



BACKGROUND NOTE

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## Australia and the Middle East conflict: a history of key Government statements (1947–2007)

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### Contents

Introduction .....	1
The Chifley Government (1945–1949).....	1
The Menzies Government (1949–1966) .....	5
The Holt, McEwen, Gorton and McMahon Governments (1966–1972).....	6
The Whitlam Government (1972–1975).....	11
The Fraser Government (1975–1983).....	14
The Hawke Government (1983–1991).....	22
The Keating Government (1991–1996) .....	29
The Howard Government (1996–2007).....	34
Conclusion.....	43
Appendix: Australian Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers: 1947–December 2007 .....	45
Table 1: Australian Prime Ministers: 1947–December 2007.....	45
Table 2: Australian Ministers for External/Foreign Affairs: 1947–December 2007 .....	45

## Introduction

This Background Note highlights some key public statements by Australian Government officials on the Arab-Israeli conflict as a way of illustrating Australia's evolving policies towards the Middle East. It focuses on Australia's publicly stated position on Palestinian statehood, but also references Australia's response to the many developments concerning the Arab-Israeli dispute over the years. The period covered is from 1947—when the UN was debating the future of the British Mandate territory of Palestine—to the end of the Howard Government in December 2007.<sup>1</sup> A related Parliamentary Library publication examines Australian policy towards the Arab-Israeli dispute under the Labor Governments between December 2007 and May 2012.<sup>2</sup>

Former Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd recently suggested that Australian support for a Palestinian or 'Arab' state on the territory of Mandate Palestine goes back to 1947, when Australia voted at the United Nations (UN) to create 'a modern State of Israel, and a homeland for the Palestinian people as well'.<sup>3</sup> While technically true, Australia only began actually advocating for the creation of Palestinian 'homeland' in the 1970s and 1980s, and began explicitly calling for an 'independent' Palestinian 'state' in the 2000s.

What is evident from the statements included below is that the Australian Government's public position on Palestinian statehood, and the Middle East conflict more generally, has slowly evolved over the last 60 years. Significant changes in broader policy generally occur over successive governments, rather than changing as governments change. Small changes, and often more significant changes in the 'tone' of public statements, do occur as governments change, as will be shown below.

This Background Note makes extensive use of historical documents recently digitised by the Parliamentary Library. These include Hansard and 'political party documents'—party policy documents and election material—back to 1901.

## The Chifley Government (1945–1949)

Australia's Minister for External Affairs from 1941 to 1949, Herbert Vere ('Doc') Evatt, played a key role in both the formation of the United Nations and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine

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1. The history of British Mandate of Palestine is covered in detail in M Tessler, *A history of the Arab-Israeli conflict*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1994, pp. 127–268.
  2. M Harris, *The Rudd and Gillard Governments and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: November 2007–May 2012*, Background Note, 2012–13, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2012, viewed 13 August 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/1845733/upload\\_binary/1845733.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/1845733/upload_binary/1845733.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf)
  3. K Rudd (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Remarks at Yad Vashem in honour of the late William Cooper*, media release, 12 December 2010, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/429037/upload\\_binary/429037.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/429037%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/429037/upload_binary/429037.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/429037%22)

Question.<sup>4</sup> The importance of Evatt in future Australia-Israel relations, moreover, has been emphasised by historian Rodney Gouttman in the following terms:

Diplomatic relations between nations are usually forged either through blood or because of strategic or economic necessity. However, the relations between Australia and Israel did not follow this pattern; they were founded on the personal beliefs of Dr Herbert Vere Evatt[.]<sup>5</sup>

On 15 May 1947 the UN General Assembly (UNGA) voted to create the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), with 11 members: Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, India, Iran, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay, and Yugoslavia.<sup>6</sup> Evatt, commenting on Australia's approach to the Palestine issue, told the House of Representatives in June 1947:

The Australian policy in such matters has always been to pursue the principle of full preliminary investigation of the facts. It is the only means likely to lead the United Nations to impartial and objective decisions. For a considerable time Australia appeared to be alone in supporting this method; but recent examples have vindicated our persistence—notably in the Balkans and now in Palestine.<sup>7</sup>

On 31 August 1947, UNSCOP released its report. The only unanimous recommendation reached by Committee members was that the British Mandate over Palestine should be terminated forthwith. A majority report, supported by seven UNSCOP members—Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, and Uruguay—recommended the partition of Palestine between Arab and Jewish states, functioning under an economic union. Under this plan Jerusalem was to be an international city (*corpus separatum*) under UN administration. A minority report, supported by three UNSCOP members—India, Iran and Yugoslavia—recommended the creation of a federal state on the territory of Palestine. Australia abstained from voting on both the majority and minority report.<sup>8</sup>

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4. For example, Evatt worked as a drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as chairman of the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee on Palestine, and as President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA); see D Mandel, *H V Evatt and the establishment of Israel: the undercover Zionist*, Frank Cass, London, 2004; and A Hogan, *Moving in the open daylight: Doc Evatt, an Australian at the United Nations*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 2008.
  5. R Gouttman, 'First principles: H V Evatt and the Jewish homeland', in W D Rubenstein (ed), *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1987, p. 262.
  6. UNGA, *General Assembly Resolution 106 (II): Special Committee on Palestine*, 15 May 1947, viewed 25 November 2011, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/F5A49E57095C35B685256BCF0075D9C2>
  7. H V Evatt (Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs), 'Ministerial statement: international affairs', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 5 June 1947, p. 3678, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1947-06-05/toc\\_pdf/19470605\\_reps\\_18\\_192.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1947-06-05/0264%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1947-06-05/toc_pdf/19470605_reps_18_192.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1947-06-05/0264%22)
  8. UNGA, 'Supplement No. 11: United Nations Special Committee on Palestine: report to the General Assembly', *Official records of the Second Session of the General Assembly*, Lake Success (New York), 3 September 1947, paragraph 75, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/9a798adbf322aff38525617b006d88d7/07175de9fa2de563852568d3006e10f3?OpenDocument>

On 29 November 1947, the UNGA voted on the partition plan recommended by the majority of UNSCOP members, in UNGA Resolution 181(II).<sup>9</sup> Needing a two-thirds majority for the Resolution to be carried, the result was 33 votes in favour (including Australia), 13 votes against, with 10 abstentions.<sup>10</sup> In December 1947, Prime Minister Chifley was asked in the House of Representatives whether he thought supporting the partition resolution was the right thing to do, considering that the UK had, on that occasion, abstained from voting. Chifley's response, which also presents Australia's justification for supporting partition in general, was:

What the United Kingdom did in connexion with voting on the Palestine partition plan is a matter entirely for the government of that country.

...

I imagine that that Government refrained from participating in the deliberations because it is so actively associated with the present administration of Palestine that it might not have been regarded as an impartial party to the deliberations. The partition of Palestine has been the subject of discussion between the Australian Government and the Minister representing it at the conference. The honorable member asks whether, having regard to all the circumstances, Australia's vote for the partition of Palestine was wise. I answer that question in the affirmative. The Government was kept fully informed of all the reasons for and against the partition, and having considered the matter, it decided that partition was the best course to follow. **It was not a matter of choosing between the bad and the good, but of choosing the least of a number of evils** [emphasis added].<sup>11</sup>

Following Israel's declaration of independence on 14 May 1948,<sup>12</sup> and the outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli war, two core issues emerged in terms of Australian policy: firstly, the fate of the persons displaced by the fighting, and secondly, recognition of the State of Israel and that country's application for membership of the UN.

