

OPINION/EDITORIAL



Canada becomes Israel

Yves Engler, *The Electronic Intifada*, 12 February 2009

[Share This](#)

 [PRINT THIS PAGE](#)

- [Electronic Intifada](#)
- [Electronic Lebanon](#)
- [Electronic Iraq](#)

 [RSS AVAILABLE](#) 

[RSS Help](#) | [EI RSS Feeds](#)

DONATE NOW
 SECURE DONATIONS
 BY [GROUNDSPRING.org](#)

[Support our work](#)

EDITOR'S PICKS

- [Mahmoud Darwish](#)
- [Israel's Georgia role](#)
- [Obama and Israel](#)
- [Israel-Hizballah deal](#)



(EI Illustration)

Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper's government publicly supported Israel's brutal assault on Gaza and voted alone at the UN Human Rights Committee in defense of Israel's actions three weeks ago. Now Canada has taken over Israeli diplomacy. Literally.

In solidarity with Gaza, Venezuela expelled Israel's ambassador at the start of the bombardment and then broke off all diplomatic relations two weeks later. Israel need not worry since Ottawa plans to help out. On 29 January, *The Jerusalem Post* reported that "Israel's interests in Caracas will now be represented by the Canadian Embassy." This means Canada is officially Israel, at least in Venezuela.

Prior to the recent bombing in Gaza, the Harper government made it abundantly clear that it would support Israel no matter what that country did. It publicly endorsed Israel's 2006 attack on Lebanon, voted against a host of UN resolutions supporting Palestinian rights and in January 2008 refused to criticize illegal Israeli settlement construction at Har Homa near Jerusalem (even Washington publicly criticized these settlements). Canada was also the first country (after Israel) to cut off financial aid to the elected Hamas government and Ottawa has provided millions of dollars as well as personnel to create a US-trained Palestinian police force to act as a



**A NEW BOOK
 FROM EI'S ALI
 ABUNIMAH**



NEWS & ANALYSIS

counterweight to the Hamas government and to oversee Israel's occupation.

Harper's support for Israel is extreme, but despite what many well-meaning commentators claim, it is not a break from Canada's role as an "honest broker" in the Arab-Israeli conflict. There is a long history of Canadian support for Zionism, a European settler ideology that has violently dispossessed Palestinians for more than six decades.

The idea for a Middle Eastern Jewish homeland to serve Western imperial interests has a long history in Canada. Since at least the 1870s Christian Zionists called for their biblical prophecies to be fulfilled under British auspices. By November 1915, Solicitor General (and then Prime Minister) Arthur Meighen publicly proclaimed, "I think I can speak for those of the Christian faith when I express the wish that God speed the day when the land of your [Jewish] forefathers shall be yours again. This task I hope will be performed by that champion of liberty the world over -- the British Empire." Two decades later Prime Minister RB Bennett began a national radio broadcast of the United Palestine Appeal with a speech about how the Balfour declaration and British control over Palestine was a step towards Biblical prophecies. "Scriptural prophecy is being fulfilled," he noted. "The restoration of Zion has begun."

During the 1947 UN negotiations over the British mandate of historic Palestine, Canada played an important role in creating Israel. Lester Pearson (then under-secretary of state for External Affairs) who chaired two different UN committees dealing with the mandate and Supreme Court Justice Ivan C. Rand, a member of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), played central roles in the negotiations that led to partition. In *State in the Making*, David Horowitz (the first governor of the Bank of Israel and first director general of Israel's ministry of finance) writes: "It may be said that Canada more than any other country played a decisive part in all stages of the UNO [United Nations Organization] discussions of Palestine."

The UN's 1948 partition plan gave the new Jewish state the majority of Palestine despite the Jewish population owning roughly seven percent of the land and representing a third of the population. Rand's assistant on UNSCOP, Leon Mayrand, provides a window into the dominant mindset at External Affairs: "The Arabs were bound to be vocal opponents of partition but they should not be taken too seriously. The great majority were not yet committed nationalists and the Arab chiefs could be appeased through financial concessions, especially if these accompanied a clearly declared will to impose a settlement whatever the means necessary." A dissident within External Affairs, the department's only Middle East expert, Elizabeth MacCallum, claimed Ottawa supported partition, "because we didn't give two hoots for democracy."

