



Statements and Speeches

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BALANCE AND OBJECTIVITY -- THE AIMS OF CANADA'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY

A Toast by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, at a Dinner given in his Honour by Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, Jerusalem, on January 19, 1976.

I am most pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you tonight. I would like to thank you, as my host, for your invitation to visit Israel and for the kind hospitality you have extended to me and my delegation since my arrival. Here in Israel, I am reminded of the great role of the Jewish people throughout history in bringing to all mankind so many significant contributions in numerous and diverse areas of human endeavour. Indeed, in Canada also I am struck by the contribution Canadians of the Jewish faith have made in the intellectual, artistic, professional and business life of our country.

As you have pointed out, Mr. Minister, despite differences in the history, the make-up and the geopolitical situation of our two countries, we have in common the social experience of young nations, built to a large extent by immigrants. We also share a heritage of common values that has provided the basis for close co-operation between Israel and Canada within international organizations.

The consolidation and further expansion of bilateral relations with Israel, as well as with all countries in the Middle East, is an important element of Canadian diplomacy in this region. In itself, this goal would have been a sufficient motive to accept the kind invitation extended to me by your Government; but, in addition, I welcome this opportunity to establish personal contacts with you, and with other Israeli leaders. I was particularly looking forward to "in-depth" discussions of Israeli positions and perceptions on the political situation in this region of the world -- and the meetings we have had so far have amply confirmed the usefulness of such exchanges. I hope to resume these discussions with you, Mr. Minister, before long -- this time in Canada, for it is with great pleasure that I invite you to pay an official visit to our country. As I noted earlier in another capital, Canadian policy on the Middle East is not fixed in stone; it reflects the existing political circumstances in time and is, therefore, liable to change as these circumstances evolve. That is why I wish to consult more frequently, in the future, with leaders like yourself.

Given that we share a common outlook in many respects, I am correct, I believe, in characterizing relations between Canada and Israel as

excellent. As you have pointed out, many thousands of Canadians travel to Israel each year, and these visits are reciprocated by the broad range of Israelis who travel in turn to Canada. On the economic front, we have witnessed last year yet another increase in our two-way trade.

During the course of my trip to the Middle East, I have visited several of Israel's Arab neighbours. Consequently, the magnitude of the problems associated with the search for peace in this area of the world is fully in my mind. Canada's fundamental and unalterable concern has always been to make its contribution towards a just and durable peace. We have tried to do this in a very direct way through our participation in the United Nations Emergency Force in the Sinai, which is larger than that provided by any other country, and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force on the Golan Heights. If these forces can continue to provide a measure of stability between Israel and its neighbours and can help to establish and maintain a climate in which substantive negotiations can take place, Canada fully intends to maintain its contribution.

The Government and the people of Canada supported the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, its right to exist as an independent state in the Middle East and the right of its people to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, and that still continues as the policy of the Government of Canada. In no way has this support ever been directed against Israel's neighbours. Indeed, Canada has sought to maintain a policy of balance and objectivity in the Middle East conflict. We firmly believe that all the peoples of this region have the same right to peaceful and prosperous development behind secure boundaries.

The Canadian Government has never attempted to assert any preconceived notions as to what might constitute the details of an eventual Middle East peace agreement. While the achievement of a just and equitable settlement has always been a major concern in Canada, it has been my Government's view that the parties themselves must solve their problems through negotiations on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and all the principles they embody, as this continues to constitute a valid framework upon which to base the deliberations required to achieve a just and lasting settlement. Canada has, therefore, welcomed the achievement of a second interim accord between Israel and Egypt as an important contribution in the negotiating process.

I know that decisions are very difficult when the security and sovereignty of states are at issue. It is my hope that the parties concerned will continue to find the fortitude necessary to make the

difficult choices that will be required if the momentum towards peace is to be built on and expanded. I recognize, Mr. Minister, as do you, that regrettable incidents such as the passage of the resolution at the United Nations equating Zionism with racism, which Canada vigorously opposed, do little to contribute to a climate of mutual tolerance and understanding so vital in any negotiations.

We understand the difficult situation facing Israel. This should not dissuade you, however, because you are a courageous people, from actively pursuing the search for meaningful negotiations that are essential if Israel is to achieve the peace and security it so ardently desires.

Canada considers it vital to any lasting settlement that there be respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the Middle East. The Government of Canada remains unalterably opposed to any attempt to challenge the right of Israel to live within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threat and acts of force. At the same time, it is the Canadian Government's view that the Palestinian people should be heard and participate in negotiations regarding their destiny. Indeed, my strong impression, as I conclude my visit to the Middle East, is that there will be no solution unless the legitimate interests of the Palestinians are met.

In conclusion, Mr. Minister, I thank you again for the kindness and hospitality you have shown me. I am sure that the discussions I have had with the President, the Prime Minister and with you will enable me to appreciate better the difficulties you face in your quest for peace. Let me leave with you Canada's hope that favourable circumstances will be brought about that will facilitate the achievement of a peace settlement that will add still further impetus to the full realization of your country's great promise.

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