On the refugee issue, Australia voted in favour of UNGA Resolution 194 (III) in December 1948, which, as well as reiterating the UN's call for *corpus separatum* to be applied to Jerusalem, also resolved:

[T]hat the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be

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9. UNGA, *General Assembly Resolution 181 (II): future Government of Palestine*, 29 November 1947, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7f0af2bd897689b785256c330061d253>

10. Ibid.

11. B Chifley (Prime Minister), 'Question without notice: Palestine', [Questioner: J Lang], House of Representatives, *Debates*, 2 December 1947, pp. 2942–2943, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22hansard80%2Fhansardr80%2F1947-12-02%2F0044%22>.

12. See *The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel: 14 May 1947*, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Declaration%20of%20Establishment%20of%20State%20of%20Israel>

paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.<sup>13</sup>

On recognition, Australia was among the first countries to formally recognise the State of Israel, and did so on 27 January 1949. Justifying Australia's position, Foreign Minister Evatt stated:

Australia's decision to give recognition to the Government of Israel was as inevitable as it was just... Australia's one objective was to reach a fair and just solution, and I believe that objective has now been satisfactorily reached.

...

This act does not imply anything but friendly relations with the Arab States. Australia was among the first Nations to provide practical relief to Arab refugees when requested to do so last year.<sup>14</sup>

Prime Minister Chifley also outlined the Government's decision on recognition on 7 February 1949, and stated that Australia would vote in favour of accepting Israel into the UN:

The Government of Australia believes that the new nation of Israel will be a force of special value in the world community and it confidently looks to Israel to assist in carrying out the United Nations decision declaring the special international status of Jerusalem as the Holy City. When the application of Israel comes before the [United Nations] General Assembly Australia will warmly support the admission of Israel to the United Nations.<sup>15</sup>

On 11 May 1949, the UNGA passed—37 votes in favour, 12 against, and nine abstentions—Resolution 273 (III), which admitted Israel into the UN. The Resolution also stated that 'Israel is a peace loving State which accepts the obligations contained in the [United Nations] Charter and is able and willing to carry out those obligations'.<sup>16</sup> Foreign Minister Evatt, then serving as the President of the General Assembly, welcomed the Israeli delegation with the following statement:

I look forward to the time when the wounds of the peoples of the Middle East will be healed, when we shall find friendships and, indeed, comradeship among these peoples.<sup>17</sup>

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13. UNGA, *General Assembly Resolution 194 (III): Palestine—progress report on the United Nations mediator*, 11 December 1948, viewed 6 June 2012,

<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/C758572B78D1CD0085256BCF0077E51A>

14. HV Evatt (Minister for External Affairs), *Recognition of Israel*, media release, 29 January 1949, available in Department of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 1, January 1949, p. 114.

15. Quoted in H V Evatt, *The Task of Nations*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1949, p. 171.

16. UNGA, *Resolution 273 (III): admission of Israel to membership in the United Nations*, 11 May 1949, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://i.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/GA273.pdf>

17. 'The General Assembly of the United Nations: second part of the Third Session', available in Department of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 5, May 1949, p. 619.

## The Menzies Government (1949–1966)

The major event concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict during the Menzies years was the 1956 Suez War. It is not clear how much Prime Minister Robert Menzies knew of the Israeli-French-British collusion before and during the Suez War,<sup>18</sup> but speaking in the House of Representatives on 1 November 1956, a few days after Israel invaded the Sinai (and before British and French troops invaded the Suez Canal zone), Menzies, while not attributing blame to either side, defended Israeli actions:

The movement of Israeli troops across the Egyptian frontier occurred only a few days ago, but it was preceded by events going back over some years. Twelve days ago the Israeli Prime Minister made a speech in which he discussed the charges made against Israel of conducting forays across her frontiers. He countered this by saying that Israel had a perfect right to self-defence to seek redress for attacks made inside her own frontiers. He complained that the United Nations authorities had shown a tendency to transform the armistice agreements into unilateral obligations by Israel to the United Nations and ignore breaches of them by the Arab States. He said that the helplessness of the United Nations regarding Israel's passage through the Suez Canal had been obvious for years. There can be little doubt that around the Israeli frontiers the faults have by no means been all on one side.<sup>19</sup>

Following the intervention of British and French forces, and the imposition of a ceasefire on 7 November 1956, Prime Minister Menzies sought to justify the British and French intervention:

That what Israel did when it invaded Egypt was an act of aggression, few people would be concerned to deny. Yet, as I have previously pointed out in public statements, Israel had become painfully aware of the aggressive attitude of her neighbours and had, quite plainly, made up her mind that something should be done to correct a situation in which Israel's existence should always be on a precarious tenure. She therefore sent her forces into Egypt. It was clear that if this invasion of Egypt proceeded, and Egypt defended herself, there would before long be a war conducted over and around the Suez Canal. If this local war had occurred in some other part of the world, it might have been isolated and either dealt with by the great nations or allowed to wear itself out. But the Suez Canal, as hundreds of millions of people in the world clearly understand, was and is one of the economic lifelines of the world.<sup>20</sup>

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18. On the Suez War more broadly see D Tal (ed.), *The 1956 War: collusion and rivalry in the Middle East*, Frank Cass, London, 2001; and on Australia's involvement see W J Hudson, *Blind loyalty: Australia and the Suez Crisis, 1956*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1989.

19. R Menzies (Prime Minister), 'Ministerial statement: Middle East', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 31 October 1956, pp. 2056–2060, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1956-10-31/toc\\_pdf/19561031\\_reps\\_22\\_hor13.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1956-10-31/toc_pdf/19561031_reps_22_hor13.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf)

20. R G Menzies (Prime Minister), 'Ministerial statement: Middle East', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 8 November 1956, pp. 2115–2126, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1956-11-08/toc\\_pdf/19561108\\_reps\\_22\\_hor13.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1956-11-08/toc_pdf/19561108_reps_22_hor13.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf)

Looking back in April 1957 on the Suez Crisis and War, and commenting on the continued cross border raids between Egypt and Israel, Australia's Minister for External Affairs Robert Casey attempted to explain Israel's position. Casey also provided some insight into Australia's position on the broader Arab-Israeli conflict, and a possible resolution for that conflict:

For reasons one must accept, but very greatly deplore, the Arab States of the Middle East have never accepted the right of the State of Israel to exist. For this reason, no Arab State would publicly query any Egyptian action against Israel, however provocative or unjust.

...

Going back a little further into the past, to 1947, ten years ago, it will be remembered that the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution partitioning Palestine into Arab and Jewish States. The Jews were ready to accept this resolution, but the Arabs refused. By the time the British forces withdrew from Palestine in 1948 a full-scale war was being waged by the surrounding Muslim States against Israel in an attempt to smother the Jewish State of Israel at birth....I do not suggest that Israel is blameless, but that on net balance she has been more sinned against than sinning.

...

When these questions were debated, privately or publicly, in New York, the Australian Government expressed its firm conviction that it was not sufficient to oblige Israel to return to the status quo when Egypt was a persistent violator of the armistice agreement. We urged the need for an Egyptian declaration of non-belligerency. We recognized the justice of Israel's claim for security. We argued the injustice and futility of sanctions against Israel.

