

**Position Paper: Palestinian membership
in the UN and Palestinian “statehood”****Policy Recommendations for Canada**

- A. **Canada must support the Palestinians’ application for full membership in the UN and its agencies:** Palestine’s membership in the UN will facilitate negotiations. Having full membership in the UN will reduce Palestinians’ relative powerlessness in their dealings with Israel. Voting in favour of Palestine’s membership in the UN is consistent with the long-standing policy of all major Canadian political parties in favour of a two-state solution. Palestinians are ready to govern themselves and deal with other nations as equals. Canada must stop claiming that the Palestinian bid for a UN seat is a “unilateral” action.
- B. **Canada must insist that Israel halt all other actions that prevent the emergence of a Palestinian state, especially its occupation and colonization of Palestinian land:** Israel has militarily occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 1967, and controls most aspects of life there and in Gaza. Its ongoing establishment of a network of Jewish-only colonies (a.k.a. “settlements”) in the occupied Palestinian territories violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and leaves the Palestinians with small patches of non-contiguous land on which to construct a Palestinian state. This violates Palestinians’ right to self-determination.

A: Canada must support the Palestinians’ application for full membership in the UN and its agencies

- 1) **Voting in favour of Palestine’s membership in the UN and its agencies is consistent with Canada’s long-standing policy – since 1947 – in favour of a two-state solution.**
- **It’s consistent with Canada’s support for the 1947 Partition Plan.** Canada, along with the majority of UN members, voted in favour of the UN Partition Plan in 1947, which divided the British Mandate of Palestine into two sections, one as a majority Jewish state, and the other to be a majority Arab (i.e. Palestinian) state. Israel issued a unilateral declaration of independence in May 1948, and was admitted to the UN in May 1949. Canada, which recognized Israel in 1948, voted in favour of Israel’s admission to the UN. Yet 62 years later, the Palestinian state has still not been allowed to emerge, nor be admitted to the UN, nor be formally recognized by Canada.
 - **It’s consistent with Canada’s support for a two-state solution.** Voting against Palestine’s admission to the UN or its agencies, such as UNESCO, contradicts the stated commitment of all major Canadian political parties to a two-state solution. Canada should formally therefore recognize the state of Palestine and vote in favour of its admission to the UN and UN agencies. This does not contradict recognition of Israel: on the contrary, 105 of the 128 UN members who already formally recognize the state of Palestine also recognise the state of Israel.
 - **It’s consistent with the timely resolution of the Israel-Palestine issue.** In view of Israel’s refusal to negotiate peace in a timely manner, Canada and other nations cannot justify making their support for Palestine’s admission to the UN conditional on the achievement of such an agreement with Israel. Doing so leaves the Palestinians completely vulnerable to Israel’s unilateral ongoing land grabs, and the progressive reduction of the land available for the establishment of their state.
- 2) **Voting to admit Palestine to the UN will facilitate more fruitful negotiations.**
- **It will demonstrate that the status quo is unacceptable.** It will send a clear signal to Israelis, Palestinians and others that Canada considers the status quo unsustainable. It will spur the Israeli authorities to halt the violations of international law that have derailed so many rounds of negotiations. This, in turn, will encourage negotiations that bring the conflict to an end.
 - **It will slightly reduce the tremendous imbalance of power between Israel and Palestine.** This will discourage both sides from resorting to violence, and will encourage negotiations in good faith.

- Israel is the world's fifth largest military power and has inflicted far more civilian casualties on Palestinians than vice-versa; since September 29, 2000, Israeli attacks have killed 3033 Palestinian civilians, whereas Palestinian attacks killed 257 Israelis.
 - Admission of Palestine to the UN would be a first step to ending lawless acts committed under Israel's occupation of the West Bank. It would allow Palestinians to initiate proceedings against Israel at the International Court of Justice and to request UN sanctions for the violations.
- 3) Canada and the rest of the international community have confirmation that the Palestinian Authority is ready to govern.
 - Neutral international bodies assert the PA's readiness to govern. The IMF and the World Bank consider the Palestinian Authority ready to govern. The UN Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) has also concluded that the Palestinian Authority is ready to govern. In 2010 and 2011 UNSCO assessed the PA's performance in six areas: governance, rule of law and human rights; livelihoods and productive sectors; education and culture; health; social protection; and infrastructure and water. It found that the Palestinian Authority was largely ready to govern, and was in fact already doing so reasonably well in the geographical areas where it exercised sufficient control.
- 4) By supporting Palestinian statehood, Canada will strengthen the hand of Palestinians committed to non-violent self-determination. It will make it easier for them to convince other Palestinian groups that armed struggle is not the only option to achieve self-determination.
- 5) Canada should not disparage Palestine's UN membership bid as "unilateral."
 - Appealing to the international community makes Palestine's decision eminently multi-lateral. Palestinian leaders, by seeking UN membership, are submitting themselves to the judgement of a multilateral institution. Over half of the members of the UN had already recognized the state of Palestine prior to Palestinian leaders' decision to seek full membership, and many encouraged Palestine to seek membership in the UN and its agencies, such as UNESCO.
 - Palestine seeks membership in the UN exactly as Israel did in 1949. Israel was accepted as a member by the UN in 1949. Canada, which voted for Israel's admission to the UN cannot now credibly complain about Palestinians' bid for a seat at the UN.
- 6) By balancing its long-time support for Israel with support for Palestinian statehood, Canada may start to re-establish its reputation as an honest broker.

B: Canada must insist that Israel halt all actions that prevent the emergence of a viable Palestinian state

- 1) Canada must pressure Israel to cease its occupation of Palestinian territories. In one of the longest military occupations in modern history, Israel has occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since 1967, and controls most aspects of life there and in Gaza. Numerous UN resolutions have called on Israel to end its military occupation and withdraw to the borders in effect just prior to the 1967 war. The occupation makes it impossible for Palestinians to construct and manage a viable sovereign Palestinian state. The occupation keeps Palestinians in a position of subjugation, and prevents them from exercising their right to self-determination.
- 2) Canada must pressure Israel to halt its colony building on Palestinian land. Israel's colony-building violates international law. Once it stops building colonies, Israel must subsequently withdraw from existing illegal colonies, unless agreements for land swaps are reached with the Palestinians.
- 3) Canada must pressure Israel to lift the blockade of Gaza. The blockade violates international law — which prohibits collective punishment. The blockade of Gaza prevents Palestinians in Gaza from exercising their collective right to self-determination and from constructing, together with Palestinians in the West Bank, a viable Palestinian state.

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