response to the High Commissioner for Refugees' new appeal and following the recent visit to the subcontinent of a team led by Mr. Gérin-Lajoie, the President of the Canadian International Development Agency, the Government has decided that substantial additional contributions must be made available.