



Statements and Speeches

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THE MIDDLE EAST: THE WILL TO PEACE AND THE FORM IT TAKES MUST BE EVOLVED BY THE PARTIES CONCERNED

A Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, to the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 20, 1974.

No one who is familiar with the developments in the Middle East in the past quarter-century can fail to be deeply moved by the human suffering that has been caused by the perpetual upheaval, insecurity and armed conflict in that region. Though far removed from this area, Canada has not and could not remain indifferent to this tragedy, and has tried to make a helpful contribution to the United Nations efforts to grapple with the problem.

Canada's fundamental concern has always been to help bring about a just and durable peace. To be just, it must take full account of the legitimate interests of all the peoples, and to be durable it must be developed and accepted by all. No imposed solution could endure.

We consider it essential to any lasting and comprehensive settlement that there be respect for the sovereignty, the territorial integrity and the political independence of Israel and of every other state in the Middle East. We remain opposed to any attempt to challenge the right of Israel or the right of any other state in the region to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threat and acts of force.

The important issue we are now examining, concerning the status of the Palestinians and their role in efforts to achieve a negotiated peace, has figured prominently in this tragic history. From the outset, Canada has recognized that the Palestinians represent a major interested element in the Middle East situation. Security Council Resolution 242, firmly subscribed to by Canada since its adoption in 1967, called for a just settlement of the Palestine refugee problem. Canada has given and continues to give substantial financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. Recent developments, including this debate, testify to the growing acknowledgement that cognizance must be taken of the need for the Palestinian people to be represented and heard in negotiations involving their destiny. Canada is fully in accord with the view that any enduring peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute must take account of the legitimate concerns of the Palestinians.

But we are convinced that these concerns must be, and realistically can only be, pursued by non-violent means. Canada condemns vigorously terrorism in whatever form and from whatever quarter it may occur. It has no place in any efforts to resolve the differences between the parties to this dispute. No one who seeks a role in a negotiated settlement, no matter how legitimate his grievances are or how deep his frustrations may be, can expect to be accepted at the negotiating table unless he sheds violence in favour of dialogue. Meaningful dialogue depends upon recognition of the existence of Israel and its right to survive.

We have noted with satisfaction that there have been, within a relatively short space of time, territorial adjustments on two fronts in the form of the existing disengagement agreements. We may also be witnessing a fundamental change of appreciation of existing realities on the part of both sides to the dispute. On the one hand, Arab governments appear more disposed to recognize Israel's right to exist. Israel, for its part, has reaffirmed its intention to pursue the search for peace with its Arab neighbours, and to this end has indicated greater recognition of the fact that Palestinian concerns will have to be taken into account in some way if real peace is to be achieved.

This said, ... it will be clear that the question is how legitimate Palestinian concerns are to be brought to bear in efforts to reach a just and durable settlement. Canada has firmly resisted giving advice on what form Palestinian representation should take in future negotiations. The claim of the Palestine Liberation Organization to represent the Palestinians is thus one that, in our view, is not for Canada to decide. It is a question that remains to be resolved by the parties directly involved in the course of their continuing efforts to work towards an agreed peace, and Israel, in our view, is an essential party in deciding the question.

If recent developments have placed new emphasis on certain elements among the numerous factors that must be taken into account in any realistic move toward a peace settlement, nothing that has occurred derogates from Canada's conviction that Security Council Resolution 242 constitutes a valid framework for a just and equitable settlement. It remains our view that the equitable balance of obligations thereby laid down for the parties continues to provide them with important guidelines for their efforts to resolve their differences.

The integrity of that Security Council resolution must be maintained, in particular by refraining from any action that would tend to emphasize one aspect to the exclusion of other equally

valid principles. This applies, of course, to the Palestinian issue, as to all the others involved. While important, and indeed fundamental, to the Arab-Israeli dispute, this issue evidently cannot be resolved separately and without consideration for other elements of the problem. We should be opposed to any unilateral actions that could be prejudicial to the comprehensive negotiated settlement that is being sought.

I have said ... that the manner in which legitimate Palestinian concerns are to be represented in the course of the search for a peace settlement is a matter for agreement by the parties involved. The same principle clearly applies to the declared aspiration of the Palestine Liberation Organization to establish an independent national authority in the region. If the emergence of any Palestinian entity were to be envisaged at some stage, it would be essential that this should be the result of agreement among the parties directly involved, which, of course, include Israel. In this respect, the establishment, evolution and existence of any such entity should in no way prejudice the continued existence of the state of Israel.

From what has been said, it will be clear that the Canadian Government believes a settlement cannot be imposed in the Middle East by outside forces. The will to make peace and the modalities and structures of an eventual settlement must be evolved by the parties directly concerned. We shall evaluate objectively any particular course that may be followed in the pursuit of peace, basing ourselves on certain fundamental principles but free of any preconceived ideas as to the form and content of an eventual settlement. We shall continue to weigh events in direct relation to their likely impact on what has always been and remains for Canada the cardinal objective: the achievement of an agreed and lasting settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbours enabling all the states of the region to live in peace and security. Canada will continue wholeheartedly, through whatever means may be open to us, to support all efforts to this end.

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