Above all else support for partition was driven by a geostrategic worldview. An internal report circulated at External Affairs explained: "The plan of partition gives to the western powers the opportunity to establish an independent, progressive Jewish state in the Eastern Mediterranean with close economic and cultural ties with the West generally and in particular with the United States." The Ottawa mandarins largely supported Israel as a possible western outpost in the heart of the (oil-producing) Middle East.

When the first Palestinian intifada broke out in 1987, then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney told the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) that

- Opinion/Editorial
- Diaries
- Human Rights
- Development
- Israel Lobby Watch
- Internet & Tech
- Business & Economy

THE MEDIA

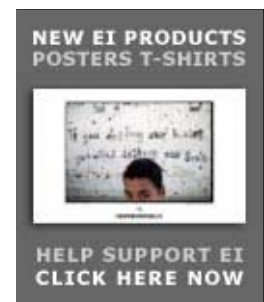
- Role of the Media
- Coverage Trends
- Journalists in Danger
- EI in the Press

ACTION & ACTIVISM

- Activism News
- Action Items
- Letters to the Media

EI EXTRA

- BY TOPIC directory
- Arts, Music & Culture
- Satire from BNN
- Multimedia
- Letters to EI
- EI Shop
- EI Bookstore



KEY RESOURCES

- Weekday Press Picks

Israel's brutal suppression of rock throwing Palestinian youth was handling the situation with "restraint." When questioned by a CBC reporter about the similarity between the plight of Palestinians and Blacks in South Africa, Mulroney replied that any comparison between Israel and South Africa was "false and odious and should never be mentioned in the same breath."

A decade later, Ottawa signed a free trade agreement with Israel. It was only Canada's fourth free trade agreement. Begun January 1997, the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement includes the West Bank and Gaza Strip as part of where Israel's custom laws are applied.

The political motivation for supporting Israel has not changed significantly over the years. The government in Ottawa today receives limited electoral support from the Jewish community, but is close to a right-wing Christian Zionist movement. Most importantly, the Harper government strongly supports Western (US-led) imperialism in the Middle East. This is why Canada has taken over Israeli diplomacy in Venezuela.

Yves Engler is the author of the forthcoming Canada on the World Stage: A Force for Good or Bad Actor? and other books. He can be reached at yvesengler AT hotmail DOT com

Latest articles on EI:

Palestine : Diaries: Live from Palestine: [In Gaza, Palestinians react to Israeli elections](#) (13 February 2009)

Palestine : Multimedia: [Crossing the Line: US role in the war on Gaza](#) (13 February 2009)

Palestine : Role of the Media: [Selective reporting from Lebanon](#) (13 February 2009)

Palestine : Activism News: [Hampshire College first in US to divest from Israel](#) (12 February 2009)

Palestine : Diaries: Live from Palestine: [If Israel's weapons came through a tunnel](#) (12 February 2009)

Palestine : Opinion/Editorial: [Israel lurches into fascism](#) (12 February 2009)

Palestine : Opinion/Editorial: [Canada becomes Israel](#) (12 February 2009)

Palestine : Art, Music & Culture: [Book review: Un-erasing the erasure of Palestine](#) (12 February 2009)

Palestine : Art, Music & Culture: [Toronto Palestine Film Festival calls for submissions](#) (11 February 2009)

Palestine : Human Rights: [Israeli "investigation" whitewashes West Bank execution](#) (11 February 2009)

- [Wire Service Photos](#)

RECENT EDITORIALS FROM ELECTRONIC IRAQ

- [The Obama Administration, Iraq, and the Question of Leverage](#) published on Fri, 07 Nov 2008 05:01:40 CST
- [Wrecked Iraq: What the Good News from Iraq Really Means](#) published on Fri, 24 Oct 2008 16:04:01 CST
- [Iraq's missing generation](#) published on Thu, 16 Oct 2008 16:24:53 CST
- [Five Years On: The Pentagon Still Struggling to Make Sense of Iraq](#) published on Wed, 01 Oct 2008 08:25:57 CST
- [Whose War Will Win the Election -- McCain's or Obama's?](#) published on Tue, 30 Sep 2008 23:15:56 CST