...

We are witnessing a dramatic period of turmoil in the Middle East, based very largely on racial antipathy by the Arabs against the Jews, rather than on any particular political or economic disagreement.<sup>21</sup>

## The Holt, McEwen, Gorton and McMahon Governments (1966–1972)

The major event concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict during this period was the June 1967 Six Day War, and the international machinations that followed.<sup>22</sup>

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21. R Casey (Minister for External Affairs), 'Ministerial statement: international affairs', House of Representative, *Debates*, 2 April 1957, pp. 410–415, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansard80/1957-04-02/toc\\_pdf/19570402\\_reps\\_22\\_hor14.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22international%20affairs%20%201950s%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansard80/1957-04-02/toc_pdf/19570402_reps_22_hor14.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22international%20affairs%20%201950s%22)
  22. On the Six Day War see J Bowen, *Six Days: how the 1967 war shaped the Middle East*, Simon & Schuster, London, 2003; and M Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the making of the modern Middle East*, Oxford University Press, London, 2002.

As tensions increased in the Middle East prior to the war, External Affairs Minister Paul Hasluck issued a media release in May 1967 calling for calm:

All parties to the present dispute are entitled to peaceful existence as independent states, members of the United Nations. Under the United Nations Charter and under international law generally they are entitled to protection from aggression and from warlike acts.

...

The present situation will be aggravated if the international community divides at this stage into partisan groups. I hope that all the Great Powers, whatever their differences on some aspects of the present situation, will nevertheless work together to prevent hostilities.<sup>23</sup>

On 2 June 1967, a few days before war began, Acting Prime Minister John McEwen restated Australia's policy that the blockade of the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba by Arab forces was an illegitimate act, thereby conveying Australian support for Israel:<sup>24</sup>

Great principles affecting the freedom of passage over mercantile sea lanes were at issue [meaning Egypt's blockade of Israeli shipping in the Straits of Tiran and Suez Canal], and this was of critical importance to the great international trading nations [including Australia].

...

On the question of the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba...the view strongly held by the Australian Government [is] that the Straights of Tiran must be regarded as an international waterway through which vessels of all nations have a right of passage.<sup>25</sup>

Prime Minister Harold Holt was overseas when war broke out on 5 June 1967. McEwen, as Acting Prime Minister, issued a media release, stating:

The failure of the [United Nations] Security Council to act before hostilities began is to be deplored...

Australia has a great concern that peace should be maintained in the Middle East. Where our own good offices can be of use, we are ready to be helpful. Australia looks to the Security

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23. P Hasluck (Minister for External Affairs), *Statement: Middle East*, media release, 25 May 1967, available in Department of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, vol. 38, no. 6, June 1967, p. 224.

24. The restriction of Israeli shipping through the Straits of Tiran by Egypt was a key issue in the lead up to both the Suez Crisis and the Six Day War; for a contemporary view on how this issue influenced Israeli attitudes in the lead up to June 1967 see CW Yost, 'The Arab-Israeli War: how it all began', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 46, no. 2, January 1968, pp. 304–320; and G Meir (Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs), *Statement to the General Assembly*, 1 March 1957, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1947-1974/26+Statement+to+the+General+Assembly+by+Foreign+Mi.htm>

25. J McEwen (Acting Prime Minister), *Statement: Middle East*, media release, 2 June 1967, available in Department of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, vol. 38, no. 6, June 1967, p. 226.



Council to act to prevent a widening of hostilities and to bring about an end to the present fighting.<sup>26</sup>

In the months after the Six Day War, the Australian Government would for the first time since the 1940s begin to provide opinions on possible solutions to the Middle East conflict. This was in the context of international debates, most crucially those surrounding the UN Security Council (UNSC). In a media release issued just after the war, External Affairs Minister Hasluck outlined what he considered the main points of contention in the Arab-Israeli dispute:

Among the issues that can be clearly identified are recognition of Israel as having a national existence and status; respect and support for the territorial integrity and political independence of states, be they Arab or Israeli; an assurance of security by both Arab and Israeli states; the position of Palestinian Arab refugees; the right of transit of ships of all nations through the Suez Canal and Gulf of Aqaba; the future status of Jerusalem; the possibility of limiting the supply of arms to various countries of the region; and co-operation over the use of Jordan waters.<sup>27</sup>

On 29 June 1967 the Australian Representative to the United Nations, Laurence McIntyre, outlined to the Fifth Emergency Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the 'most readily identifiable' factors that would need to be accounted for in any Middle East peace settlement:<sup>28</sup>

One primary requirement...is that of respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of all the states concerned. Added to this must then be the assurance of their security.

...

Israel should adopt a reasonable approach to any questions of boundaries; and equally that on the part of the Arab States there should be a reasonable attitude on acceptance of Israel's existence as a State and of its right to exist in security.

...

Some reconciliation will also have to be made between territorial claims and the desire of the peoples of all the faiths—Moslems, Jews and Christians—to have unrestricted access to the their Holy Places in the city of Jerusalem... Such access should be assured.<sup>29</sup>

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26. J McEwen (Acting Prime Minister), *Statement: Middle East war*, media release, 6 June 1967, available in Department of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, vol. 38, no. 6, June 1967, p. 232

27. P Hasluck (Minister for External Affairs), *Middle East*, media release, 16 June 1967, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/745149/upload\\_binary/745149.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/745149%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/745149/upload_binary/745149.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/745149%22)

28. This Emergency Session was called in response to the Six Day War, and was held from 17 June to 18 September 1967. The resolutions passed by this sitting of the UNGA can be accessed here: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/6798&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/6798&Lang=E)

29. L McIntyre (Ambassador to the United Nations), *Statement to the Fifth Emergency Session of the UNGA*, 29 June 1967, available in Department of External Affairs, *Current Notes on International Affairs*, vol. 38, no. 6, June 1967, pp. 241–244.

McIntyre also addressed the issue of refugees:

I have left until last the question of refugees. This is not because it is the least important, but precisely because it is at this very moment the most pressing problem from a humanitarian point of view.

The need for the urgent assistance for these helpless victims of causes and events far beyond their control has been rightly emphasised[.]

...

The Australian Government is well aware that the situation of the refugees constitutes one of the most difficult of the entire complex of problems of the area, and that in the absence of a just settlement of it there can be no prospect of lasting peace.

It will have to be resolved not only to the satisfaction of the various states concerned, but above all so that these unfortunate victims of the political and military events which have swept over them in the past 20 years can themselves obtain the basic human rights which they, like all people, are surely entitled to look for.<sup>30</sup>

These UN debates would eventually lead to the passage (in 1967) of United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) Resolution 242, probably the most important international agreement on the Middle East conflict since 1947.<sup>31</sup>

In August 1967, External Affairs Minister Hasluck shied away from suggesting what a final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict might look like, but did give some indication of the Australian Government's thinking:

I do not believe that Israel plans to retain all these areas permanently but, at the most, to seek [border] adjustments by agreement. At this stage it would not be helpful for nations other than the principle parties to lay down the lines of settlement and, on behalf of Australia, I say no more than that any arrangements relating to the Old City of Jerusalem should pay respect to the special place which Jerusalem holds for Christian, Moslem and Jew.<sup>32</sup>

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30. Ibid.

