

STATEMENT DISCOURS

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STATEMENT BY THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
FLORA MACDONALD,
DURING THE UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING
ON IRAN, NEW YORK,
DECEMBER 30, 1979

Mr. President,

I thank you for this opportunity to be able to participate today. It is because we have respect for international law that we are able to meet here today. It is because 23 million Canadians are outraged by a violation of international law that I have asked to speak. Probably more than any other nation, Canada is aware of the enormity of feeling that the hostage situation in Iran has aroused in the American people. Perhaps, more than most, we are able to admire the restraint with which the American Government has acted in the face of such strong provocation.

On humanitarian grounds alone, the need to act is clear; indeed, it is compelling. For two months now, fifty ordinary men and women have been subjected to the grossest violation of their rights. Like all of us here, I am deeply concerned for these hostages, just as I am in every instance where people anywhere in the world are deprived of their human rights.

This ground alone would suffice to compel this body to act. But even more is at stake. As other speakers have made amply clear, the very foundations of international law and of civilized diplomacy are called into question by the situation in Iran.

Mr. President, it is not necessary for me to rehearse the sound and compelling arguments already made here. Nonetheless, no delegation in this council should lose sight of its responsibility before the world community, now and in the future, for the way it votes on this issue.

Rarely is a turning point in world history so clear to the people in whose hands a decision lies. To ignore this stark need for communal corrective action would be to threaten the fabric of the international community, and to risk a dark age of diplomatic anarchy.

But, Mr. President, what the Security Council faces today is more than just a decision on a matter of humanitarian rights or of international law. Members should all be conscious that their decision may substantially affect the relevance, the very usefulness, of the United Nations as an instrument for the maintenance of world order.

The Security Council has already called upon Iran to release the hostages it holds in Tehran, and has asked both Iran and the United States to take steps to resolve the remaining differences between them. The International Court of Justice, in an unanimous decision, has also called for such release. Clearly, those actions have not sufficed to convince Iran to live up to its international obligations.

The resolution you have before you allows for a final, intensified effort at persuasion by the Secretary General further to those he has already made. We pray it will be successful. But should he fail, should Iran not respond, you are asked to agree to take further measures: to implement sanctions under the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. These provisions were designed from the outset to be used in situations such as this one, where a country is in flagrant violation of the obligations it has undertaken as a member of the international community.

The United States in particular, but also every civilized country, has the right to expect that the council will adopt this resolution. To fail to do so, will be to admit the inability of the community of nations to use its institutions to maintain order in international affairs.

Unquestionably, Mr. President, the people and Government of Iran feel a deep grievance, and look for recognition of the right to redress that they so strongly feel. Accordingly, it is imperative that Iranians be made to understand that the international institutions are just as much at their service as they are for the Americans.

By supporting the resolution, members of the council will be sending a direct message to the Government of Iran that its current behaviour is totally unacceptable to the civilized world. But it should be clear that, once Iran has again made its behavior conform with international law, it will be able to turn to the international community for a full and fair hearing of its complaints.

Mr. President, on behalf of the people of Canada, I urge the members of the council to endorse this resolution. It is a powerful, positive and peaceful step that can help resolve this intolerable situation which threatens the peace, order and good governance of the whole world.