

**POSITION FOR A RELEVANT & POSITIVE  
PAPER: CANADIAN MIDDLE EAST POLICY**



## **Policy Recommendations for Canada**

The Winter and Spring months of 2007 have been fraught with diplomatic activity in the Middle East, but vacant of much hope. Sectarian violence in Iraq deepens. Lebanon's internal paralysis continues, as does its susceptibility to foreign influences. Israel completes its 40<sup>th</sup> year in illegal military occupation of the Palestinian Territories, while the Palestinians languish with an economy and society hobbled by an Israeli-imposed apartheid. Despite the possibilities presented by the Saudi Plan and the Palestinian Unity government in March, Israel and its powerful supporters seem to prefer the stalemate of endless occupation, violence and counter-violence. Canada, both in word and deed, has been absent throughout. CJPME proposes the following positions to enable Canada to be positively present in the Middle East.

- A. **Ensure that assistance to Palestine stimulates institution building and growth.** Canada itself has continued to provide assistance to Palestinians in need via the UN Consolidated Appeal and UNRWA. Canada must pressure Israel to resume illegally withheld tax transfers and relax other economic restrictions; and must ensure that all possible assistance goes toward the strengthening of civil institutions and real growth.
- B. **Support and promote the Saudi Peace Plan.** The Saudi Peace Plan – supported by the Arab League – provides something no other plan offers: normalization of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Canada must encourage Israel and the US to engage with this Plan, and must publicly endorse the Plan's framework for negotiations.
- C. **Recognize the Palestinian Unity Government.** The Palestinian Unity Government implicitly satisfies the requirements of Israel and its supporters. Canada must acknowledge the positive elements presented in the Unity Government's platform, say "no" to the status quo, and embark on a policy rooted in respect for international law, and equal expectations of all.
- D. **Consider the Norwegian model to positively influence events in the Middle East.** Given its credibility as an honest broker in the region, Norway was invited to present at the Arab League Summit in March. Norway roots its decisions in policies which positively impact the status quo.
- E. **Protect Lebanon from outsiders, and support a Lebanese solution to Lebanese problems.** Whether from Israel, Syria, Iran or the US, Lebanon is highly subject to external manipulation. Canada must pressure all players to cease their political and military machinations, and enable Lebanon to find a Lebanese solution to its already complex internal challenges.

### **A: Ensure that assistance to Palestine stimulates growth**

1. **First, Canada must continue providing generously to humanitarian appeals.** Although it has suspended or restructured many of its growth-oriented programs in Palestine, Canada must continue to give to the UN Consolidated Appeal and UNRWA. According to UNRWA, in the first half of 2006, deep poverty in Palestine increased by over 64 percent, to over one million Palestinians.
2. **Canada must pressure Israel to restore tax transfer payments to Palestine.** Under the Paris Protocols (part of Oslo II), Israel collects customs payments on Palestinian commerce and then remits the money to the PA. These payments – about \$60 million monthly – typically accounted for about half of the PA's income. Canada must pressure Israel to respect previous negotiated agreements, and resume the transfers at once, as well as the previously withheld total.
3. **Canada must promote growth-oriented aid programs and policies.** While addressing humanitarian needs is laudable, Canada must consider programs and policies which address the real source of poverty: Israeli military occupation; Israeli restrictions on movement and access; and Israeli colonization and fragmentation of Palestinian land. The World Bank reported that in the year after Condoleezza Rice obtained bi-lateral agreement for her November, 2005 *Agreement on Movement and Access*, Israeli checkpoints and other physical obstacles increased by 44 percent. Canada must pressure Israel to cease its occupation; and must itself invest again in institution building and growth.

## **B: Support and promote the Saudi Peace Plan**

1. Canada must acknowledge and promote the Saudi Plan offer. Unless Canada is happy with the continued tension and bloodshed in Palestine/Israel, it should do all it can to get Israel and the US to engage on the Saudi Peace Plan. The Plan is aligned with international law and existing UN resolutions. Given the opportunity for normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab World, Canada must promote the final status framework suggested by the Plan.

## **C: Recognize the Palestinian Unity Government**

1. Canada should recognize the Palestinian Government. The new government pledges to “achieve national objectives through the resolutions of [Palestinian bodies...] and shall respect the international resolutions and agreements signed by the PLO [i.e. Palestine Liberation Organization.]” By citing its support for the Arab League Peace Plan (a.k.a. Saudi Peace Plan) which includes recognition of Israel and its borders (and Oslo), the new government implicitly states its recognition of Israel. Finally, the new government commits to “consolidating calm and expanding it to a comprehensive reciprocal truce [with Israel.]”
2. Canada must establish a Middle East policy based on equal expectations of all. While Canada’s demands on the PA may be reasonable – respect for previous agreements; recognition of Israel; and renunciation of violence – Canada does not hold Israel accountable to the same standard.
3. Canada must reassert international law as the cornerstone of its Middle East policy. Since at least 2004, Canada has moved away from international law in its Middle East policy. While Canada dismisses resolutions at the UN as “not useful,” “unbalanced” or dwelling on the past, it refuses to take a stand on obvious and ongoing violations of international law: Israel’s 40-year military occupation, its apartheid Wall, and its ongoing colonization of Palestinian territory.

## **D: Consider the Norwegian model to positively influence events**

1. Canada must restore its role as an honest broker in the Middle East. While Middle Eastern players have felt the recent chill from Ottawa, it is not too late for Canada to reclaim its former respected role (established under both Liberal and Conservative governments.) To do so, Canada must decide the basis for its Middle East policies – e.g. international law dealing with the root causes of the current tensions – and drive all policy from this foundation.
2. Canada, like Norway, must be a “small” player making distinguishing choices. Norway has less than 5 million people, yet has significant influence in the Middle East. Canada, like Norway, must reject the status quo in conflict-stricken areas like Palestine/Israel, must cultivate relations of respect with all parties, must maintain a single, defensible standard for its positions, and must apply it consistently.

## **E: Protect Lebanon from outsiders, and support Lebanese solutions**

1. Canada must demand an end to all outside influence on Lebanon. In his April report on Lebanon, the UN Secretary General asserted that Lebanon’s current internal political stalemate is best resolved internally. Yet Israel’s ongoing overflights (sometimes more than 10 times per day) of Lebanon give militant elements in Lebanon all the excuse they need to rearm to prepare resistance for the next Israeli invasion (which would be the fourth since 1978.) Canada’s demands must begin with Israel, and must then turn to all other players who seek to manipulate, whether diplomatically or militarily.
2. Canada must provide aid to Lebanon. Lebanon’s cluster bomb problem remains enormous, with 90 percent (or about 800,000) of the residual Israeli cluster bomblets still undetonated in April, 2007. (In its 2006 Destruction of Lebanon, Israel covered 34 square kilometres of Lebanon with cluster bomb strikes.) The roughly \$30 million (spread over two years) that Canada has offered is negligible next to the over \$4 billion infrastructure damages sustained by Lebanon in 2006. Money is needed for humanitarian needs, infrastructure and institution building.