31. UNSC Resolution 242 was passed unanimously by the Security Council on 22 November 1967. The most often referred to United Nations Resolution concerning a peace settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, its two basic tenets are that for peace to be established Israel should withdraw from some or all of the territories occupied in the Six Day War, and Arab states should recognise Israel and end all claims of belligerency against it. See UNSC, *Security Council Resolution 242: the situation in the Middle East*, 22 November 1967, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/240/94/IMG/NR024094.pdf?OpenElement>. On the importance of UNSC Resolution 242 see SM Lynk, 'Conceived in Law: the legal foundations of Resolution 242', unpublished, 2 July 2007, available online, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1411698](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1411698); L Cardon et. al., *U.N. Security Council Resolution 242: a case study in diplomatic ambiguity*, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Georgetown, 1981.

32. P Hasluck (Minister for External Affairs), 'Ministerial statement: international affairs', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 17 August 1967, pp. 209–210, viewed 6 June 2012,

The Coalition Government of Australia asserted a number of times in the late 1960s and early 1970s that its position on the Middle East conflict was one of 'neutrality'.<sup>33</sup> According to Nigel Bowen, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1971 and 1972, this neutrality was demonstrated in Australia's voting pattern at the UNGA:

Our policy is one of neutrality and sympathetic interest in a settlement of the conflict. We are friends of both the Arab states and Israel and wish to remain so. Accordingly the Australian Government has supported United Nations resolutions which were concerned with the welfare of those who have suffered from the dispute, but has abstained on those which tended politically to favour one side or the other.<sup>34</sup>

Another important issue concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict which developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the rise of the use of 'terrorist' tactics by Palestinian militant groups. These tactics included aircraft hijackings and attacks on Israeli civilians both inside and outside Israel.<sup>35</sup> Following one of the most infamous Palestinian attacks of the early 1970s—the Munich Olympics massacre—Prime Minister McMahon moved a motion in the House of Representatives:

The outrage by terrorists at the Olympic Games in Munich is still very much in our minds. We share the grief which swept the whole world at the barbarous acts of terrorism which led to the death of members of the Israeli team.

On behalf of the Government and the Australian people I have already sent a message of sympathy to the Prime Minister of Israel and to the Israeli people. It is with sadness and with heartfelt sympathy for those who have suffered so much that I submit to the House the following motion:

That this House expresses its horror and shock at the violence which was perpetrated upon competitors and officials at Munich and which threatened to destroy the spirit of the 1972

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[http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1967-08-17/toc\\_pdf/19670817\\_reps\\_26\\_hor56.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1967-08-17/toc_pdf/19670817_reps_26_hor56.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf)

33. See for example W McMahon (Minister for External Affairs), 'Answer to Question without notice: Egypt', [Questioner: Mr Bryant], House of Representatives, *Debates*, 3 June 1970, p. 2799, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1970-06-03/toc\\_pdf/19700603\\_reps\\_27\\_hor68.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1970-06-03/toc_pdf/19700603_reps_27_hor68.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf)
34. N Bowen (Minister for Foreign Affairs), 'Ministerial statement: Australian foreign policy', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 9 May 1972, pp. 2224–2225, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1972-05-09/toc\\_pdf/19720509\\_reps\\_27\\_hor78.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1972-05-09/0158%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1972-05-09/toc_pdf/19720509_reps_27_hor78.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1972-05-09/0158%22)
35. Some of the more well-known of these incidents in the late 1960s and early 1970s include the Munich Olympics massacre (September 1972), the Avivim school bus massacre (May 1970), the Dawson's Field hijackings (September 1970), the Ma'a lot massacre (May 1974), and Pan Am Flight 110 (December 1973); see H Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: people, power, and politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1984, chapters 3–4; Y Alexander and J Sinai, *Terrorism: the PLO connection*, Cranre Russak, New York, 1989; AD Miller, *The PLO and the politics of survival*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, 1983, pp. 31–35, 90–92; and JW Amos II, *Palestinian resistance: organization of a nationalist movement*, Pergamon Press, New York, 1980, chapter 10.

Olympic Games. The House extends its deepest sympathies to the families and relatives of the deceased, and calls upon all countries which participated in the Games to preserve this unique institution from attacks on its competitors and its ideals.<sup>36</sup>

The Opposition supported this motion, and subsequent Government's would consistently condemn terrorist attacks perpetrated by Palestinian militants.<sup>37</sup>

## The Whitlam Government (1972–1975)

Australian writers Colin Rubenstein and Tzvi Fleischer argue that the election of the first Labor Government since 1949 resulted in a shift away from Israel in Australian policy on the Middle East conflict:

It is generally agreed that, despite a solidly pro-Israeli record up until that point, the election of an ALP government under Gough Whitlam marked a sharp departure in Australian policy toward Israel and Arab-Israeli issues.<sup>38</sup>

Prime Minister Whitlam himself may have agreed that his Government shifted Australia's policy on the Middle East conflict. Looking back on his time as Prime Minister, Whitlam wrote in 1985:

Australian Governments had always professed an even-handed attitude towards Israel and the Arab nations in international forums, while in practice they were thought to be favouring Israel in the 1948, 1956 and 1967 conflicts. When the 1973 conflict erupted it was expected that my Government would favour Israel.... On this occasion Australia had to practice its profession of even-handedness.<sup>39</sup>

The ALP's position on the Middle East conflict at the time of the December 1972 election is found in the party's 1971 *Platform, constitution and rules*:

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36. W McMahon (Prime Minister), 'Munich Olympic Games', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 12 September 1972, p. 1119, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1972-09-12/toc\\_pdf/19720912\\_reps\\_27\\_hor80.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22munich%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1972-09-12/toc_pdf/19720912_reps_27_hor80.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22munich%22); On the Munich Olympics massacre see AJ Klein, *Striking back: the 1972 Munich Olympics massacre and Israel's deadly response*, Scribe Books, Carlton North, 2006.
  37. See for example G Whitlam (Prime Minister), 'Answer to a Question without notice: terrorist activities', [Questioner: E Drury], House of Representatives, *Debates*, 16 July 1974, pp. 193–194, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1974-07-16/toc\\_pdf/19740716\\_reps\\_29\\_hor89.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1974-07-16/0071%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1974-07-16/toc_pdf/19740716_reps_29_hor89.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1974-07-16/0071%22); and R Withers (Leader of the Government in the Senate), 'Answer to a Question without notice: raid on Entebbe airport', [Questioner: Senator P Baume], Senate, *Debates*, 18 August 1976, pp. 90–91, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansards80/1976-08-18/toc\\_pdf/19760818\\_senate\\_30\\_s69.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansards80/1976-08-18/0073%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansards80/1976-08-18/toc_pdf/19760818_senate_30_s69.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansards80/1976-08-18/0073%22)
  38. C Rubenstein and T Fleischer, 'A distant affinity: the history of Australian-Israeli relations', *Jewish Political Studies Review*, vol. 19, no. 3–4, Fall 2007, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://jcpa.org/article/a-distant-affinity-the-history-of-australian-israeli-relations-2/>
  39. G Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government: 1972–1975*, Viking, Ringwood, 1985, pp. 124–126.

