



Canadian Arab Federation
La Fédération Canado-Arabe

POLICY POSITION

FOREIGN POLICY

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Promoting Fair and Effective Canadian Foreign Policy

CONTEXT

Since the formation of the United Nations in 1945, Canada has enjoyed a proud reputation as a quintessential peacekeeper, a protector of human rights, a promoter of international law and a provider of humanitarian aid. It is this reputation that has attracted many of Canada's immigrants, particularly those from Arab countries.

The values that underlie Canada's prized reputation have also been the driving force in persuading the international community to adopt Canada's "Responsibility to Protect" principle at the United Nations; an initiative that seeks to prevent humanitarian catastrophes. Other noteworthy aspects of Canada's foreign policy include aid and assistance to Iraq, Sudan and the Palestinian territories.

While Canada's foreign policy has been commendably developed within the framework of international human rights law, it has become apparent that its stated policies on the Middle East - Palestine and Israel in particular, are inconsistent with its actions on the world stage via Canada's UN recent voting patterns and public statements. This problematic double standard casts doubt on Canada's position as being a fair and effective player on the international stage.

CONTENTIOUS ISSUES AND RECOMMENDED COURSES OF ACTION

1. Canada's Inconsistent Application of Policies and Principles on the Middle East

The Canadian Arab Federation agrees with several of Canada's written policies on the Middle East. However, CAF is critical of Canada's inconsistent application of its own policies and principles when it relates to Israel. For example, CAF is concerned about Canada's double standards in its selective support of resolutions at the UN. Canada took a strong position against Syria's presence in Lebanon and has criticized human rights violations in China, Iran and Cuba. In contrast, it is troubling to see Canada take a weak position on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories and Israel's serious human rights record when it comes to voting on UN resolutions condemning these violations. Of particular concern is Canada's recent history of either abstaining or voting with the US and Israel. Diplomatic niceties and disputes over word choice in UN resolutions are poor excuses for a country like Canada which normally promotes human rights and international law. This shift away from objectivity is especially disconcerting in light of Canada's own written policies, existing UN resolutions and the decision by the International Court of Justice stating that the Separation Wall being constructed by Israel on occupied Palestinian land is illegal and contravenes international law. Canada has not acted to support the ICJ's advisory ruling.

Recommended Courses of Action

- Canada should table a resolution at the UN on Israel's human rights record similar in wording to the resolution it has tabled at the UN concerning Iran's human rights record;
- Canada must consistently support UN resolutions that seek to protect the human rights of all civilians and place more emphasis on **enforcement** than on mere words;
- Canada must be more engaged in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by supporting its own policies in demanding compliance with international law and UN resolutions.



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2. Rewarding Violations of International Law - The Canada Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA)

While Canada officially opposes Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, as well as the establishment of Jewish settlements in those territories (which it considers contrary to international law and unproductive to the peace process), Canada continues to reward Israel with duty free trade status that makes no distinction between goods made in Israel and those made (or grown) in illegal settlements on confiscated Palestinian land.

Recommended Course of Action

- Introduce a similar bill or support Private Members Bill C-326 introduced by Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ). This bill would amend the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act and exclude entry of products to Canada from illegal Jewish settlements that are currently labeled as being of Israeli origin. The European Union adopted this policy in 2001.

3. Rebuilding Iraq and Ending the Occupation

The current situation in Iraq continues to be of significant concern to the international community and one that jeopardizes regional stability. It is now evident that the illegal US invasion and occupation of Iraq is the main cause for the escalation of violence, the increasing number of civilian deaths and the exodus of 2 million Iraqis. Canada deserves praise and recognition for the \$300 million in funding for reconstruction aid and by refusing to join the US aggression against Iraq.

Recommended Courses of Action

- Lobby at the UN for the quick end of the US occupation of Iraq as a prerequisite for regional stability and world security.
- Allocate more assistance for basic humanitarian aid and infrastructure development for Iraq.
- Support international and Iraqi organizations in helping rebuild Iraqi civil society.

4. Relations with the Palestinian Authority

The Palestinian people under occupation held free elections in March 2006 and elected a new government. Instead of respecting the democratic choice of the Palestinian people Canada was the first country to sever all contacts with the new government and to cut funding to it. This emboldened Israel to arrest Palestinian legislators, tighten its blockade of the occupied Palestinian territories, murdering more than 400 Palestinians since July 2006 and resulted in a humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the West Bank.

Recommended Course of Action

- Immediately renew contacts with all state and non-state parties in the occupied Palestinian territories and reinstate its assistance programs.
- Demand that Israel release all detained Palestinian legislators.
- Demand that Israel release all tax funds it has collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.
- Help rebuild the power plant which supplies electricity to 1 million residents of Gaza that was bombed by Israeli forces on June 27.
- Support the UN investigation into Israel's criminal actions in Beit Hanoun in Gaza.



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5. Israel's Invasion of Lebanon

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in July 2006 lasted for 34 days and resulted in the destruction of the country's infrastructure and the killing of 1150 civilians. Canada refused to join the UN and many other countries in calling for an immediate ceasefire thus endangering the lives of 50 thousand Canadians living in Lebanon. Israel's indiscriminate bombing and use of prohibited weapons such as phosphorous and cluster bombs have had a horrific toll on the civilian population.

Recommended Course of Action

- Table a resolution at the UN censoring Israel for its use of illegal and banned weapons.
- Support Lebanon's request at the UN to make Israel pay reparations for the damage it caused.
- Contribute generously towards the reconstruction effort in Lebanon.

6. List of Banned Organizations in Canada

Under pressure from the pro-Israel lobby and the US government, Canada has banned both Hezbollah and Hamas. Both of these groups are legitimate political parties, with grassroots support, and are represented in the legislature and the cabinets of Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority respectively. Both groups are resisting the illegal Israeli occupation of Lebanon and Palestine respectively which right is guaranteed under international law.

Recommended Course of Action

- Remove Hezbollah and Hamas from the list of banned organizations.
- If any group deserves to be place on the list of banned organizations, it should be the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) who murdered 8 Canadian civilians and a Canadian UN peacekeeper in Lebanon, and was accused by Amnesty International and our own Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, of committing war crimes in Lebanon and Gaza.

7. Afghanistan Mission

Under US pressure Canada agreed to send troops to Afghanistan to engage in offensive military operations. Canada has so far spent 4 billion on military operations while only spending 500 million on development projects. The government of Afghanistan is run by warlords, corruption is rampant and the drug trade has increased. Canadian casualties are on the rise and violence has escalated and is spilling over into Pakistan.

Recommended Course of Action

- Withdraw Canadian troops by February 2007.

CONTACT

For more information contact the Canadian Arab Federation at 416-493-8635 or email info@caf.ca

www.caf.ca

Established in 1967, the Canadian Arab Federation is a national, non profit and membership-based organization. CAF represents Canadian Arabs on issues relating to public policy. Through education, media relations and non-partisan government relations, CAF raises awareness of domestic issues that affect the community.