



CJPME

Meeting the Challenge

A CJPME Proposal for Canada's Middle East Policy

2. The Cornerstone of Canada's Middle East Policy

Prepared by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East



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A stable, prosperous, and peaceful Middle East is a vital Canadian, Western and world interest, and should be the cornerstone on which Canada's Middle East policy rests. Tensions and conflicts in the Middle East are a threat to global security. Not only do they result in the death of civilians, the destruction of vital infrastructure, and the de-development of the region, but they put at risk energy supplies that are critical to the global economy, and also stimulate violence and extremism. Arms build-ups, including the search for nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as the delivery systems that accompany them, are symptomatic of the region's malaise. That malaise has a variety of roots, but often relate to ill-contained differences among religious and ethnic groups that have frequently led to violence, and often to the suppression of the rights of minorities. These tensions can be seen at play throughout the region be it in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Sudan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and elsewhere.

Historically the actions of the West in the Middle East have often had a negative impact, and the consequences going back to the Crusades and running through the 19th and 20th century, including the aftermaths of WWI and WWII, are still being felt. Since the Second World War Western policies in the Middle East, sometimes because of the Cold War, have not been in the interest of peoples of the region and have contributed to local tensions and extremism. Events such as the 1953 overthrow of the Mohammad Mossadeq Government in Iran, for example, or the more recent 2003 overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq continue to have repercussions today. They feed the perception that Western actions in the region have always been and continue to be dominated by the desire for access to oil. Consistent with that perception, Western powers have backed – through arms and military support – unrepresentative regimes that do not rule in the best interests of their peoples. Frequently such regimes control substantial oil reserves. Propping up such regimes inhibits the growth of democratic institutions and free societies, and feeds extremism. Harmful as de facto alliances with unrepresentative authoritarian regimes have been, perhaps nothing has done more to contribute to anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East and to Islamic extremism than the perception of an unfair and unwarranted pro-Israel bias in the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflicts.

While Canada by itself cannot resolve the problems of the Middle East, it can certainly lead by example and adopt an approach to Middle East issues based on the core principles outlined above. In particular, CJPME believes that a just and fair resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflicts starting from the proposals of the Arab League would do much to improve regional stability. Canada's approach should put the interests of the peoples of the region above immediate economic interests. In the long-term Canada's interests, including its economic interests will be best served when justice and peace prevail in the Middle East. The policy proposals put forward in this document are intended to promote the security and economic well-being of all the peoples of the Middle East and in doing so, to serve Canada's own interests as well.