The situation in the Middle East remains the greatest threat to the peace of the world. Labor recognises the necessity to renew efforts through the United Nations and otherwise to persuade Arab nations and Israel to accept a permanent settlement to all the problems in the area.<sup>40</sup>

A few months after Labor's election victory, Prime Minister Whitlam spoke at Sydney Town Hall during a ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. Concerning Australian policy, he said:

[While being neutral on the Middle East conflict] we are not neutral on the question of the sovereignty of Israel. The rights of Jews to a national homeland and to live there in peace are not to be denied. The right of Israel to defend her borders and preserve intact the great democracy which flourishes there is not a matter on which any Australian Government has been neutral.<sup>41</sup>

By the time of the 30th Federal Conference of the ALP, held in September 1973, the Party's stated policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict had become more specific:

The situation in the Middle East remains the greatest threat to the peace of the world. There can be no peace until the Arab States respect and recognise Israel's sovereignty and right to exist. Equally, there can be no peace until Israeli forces have been withdrawn from occupied territories to secure and recognised boundaries and a just settlement of the refugee problem is achieved.<sup>42</sup>

When war broke out between Israel and the Egyptian and Syrian-led Arab coalition on 6 October 1973, the Australian Government called for an end to the fighting, stated that it believed UNSC Resolution 242 was the basis for resolving the conflict, and restated its policy of neutrality and even-handedness.<sup>43</sup> During that war and in the weeks that followed the Government refused to apportion blame for the outbreak of the conflict, using the following or similar terms:

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40. Australian Labor Party (ALP), *Platform, constitution and rules: as approved by the 29th Commonwealth Conference*, ALP, Adelaide, August 1971, p. 40, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1042679/upload\\_binary/1042679.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1042679%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1042679/upload_binary/1042679.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1042679%22)
41. Quoted in 'PM backs Israel freedom,' *The Australian*, 7 May 1973.
42. ALP, *Platform, constitution and rules: as approved by 30th Commonwealth Conference*, ALP, Canberra, September 1973, p. 51, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1052378/upload\\_binary/1052378.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1052378%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1052378/upload_binary/1052378.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1052378%22)
43. G Whitlam (Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Press statement: Middle East war*, media release, 7 October 1973, available Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 44, no. 10, October 1973, p. 697; G Whitlam (Prime Minister), *Press statement: Middle East war*, media release, 13 October 1973, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 44, no. 10, October 1973, p. 697; and G Whitlam (Prime Minister), 'Answer to a Question without notice: Israeli-Arab War', [Questioner: J Riordan], House of Representatives, *Debates*, 15 October 1973, pp. 2053–2054, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansard80/1973-10-15/toc\\_pdf/19731015\\_reps\\_28\\_hor86.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansard80/1973-10-15/toc_pdf/19731015_reps_28_hor86.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf). It should be noted that the previous and subsequent Coalition Government likewise supported Resolution 242 as the basis for resolving the Middle East conflict; see for example N Bowen (Minister for Foreign Affairs), 'Ministerial statement: Australian foreign policy', op. cit.

The Australian Government maintains a neutral and even-handed attitude to the conflict in the Middle East, as did the Holt and Menzies governments when conflict broke out there on earlier occasions. Successive Australian governments have always been neutral and have tried to be even-handed in this longstanding dispute. I believe that there is no advantage in seeking to apportion blame.

...

We are simply wasting our time if we join in recrimination which only seeks to ascribe blame to one side or the other.<sup>44</sup>

On 13 November 1974, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat made his first address to the UNGA.<sup>45</sup> Australia's Ambassador to the United Nations, Laurence McIntyre, said in response:

We have listened to the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Mr Arafat, and have heard that the PLO, as supported by the Heads of State of all Arab Governments, represents the Palestinians and all their aspirations. Whatever reservations we have about methods employed in asserting those rights to self-determination and a recognised place in their original homeland—there is clearly a new and vigorous spirit, a new sense of destiny among the leaders of the displaced Arabs, a new confidence in their rights to self-determination and independence within a Palestinian state of their own.

My delegation has taken note of all this, and **we say that if the Palestinians want to create a state of their own alongside Israel, we will accept this** [emphasis added].<sup>46</sup>

This appears to be the first time an Australian official hinted at supporting the creation of a Palestinian state (excluding the 'Arab state' envisioned during the debates about partition in the

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44. G Whitlam (Prime Minister), 'Response to a Question without notice: Israeli-Arab War', [Questioner: J Riordan], House of Representatives, *Debates*, 15 October 1973, pp. 2053–2054, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1973-10-15/toc\\_pdf/19731015\\_reps\\_28\\_hor86.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1973-10-15/0046%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1973-10-15/toc_pdf/19731015_reps_28_hor86.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1973-10-15/0046%22); see also Senator D Willisee (Minister for Foreign Affairs), 'Response to a Question without notice: Middle East', [Questioner: Senator A Lilloco], Senate, *Debates*, 27 November 1973, pp. 2107–2108, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansards80/1973-11-27/toc\\_pdf/19731127\\_senate\\_28\\_s58.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansards80/1973-11-27/0066%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansards80/1973-11-27/toc_pdf/19731127_senate_28_s58.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansards80/1973-11-27/0066%22)
45. For an English translation of Arafat's speech to the UNGA see *Yasser Arafat's 1974 UN General Assembly speech*, 13 November 1974, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Yasser\\_Arafat's\\_1974\\_UN\\_General\\_Assembly\\_speech](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Yasser_Arafat's_1974_UN_General_Assembly_speech); for more on the PLO see 'Palestine Liberation Organisation,' *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2008, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0015\\_0\\_15347.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0015_0_15347.html); A Jamal, *The Palestinian national movement: politics of contention, 1967–2003*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2003; and H Cobban, *The Palestinian [sic] Liberation Organisation: people, power and politics*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1984.
46. L McIntyre (Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations), 'UN debate on Palestine—the Australian statement', 21 November 1974, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 45, no. 11, November 1974, pp. 746–747.

1940s). A few months later Prime Minister Whitlam more explicitly stated that ‘the Palestinian people have a right to a sovereign independent state’.<sup>47</sup>

The day after Australia’s statement in response to Arafat’s speech, the UNGA voted in favour of Resolution 3237 to grant the PLO observer status in the General Assembly.<sup>48</sup> The Resolution was passed with a vote of 95 to 17, with 17 abstentions (including Australia). In October 1975 the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Doug Willisee, was asked by a Coalition Senator why Australia had been ‘adopting an attitude favouring the admission of a terrorist organisation [the PLO]’ to the UN. Senator Willisee defended the Government’s position in the following terms:

Although Australia abstained, we now have to take account of the decision embodied in that resolution, which was adopted by a large majority of the General Assembly.

...

Australia’s acceptance of observer status for the PLO at the United Nations and Specialised Agencies does not imply endorsement of its tactics. Australia acknowledges the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, but our support for the right of Israel to exist within secure and recognised boundaries has also been repeatedly reaffirmed by the Australian Government.<sup>49</sup>

This was part of the slow shift in Australian policy, through successive Governments, to the point where the PLO was eventually accepted by the Keating Government as the ‘legitimate representative of the Palestinian people’ (this acceptance is also discussed below).

