

POSITION PAPER: CANADIAN RELATIONS, AND AID COMMITMENTS TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY



Recommendations for Canadian Policy

- A. Canada should cease sanctions – i.e. cessation of aid – against the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (PA). These sanctions are immoral, are tantamount to collective punishment, and highly harmful to Canadian interests and Palestinian humanitarian and political well-being.
- B. Canada should provide emergency humanitarian aid to the PA, given the dire humanitarian needs on the ground in Palestine as of May, 2006.
- C. Canada must work with the Hamas-led PA in an attitude of “constructive engagement.” Hamas’ conciliatory gestures have steadily increased, and include an unbroken unilateral ceasefire initiated in December, 2004. Hamas must be encouraged along this path, not punished for peace-affirming behaviour.
- D. Canada should hold both Israel and the PA to the same standard. Canada has failed to sanction violations by Israel, and failed to honour compliance in the face of great odds by the PA. Canada has cut relations with the PA, yet has not held Israel accountable to its violation of the same standards: non-violence; respect for past treaties; recognition of one’s adversary to self-determine.
- E. Canada should insist that Israel restore the tax transfers – \$60 M per month – as required by the Oslo II Accords. These transfers are not “aid,” but money owed to the PA through the customs agreements of the Paris Protocols.

A. Key Points: Canadian Sanctions against the PA

1. The PA has offered to “open the books” to any international donor that wishes to ensure that its aid money is being spent as specified.
2. Canada’s pre-existing aid programs provided assistance to Palestinians via many worthy programs. These programs, focused on good governance, capacity building, municipal development, housing development and the like could never be misconstrued as underwriting violence.
3. Under international aid norms, withdrawing aid because of the Palestinian people’s election choices violates moral principles of impartiality, neutrality, and humanity.
4. The PA provides public services to the Palestinian people on a massive scale, not to be replaced by the UN or NGOs. The PA employs 39,000 workers in education and 11,000 workers in health care (and runs 22 of 23 general hospitals) which cannot be replaced by the UN and NGOs.
5. Under the current status quo of international aid sanctions, Palestinian poverty – defined as living on less than \$2.20 a day – will rise to 74 percent.

B. Key Points: Emergency Aid Needs in Palestine Now

1. Basic medical supplies in Palestine have dwindled to emergency levels. Kidney dialysis patients in Palestine have only days left before all available dialysis supplies are exhausted.
2. Poverty levels are skyrocketing to 74 percent under current conditions. Many Palestinians are now struggling to feed themselves.
3. Exams in Gaza were cancelled in April because of insufficient paper.

C. Key Points: Canadian “Constructive Engagement” with the PA

1. Canadian interests in the Middle East are best served through a policy of constructive engagement toward the Hamas-led PA. Non-contact destroys Canada's previous reputation as an honest broker.
2. Canada must encourage Hamas to continue its 18-month-old ceasefire as a gesture of good will, despite the severe provocation of continuing Israeli attacks on Hamas members and Palestinian non-combatants. With constructive engagement, Canadian policy can encourage the PA along a path of softening rhetoric and increased dialogue.
3. Through constructive engagement, Canada must avoid causing the PA to turn away from the West.
4. Through continued support for good governance, Canada must help avert a collapse of PA governance and civil society, and the emergence of radical, regional warlords and lawlessness.

D. Key Points: Holding the PA and Israel to the Same Standard

1. Israeli violence on the Palestinian people is ongoing and well-documented by international human rights organizations. Four times as many Palestinians as Israelis have died in the past six years. Recent violence perpetrated by the Israeli Army includes: 1) Israeli shelling of Palestinian neighbourhoods in Gaza; 2) ongoing destruction of Palestinian livelihoods and property via with the continuance of Israel's Wall; 3) quasi-total official indifference to Israeli colonist violence and seizures of property from Palestinians.
2. Israeli disregard for the Palestinian right to a state includes: 1) the former governing party (Likud's) position that "flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state..."; 2) the former Israeli government's 14 reservations to the Road Map Peace Plan, which rejected every reference to a two-state solution (e.g. UNSC 1397); 3) no official acceptance of a Palestinian state under Oslo – only Palestinian self-governance.
3. Israeli disregard for past Israeli-Palestinian agreements includes, among others: 1) Israeli unwillingness to respect the territorial integrity of the West Bank and Gaza as required under Oslo and the Road Map Peace Plan; 2) Israeli unwillingness to cease colony and outpost growth, despite such a requirement under Oslo and the Road Map Peace Plan; 3) Israeli refusal to transfer customs revenues to the PA as required under the Paris Protocols.

E. Key Points: Pressuring Israel to Restore Tax Transfers to the PA

1. Since January, Israel has illegally withheld money legally owed to the PA. Customs transfers from Israel to the PA are the result of agreements under the Paris Protocols, where Israel collects Palestinian customs on Palestinian imports, and is required to transfer this money to the Palestinians. This is not aid – it is money legally owed to the PA.
2. Customs transfers account for almost half of the PA's revenues. In effect, the economic duress under which Palestinians currently find themselves is due largely to Israel's decision to unrightfully withhold this money.
3. Canada should press Israel to fulfill its legal obligation in this tax transfer, both for legal, as well as humanitarian and moral reasons.

For more Information...

For more information and background on the humanitarian needs in Palestine, Canada's aid posture with Palestine, and the other topics discussed above, please refer to the CJPME presentation entitled "People-focused Policy, and Equal Expectations for All: A Proposal for Canadian Middle East Policy" (2006.) For related topics, e.g. the Israeli colonization and occupation of Palestine, Israel's Wall, and other topics, please call CJPME at 514/745-8491.