Advancing a Constructive Middle East Policy

Canada is widely considered to be one of Israel's closest and most reliable friends. When Israelis faced serious challenges in recent years, the Government of Canada extended clear, unequivocal, and remarkable support for the Jewish state. In general, this has received cross-partisan endorsement on Parliament Hill, reflecting the fact that support for the people and land of Israel is rooted in the democratic values Canadians and Israelis share.

This is consistent with Canadian policy for decades. Regardless of the governing party, Canada has maintained positive relations with Israel for nearly 70 years. Canada has consistently recognized the legitimacy of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, emphasized support for Israel's right to defend its people from terror attacks, and called for the necessity of a negotiated, two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The leaders of all major federal political parties have also explicitly rejected the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign targeting Israel.

At important junctures, Canada has played a key role in promoting peace in the region, including serving on the UN Special Committee on Palestine that recommended the two-state solution in 1947, and as “Gavel Holder” of the multilateral Refugee Working Group beginning in the 1990s. More recently, Canada was the first country outside Israel to officially recognize, as a cabinet decision, the plight of the nearly one million Jewish refugees who were forced to flee their homes in Arab countries in the years immediately following Israel's founding in 1948. This decision was a response to a recommendation from the House of Commons foreign affairs committee, unanimously supported by all parties.

Canada has long played a constructive role in the Middle East, particularly with regard to promoting security, fostering cooperation and developing the conditions for peace. Close friendship with Israel has never compromised Canada's ability to help Palestinians or advocate for a comprehensive solution. In fact, it has only enhanced Canada's ability to play a meaningful role. In 2012, an advisor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told the...
The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs - Priorities

Updated – May 9, 2016

Globe and Mail that Abbas did not seek to change Ottawa’s close relationship with Israel, but to use its influence “for the sake of the two peoples.” He noted that Canada is “eligible to play an even better role as friends of Israel.”

Canada can continue demonstrating that Middle East Peace is not a zero-sum proposal by supporting bilateral and multilateral peace initiatives; assisting the building of accountable, liberal democratic institutions in the Palestinian Authority; and simultaneously opposing efforts to isolate or denigrate Israel.

KEY POINTS

• Canadian support for Israel has consistently received multi-partisan endorsement on Parliament Hill for decades.

• Canada has long played a constructive role in the Middle East, particularly with regard to promoting security, fostering cooperation and developing the conditions for peace.

• Close friendship with Israel has enhanced Canada’s ability to play a meaningful role in advancing peace.

• Canada can continue demonstrating that Middle East Peace is not a zero-sum proposal by supporting bilateral and multilateral peace initiatives; assisting the building of accountable, liberal democratic institutions in the Palestinian Authority; and opposing efforts to isolate or denigrate Israel.