## The Fraser Government (1975–1983)

An indication of the Coalition’s policy concerning the Middle East conflict when it came to power in December 1975 was provided in the October 1975 election document *Foreign policy [and] international development assistance policy*:

The Liberal and National Country Parties believe that a partisan stand by Australia will contribute neither to a lasting and just peace in the Middle East nor to our own interests. We reassert our support for United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 339 as providing the basis for a peaceful settlement.

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47. G Whitlam (Prime Minister), ‘Response to a Question without notice: Palestine Liberation Organisation’, House of Representatives, *Debates*, 5 March 1975, pp. 1039–1040, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1975-03-05/toc\\_pdf/19750305\\_reps\\_29\\_hor93.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22terror?%20palestin?%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1975-03-05/toc_pdf/19750305_reps_29_hor93.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22terror?%20palestin?%22)

48. UNGA, *General Assembly Resolution 3237: observer status to the PLO*, 22 November 1974, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1974-1977/47%20General%20Assembly%20Resolution%203237%20-XXIX--%20observ>

49. Senator D Willesee (Minister for Foreign Affairs), ‘Answer to Question: Palestine Liberation Organisation’, [Questioner: Senator Wright], Senate, *Debates*, 7 October 1975, pp. 955–956, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansards80/1975-10-07/toc\\_pdf/19751007\\_senate\\_29\\_s66.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansards80/1975-10-07/toc_pdf/19751007_senate_29_s66.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf)



We value our long-standing and close relations with the Arab nations and Israel. We regard a guarantee of Israel's right to exist as an essential part of any settlement. At the same time we appreciate the plight of the Palestinian refugees and will continue to participate in actions to assist them and alleviate their suffering.

Given the history of the region, and the legacy of suspicion and fear it has left, we see the best hope for progress toward such a settlement in the initial negotiation of agreement on limited and particular issues. Success in such efforts will strengthen the spirit of compromise and mutual trust which is essential for a lasting peace.<sup>50</sup>

The Fraser Government's first Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andrew Peacock, had—when in Opposition—prepared a position paper on the Middle East in which he criticised the Whitlam Government's policy and outlined the Coalition's stance:

The Opposition Parties (the Coalition) regard United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, passed on 22 November 1967, as fundamental to prospects for settlement in the Middle East.

Although the precise meaning of basic aspects of the Resolution are disputed<sup>[51]</sup> and circumstances have in some respects altered since it was passed, it expresses the spirit of compromise essential to any settlement and suggests the lines along which a lasting peaceful solution may be reached.

...

Both the PLO and Israel have taken an uncompromising position on negotiations with each other which might hinder moves towards peace.

...

[T]he Opposition parties believe the present stand by the PLO cannot form the basis for negotiations.

...

The Liberal-Country Parties consider the Labor Government in Australia has been derelict in not calling on the PLO in the United Nations and elsewhere to accept in principle the existence of the independent and sovereign state of Israel.

...

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50. Liberal and National Country Parties, *Foreign policy [and] international development assistance policy*, Liberal and National Country Parties, Canberra, October 1975, pp. 3–4, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1309591/upload\\_binary/1309591.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1309591%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1309591/upload_binary/1309591.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1309591%22)
51. This refers to the line in United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (op. cit.) which advocates the 'withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict.' The absence of the phrase 'the territories' has led some to believe that Israel is only required to withdraw from **some** territories, not to the 1967 borders.



The Opposition Parties do not believe that the PLO should have been accepted as a participant in a UNGA debate until they had modified their expressed objective for the destruction of the State of Israel.

...

On the other hand, Israel's refusal to deal with the PLO (because of the PLO's stated policy towards Israel) leaves little room for compromise. In particular, this stand tends to overlook the new realities of the situation. The PLO has been accepted by the Arab States, including Jordan, as representing the Palestinian people and they have ... won sufficient support in the United Nations to gain the right to participate in the debate on the Palestine question. If present PLO leaders cannot continue to show some progress, more extreme elements may gain greater influence.... However, Israel's stand must be understood in the light of the PLO's flat denial of Israel's right to exist.

...

In existing circumstances it has become difficult for Israel to sustain its position that it will negotiate only with Jordan on the question of Palestine. But the PLO, if it is to genuinely fill the role of the representative of the Palestinians, must accept Israel's right to exist.

...

No Israeli government could or should be expected to deal with an organisation dedicated to the destruction of Israel.<sup>52</sup>

A few weeks after the December 1975 election, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser was paraphrased by a journalist stating that the previous Labor Government's Middle East policy was not 'even-handed' and quotes Fraser as saying 'I have branded the [Labor] policy as a pro-Russian policy ... We would want to make more plain our commitment to the survival of Israel'.<sup>53</sup>

The new Foreign Minister, Andrew Peacock, also criticised Labor's Middle East policy during the 1975 election campaign. In a speech to the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies, Peacock said:

[W]e do not think that blame is to be evenly distributed; we do not believe in the mechanical balance implied by 'even-handedness.' But we do believe that there are moderate elements within the Arab world and that it is essential that a distinction be made between these and the extremists and terrorists. The policy of all friends of Israel should be directed at strengthening and encouraging these elements.

...

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52. A Peacock (Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs), 'Position Paper on the Middle East', 3 March 1974; cited in J Knight and G Patz (eds), *Australia and the Middle East: papers and documents*, Australian Institute of International Affairs, Canberra, 1976, pp. 103–106.

53. J Lombard, 'We're pro-Israel, says Fraser,' *The Sun-News Pictorial*, 27 December 1975.

[W]e believe that outside the Middle East itself, in the larger international society, Israel's right to exist and to participate as a full and equal member of that society must be protected as must those of all other countries. It is unthinkable that a democratic and enlightened society should be ostracised and treated as a pariah. We will have none of it.

...

The proclaimed policy of the Whitlam Government was one of 'even-handedness.' And in some senses it was even-handed. But it was even-handed not between Israel and the moderate Arabs but between Israel and the PLO, between the terrorists and a social democratic state.<sup>54</sup>

The most important series of events concerning the Middle East conflict in the early years of the Fraser Government were the negotiations that led to the 1978 Camp David Accords and the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty on 26 March 1979.<sup>55</sup> When Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat made his historic trip to Israel and delivered a speech to the Israeli parliament (the Knesset) in November 1977, Foreign Minister Peacock praised the move:

It was a symbol of hope for reconciliation between Arabs and Jews and President Sadat, as its author, has assured himself a proud place in the history of both peoples.

...

[T]he Middle East would never be the same again. Israel's existence was now accepted by Egypt. Two traditional adversaries who had fought five wars with each other since 1948 had made a mutual pledge of peace.<sup>56</sup>

Prime Minister Fraser too would also commend Sadat's overtures in a speech to the Zionist Council of Victoria in May 1978:

In that one visit Israel achieved the implicit recognition of a major Arab nation and new and exhilarating prospects of real and lasting peace.

Australia welcomed President Sadat's courageous initiative because it represented the first real breakthrough in 30 years of continual warfare. It opened a new path which Israel has always wanted but which had hitherto seemed inaccessible; the path to negotiation. I have said repeatedly that the only future in the Middle East lies in negotiation.<sup>57</sup>

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54. A Peacock (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Australia and the Middle East: text of address to the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies*, media release, 1 December 1975.

55. On these events see KW Stein, *Heroic diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin, and the quest for Arab-Israeli peace*, Routledge, New York and London, 1999; and WB Quandt, *Camp David: peacemaking and politics*, Brookings Institute, Washington DC, 1986.

