



Statements and Speeches

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THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CANADA'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, to the Canada/Israel Committee Dinner in Ottawa on April 30, 1975.

I am pleased to join with my distinguished Parliamentary colleagues in greeting you tonight on the occasion of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the State of Israel. As this is the first time I have had the opportunity in my present portfolio to be present at such an occasion, let me add that I attach the highest importance to Canada's relations with Israel. The Canadian people have always had and will always continue to have special ties of friendship and respect for the people of Israel. I look forward to visiting Israel myself before the end of the year at the invitation of the Foreign Minister of that country.

The last two years have seen important and far-reaching changes in the Middle East, changes which have carried with them new responsibilities for Canada. Indeed, in this relatively short period, our commercial, economic and financial ties with all the states of the area have grown rapidly. We have provided some 1,100 logistic and administrative personnel for the UN forces in the area, and are the single largest contributor to the UN's current peacekeeping efforts in the Middle East.

With Israel an established market, we witnessed last year yet another substantial increase in our two-way trade. Of the 1972 Export Development Corporation agreement with Israel, I understand that the full \$100 million has now been committed for projects involving thermal-electric power-stations, hotels and the Ben Gurion Airport.

I have mentioned peace-keeping. We are glad to make a contribution to this vital UN activity, not only because it is indispensable to the peace of the area but because it is in the Canadian interest to strengthen the capacity of the UN to help preserve international peace and security. We believe, nevertheless, that peacekeeping operations are a means to an end -- a peaceful settlement of the dispute. If the forces can help to maintain or establish a climate in which substantive negotiations can begin, and if these are carried on in good faith, it is that much easier for Canada to justify its participation. In view of the present efforts by the parties concerned to seek alternative methods of negotiations following the failure to agree to further disengagement in the

Sinai, this task of the UN forces takes on a crucial importance.

The Government has not attempted to assert any preconceived notions about what might constitute the details of an eventual peace agreement. The parties themselves must work these out through negotiations on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242, which, in the Government's view, continues to constitute a valid framework upon which to base the negotiations required to achieve a just and equitable peace settlement. Canada has consistently refused to interpret this resolution or to draw implications from it that were not immediately apparent from the wording of the resolution. To do otherwise would, I think, preclude the shape of any potential settlement. We have insisted, however, on the necessity for all the parties to negotiate their differences. We know this is very difficult when the security and sovereignty of states are at issue. But is there any feasible alternative negotiations if a solution is to be found that will be acceptable to all peoples of the area?

The Government has fully supported all initiatives to this end, including Dr. Kissinger's efforts to achieve a further partial settlement between Israel and Egypt. We regret the breakdown of these efforts and trust that new elements may allow their resumption. I understand that there has been a call for the reconvening of the Geneva Conference on the Middle East. For my part, I would hope that an acceptable formula can be found which would allow for the participation at the conference of all interested parties. What seems to me important is to build upon the stated willingness of each side to seek paths towards peace. To this end, and depending on developments, a return to Geneva -- assuming that adequate detailed preparations have been made -- might assist the process towards a final negotiated settlement of differences.

It is clear that, in the continuing efforts to achieve an eventual negotiated peace, the Palestinians must play a role. Indeed, the re-emergence of the Palestinian factor in the Middle East equation culminated, as you are all aware, in a major debate at the last session of the UN General Assembly. I made clear at that time Canada's position on the issue. I reiterated Canada's support for the right of the Palestinian people to be heard and to participate in negotiations concerning their future status. At the same time, however, I firmly maintained the Government's refusal to comment on the form Palestinian representation should take in any such future talks. I trust I made clear the Government's view that this must remain a question to be resolved by the parties concerned. The Palestinian issue is not one that can be settled separately but must be placed in the context of the efforts to work towards an agreed and acceptable peace settlement to all parties concerned.

Against this backdrop of profound change in the Middle East over these last two years, Canada's longstanding commitment to Israel's right of survival as an independent state in the area remains firm. It follows from this, as well as from our adherence to all the principles embodied in Security Council Resolution 242, that 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. Canada's earnest wish is to see all the peoples of the Middle East live out their lives in peace and security without constant fear of further war. A just and durable settlement of Arab-Israeli differences must be arrived at by the parties themselves through negotiations, and not by a resort to violence. Terrorist activities of the kind that occurred at the Savoy Hotel in Tel Aviv last month must only be condemned.

From what I have said tonight, I think it is apparent that, despite greatly altered circumstances, the fundamental principles of Canada's policy on the Middle East remain unchanged. While the Government is prepared to evaluate all developments in a rapidly-evolving situation in terms of their impact on the search for a peaceful settlement, it firmly maintains that such developments must not be allowed in any way to prejudice the continued existence of Israel. What is important for Canada now, as it has always been in the past, is that Israel and its neighbours continue the process towards a negotiated peace, freely arrived at and acceptable to all. No effort should be spared, and no opportunity missed, in pursuit of this objective, which, when achieved, would allow Israel, free from present constraints, and, in a climate of independence and confidence, to concentrate on the task it has always set for itself -- the promotion of the social, cultural and economic development of its people.

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