

The Basis for Negotiations

Canada has traditionally and rightly supported United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 as the best basis for the achievement of a comprehensive peace. The Resolution was passed unanimously by the Council following the 1967 war in the Middle East and has served as the basis for negotiations ever since. Its basic principles are:

- "(i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
- (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

The Resolution is accepted by Israel and by all her neighbours although interpretations as to its precise meaning vary significantly. The Arab governments see it as calling pre-eminently for Israeli evacuation of the entirety of the territories occupied in 1967 which include the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. The Israelis argue that the extent of withdrawal is left very open by the Resolution and they interpret the reference to secure boundaries as meaning, above all, the physical security of borders in military terms. These differences do not negate, however, the Resolution's usefulness as the basis for negotiations.

It would serve no useful purpose for Canada to adopt a specific interpretation of Resolution 242. The precise details of any peace settlement including what borders will eventually emerge and the extent of relations between the states concerned is for the parties themselves to decide in negotiations. This I understand is what the Resolution's authors intended. At the same time it seems clear to me that they also intended the Resolution to be seen as a whole - that Israel's withdrawal from territories would balance her neighbours' recognition of her as a legitimate state in the area within clear and defined boundaries. It is not enough to say, as some Arab governments still do, that Israel should unilaterally withdraw to the pre-1967 lines and recognize Palestinian rights without concurrent agreement on boundaries and recognition. On the other hand, it is questionable how far Israel's concern for security would justify territorial claims that effectively negated a Palestinian homeland. If the arrangements ultimately made in negotiations are to be durable and lasting they must not only adequately reflect territorial and defence considerations, important as these are, but even more significantly, they must be such as to obtain the general and genuine acceptance of the peoples affected.