56. A Peacock (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *President Sadat's visit to Israel*, media release, 23 November 1977, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 48, no. 11, November 1977, p. 598.

57. M Fraser (Prime Minister), *Speech: Zionist Council of Victoria: 30th Independence Day of the State of Israel*, media release, 10 May 1978.

Following the signing of the Camp David Accords on 17 September 1978, Prime Minister Fraser stated that this represented ‘a major contribution towards a peace settlement’, and described Australia’s policy on the Middle East conflict at that time:

We particularly welcome the agreement by the leaders of Egypt and Israel that the provisions and principles of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 will govern the negotiations for an agreed basis for a peaceful settlement between Israel and its neighbours. This is a position which the Australian Government has consistently taken. We also welcome the recognition in the Camp David agreements of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to participate in the determination of their own future. This also accords with the stated policy of the Australian Government.<sup>58</sup>

As the Israeli-Egyptian peace process evolved through 1979, Prime Minister Fraser ‘welcomed the dramatic progress’ towards an Israel-Egypt peace treaty, stating:

The Prime Minister said a treaty between Egypt and Israel would be an historic event not only in itself, but in the stimulus it would provide to bring about peace in the Middle East as a whole... The Prime Minister expressed the hope that as the treaty was implemented, the doubts of the other Arab states would lessen and that work on a comprehensive Middle East settlement would proceed.<sup>59</sup>

In March 1980, following the signing of the treaty, Foreign Minister Peacock came close to endorsing the idea of a Palestinian state.<sup>60</sup> In a speech to the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Peacock said:

From the point of view of the Arab countries, this dispute is no longer so much about the continued existence of Israel. It is rather about how to solve the Palestinian problem and to involve the Palestinians in a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement.

...

Our own position remains ... that peace should be based on the proposals contained in resolutions 242 and 338; upon Israel’s rights to exist within secure and recognised boundaries; and **upon recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to a homeland**

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58. M Fraser (Prime Minister), ‘Ministerial Statement: Middle East situation’, House of Representatives, *Debates*, 21 September 1978, pp. 1304–05, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1978-09-21/toc\\_pdf/19780921\\_reps\\_31\\_hor110.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1978-09-21/toc_pdf/19780921_reps_31_hor110.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf); for the text of the Camp David Accords see *Camp David Accords*, 17 September 1978, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Camp%20David%20Accords>
59. M Fraser (Prime Minister), *Middle East*, media release, 15 March 1979, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 50, no. 3, March, 1979, pp. 175–176.
60. *Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt*, 26 March 1979, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Israel-Egypt%20Peace%20Treaty>

**alongside Israel** and the corresponding responsibility that they live peacefully with all their neighbours [emphasis added].<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, in April 1982 Prime Minister Fraser discussed those aspects of the Camp David Accords that dealt with the goal of Palestinian ‘autonomy’ in the West Bank and Gaza Strip:<sup>62</sup>

Recent outbreaks of violence in cities on the West Bank show how very close to the surface are the tensions that exist in that territory. The aspirations of the Palestinians are a significant factor underlying that violence, and if the momentum of Camp David is to be maintained, a way needs to be found for Israel to give appropriate recognition to them [Palestinian aspirations].

We believe ... that the legitimate rights of the Palestinians include a homeland alongside Israel, and the right to participate directly in decisions affecting their future.<sup>63</sup>

On this occasion Fraser made clear that the Palestinians’ right to participate in decisions that would impact on their future did not include recognising the PLO, because, as he explained, ‘while the PLO refuses to recognise Israel’s right to exist, there can be no consideration by Australia of the question of recognising the PLO’.<sup>64</sup>

On 14 December 1981, Israel annexed the Golan Heights, territory captured from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War. Australia’s Foreign Minister, Tony Street, expressed the Government’s opposition to this move, stating:

[T]he Australian Government regarded the intention of the Israeli Government with respect to the Golan Heights as contrary to the principles of Security Council Resolution 242. The Australian Government considers the Golan Heights to be part of the occupied territories, the final status of which should be determined through negotiations between all parties in the context of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East dispute.

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61. A Peacock (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *The Middle East in world politics: speech to the Eighth National Conference of the Australian Institute of International Affairs*, media release, 28 March 1980, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 51, no. 3, March 1980, pp. 71–75.

62. The Camp David Accords consisted of two agreements—*A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel* and *A Framework for Peace in the Middle East*. The latter dealt with the future of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, calling for ‘full autonomy to the inhabitants’ for a five-year transitional period, during which negotiations between Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Palestinian representatives would determine the ‘final status of the West Bank and Gaza and other outstanding issues’. See *The Camp David Accords: a framework for peace in the Middle East*, 17 September 1978, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/campdavid/accords.phtml>

63. M Fraser (Prime Minister), *Israel and the Middle East: speech to the NSW State Zionist Council on the occasion of the 34th anniversary of the founding of Israel*, transcript, media release, 22 April 1982, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 53, no. 4, April 1982, pp. 217–219.

64. Ibid.

The Minister recalled that last year the Australian Government had also expressed its opposition to the declaration by the Israeli Knesset that all Jerusalem, including occupied East Jerusalem, is the united capital of Israel.<sup>65</sup>

The other major event to occur concerning the Middle East conflict while Fraser was in power was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which drew sharp criticism from the Australian Government. For example, during the Israeli siege of West Beirut in August 1982, Prime Minister Fraser said:

The continued fighting and destruction in Beirut, costing the lives and destroying the livelihood of innocent and powerless Lebanese citizens, is of the gravest concern to the Australian Government and people.

Australia does understand Israel's concern at the repeated terrorist attacks and threats made by the PLO. We deplore terrorism of all kinds.

However, despite the provocations Israel has received, its present actions in persisting with the use of its formidable military strength in Beirut, long after achieving its initially declared objective, are **short sighted and foolish** [emphasis added].<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, following the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps by Israeli-backed Lebanese militia (16–18 September 1982), the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister both spoke out strongly against Israel, and it was from this point that the Australian Government began to consistently advocate for a 'Palestinian homeland' to be established alongside Israel.<sup>67</sup> On 20 September 1982, Foreign Minister Street expressed the Government's 'grave concern' without explicitly condemning Israel's actions:

[T]he Australian Government was appalled at the massacre of Palestinian civilians in refugee camps [Sabra and Shatila] in West Beirut at the weekend.

...

The Minister noted that the re-entry of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) into Beirut had been explained in terms of the need to maintain peace. 'By re-entering Beirut the IDF took on itself the responsibility for the protection of the civilian population. It is a matter of grave concern that

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65. T Street (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Golan Heights*, media release, 15 December 1981, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 52, no. 12, December 1981, pp. 602–603.

66. M Fraser (Prime Minister), *Lebanon*, media release, 9 August 1982, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 53, no. 8, August 1982, pp. 522–523 [emphasis added]

67. On Sabra and Shatila see T Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, Farrer Strauss Giroux, New York, 1989, pp. 159–166; R Fisk, *Pity the nation: Lebanon at War*, Andre Deutsch Limited, London, 1990, pp. 359–400; Government of Israel, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the events at the refugee camps in Beirut*, 8 February 1983, available on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1982-1984/104%20Report%20of%20the%20Commission%20of%20Inquiry%20into%20the%20e>; and M Jansen, *The battle of Beirut: why Israel invaded Lebanon*, Zed Books, London, 1982, pp. 91–109.

the massacre of Palestinian civilians occurred while Israeli forces were in the immediate area,’  
Mr Street said.<sup>68</sup>

Two days later, the Prime Minister, when asked in the House of Representatives to make a statement on the Sabra and Shatila massacres, responded:

[T]he Minister for Foreign Affairs and I — indeed I am sure we were doing it on behalf not only of the Government but of all Australians — have indicated how appalled we were at what happened.

