



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA'S CONCERN FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Canada-Israel Committee, Ottawa, March 31, 1982

Down through history, the Jewish people have had their right to live, to be one people challenged repeatedly. They have met threats to their very existence in the form of a monumental obscenity against mankind, the holocaust. Many in Canada and many now living in Israel know that horror from personal experience. But most Jews have been touched by it in some way, either directly or as a result of the loss of family or friends. Whether they have undergone that trauma themselves or grown up with that dark cloud of history as a background darkening their lives, all Jews see Israel as a land of their dreams. Those who have taken up new lives in Israel have made this homeland a green and pleasant land. Those who remain in the Diaspora (I am sure I can say without exception) look to Israel for spiritual leadership and for inspiration. And, in turn, they try to make their contribution to the new Israel that is taking shape.

Those of us who regard ourselves, and I hope are regarded, as friends of Israel are aware of the deep desire of Israelis, finally to live peacefully and to be able to carry on the religion, philosophy and culture that has brought them through centuries of adversity. As friends, our aim has to be to make some contribution to that peaceful goal in what we say and in what we do.

We cannot forget the sacrifices Israel has made and is making in the search for peace. In just 25 more days it will be giving witness to the true extent of its commitment to peace when it withdraws from the Sinai peninsula. There have been many obstacles for the Israeli government to overcome in reaching this stage, and in the days that remain before the withdrawal is concluded, there will probably be more.

The original decision to return the Sinai to Egypt was a momentous one for Israel. It was courageous as well, because it involved giving up strategically and economically important advantages that it had enjoyed for a number of years.

I appreciate Israel's concerns about what the future holds in store after April 25. There has been great disruption in the lives of those who had built new homes for themselves and their families in the Sinai Desert, never imagining that peace between Israel and an Arab neighbour would be possible in their lifetime. The extent of the trauma that peace with an Arab neighbour could create within Jewish society is only now being fully understood, as Jew must confront Jew, to ensure that the terms of the peace treaty are respected.