...

I do not think any of us would want, in any sense, to be seen as condoning the killing of many thousands of people—of many innocent people, of many non-combatants. There can be no contesting, no doubting that that has occurred.

...

There is one general thing I want to say. I hope it will be understood in this Parliament and in the broader Australian community. I say it as a person who has been and is, in a real sense, a friend of Israel. I say it on behalf of a government that has done a great deal to support the integrity of Israel behind secure and safe borders... Israel has earned the right, I believe, to the support of governments of countries such as Australia because of the long history of the Jewish people, because of their courage and determination, because of their absolute right to a homeland behind secure and stable boundaries and because there have been many who have sought to drive them into the sea and to destroy that right.

This Government and, I hope, Australia will never withdraw from that general proposition and position. But, at the same time, the strength of support that has been given to Israel over the years has depended very much on the capacity to offer support for a stance which was a moral and high-minded one. That has been the position of Israel and of successive Israeli governments over the years. If, by accident, by design, by misfortune, by error or by misjudgement, events occur which weaken or diminish Israel's right to command the support of countries such as Australia, because it breaks down the moral position on which it stands by any of those means—I am not saying deliberately; inadvertently or in any other way—the capacity of nations to support Israel is obviously diminished because we need to have a credible position from which we can argue our support.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, on 6 October 1982 Foreign Minister Street explicitly called for the creation of a Palestinian ‘homeland’, while calling on Arab states to recognise Israel:

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68. T Street (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Lebanon*, media release, 20 September 1982, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 53, no. 9, September 1982, pp. 576–577.

69. M Fraser (Prime Minister), ‘Answer to a Question without notice: Lebanon’, [Questioner: B Hayden], House of Representatives, *Debates*, 22 September 1982, pp. 1701–1702, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansard%2F1982-09-22%2F0006%22>

Israel must recognise the legitimate rights of the Palestinians — rights which should include a homeland for the Palestinians alongside Israel. Israel, pre-eminently among nations, should understand the significance of a national homeland for a dispersed people.

Equally important is the need for movement from the Arab side. We recognise that the proposals from the Arab League States at Fez provided an implicit recognition to Israel by calling for the Security Council to guarantee peace among all states in the region. Why, however, cannot the implicit be made explicit?<sup>70</sup>

## The Hawke Government (1983–1991)

Prior to entering Parliament, the future Prime Minister Bob Hawke made a number of important statements outlining his position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. While President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), Hawke gave a speech to the 26th Biennial Conference of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand, on 26 January 1974:

This then is the reality with which we are confronted—Arab States covering thirteen million square kilometres and Israel, even with the post-1967 lines (90 000 square kilometres) in control of much less than 1% of that figure, threatened constantly with extinction. And in light of this reality I do not know what language means if we talk of [the Whitlam Government policy] of ‘even-handedness’. The policy of the party to which I belong is brief, and, I believe, clear in its implications—the full Resolution [passed by the Federal Labor Conference in September 1973] is: ‘The situation in the Middle East remains the greatest threat to the peace of the world. There can be no peace until the Arab States respect and recognise Israel’s sovereignty and right to exist. Equally, there can be no peace until Israeli forces have been withdrawn from occupied territories to secure and recognised boundaries and a just settlement of the refugee problem is achieved.’

The very crux of that policy is manifestly the requirement of the Arab States to recognise the right of Israel to exist.

...

[W]e cannot be even-handed in judgement between States ... where one side is bent on the physical destruction of the other.

In the nineteen thirties appeasement under threat and blackmail permitted, among other things, the holocaust in which six million of our fellow human beings, who happened to be Jews, were exterminated... [A]s an individual Australian, I know that I am not an island and I know that if we allow the bell to be tolled for Israel it will have tolled for me, for us all, and we will all to that extent again have been diminished. This would be an especial loss for Australia, which under the

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70. T Street (Minister for Foreign affairs), *United Nations: Foreign Minister’s address*, 6 October 1982, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 53, no. 10, October 1982, p. 618.

leadership of Dr Evatt as Minister for External Affairs, played a major part in the emergence of the State of Israel.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, in a press article Hawke attempted to ‘establish the absolute legitimacy of the State of Israel’:

In terms of the international community of nations, the State of Israel arose out of a decision by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 29, 1947 which [was] approved by more than the required two-thirds majority.

...

Israel became a member of the United Nations on 11 May 1949.

...

Both decisions [the General Assembly vote and admission to the UN] were founded in a recognition of the unbroken line of historical association of the Jew with ‘the Land,’ the simple designation which survived and inspired them through centuries of persecution.

...

I now believe we are witnessing a paradox. At a time when Israel has probably never been more militarily secure than it is now, it is in danger of becoming more isolated diplomatically and in terms of world opinion than at any time since its creation in 1948.

...

[N]o one has the right to demand Israeli withdrawal [from the occupied territories] until the other part of [UN Security Council Resolution] 242 has been put into a result-producing negotiation process — i.e. ‘termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area’<sup>72</sup>

In Government, the Hawke Government continued the trend towards directly calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

The ALP’s policy position on the Middle East conflict when it returned to Government in 1983 is found in the Party’s *Platform, constitution and rules*, adopted in July 1982:

Labor seeks a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

...

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71. R J Hawke (ACTU President), ‘Israel and the Middle East: speech to the 26th Biennial Conference of the Zionist Federation of Australia and New Zealand’, cited in the booklet *Hawke on Israel*, Australian Friends of Labour Israel, Melbourne, 1977, pp. 39–54.

72. R J Hawke (ACTU President), ‘The past can be a prelude to peace’, *The Australian*, 6 May 1978.



Labor believes that both Palestinians and Israelis are entitled to homelands and States of their own. Both the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel should recognise that fact and the reality of the existence of each other.

There can be no lasting peace until Israel recognises the just claims of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and a Palestinian homeland and until Israeli forces have been withdrawn from the occupied territories to internationally recognised boundaries.

Equally there can be no lasting peace until the Arab states and the Palestine Liberation organisation [*sic*] respect and recognise Israel's sovereignty and right to exist.<sup>73</sup>

During its first year in office, the Hawke Government conducted a review of its Middle East policy. The outcomes of this review, which included tentative moves towards recognising the PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, were announced by the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs Lionel Bowen:

Mr Bowen emphasised that the review reaffirmed the fundamental principles which guide Australia's Middle East policy: namely, the recognition of the urgent need to achieve a just, comprehensive, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Middle East dispute; Australia's fundamental commitment to the security of Israel and its right to exist within secure and recognised boundaries; and recognition of the central importance of the Palestinian issue for any settlement.

Mr Bowen said that the following specific decisions had been agreed as a result of the review.

The Government acknowledges the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent state.

...

The Government will maintain its refusal to recognise the PLO while it maintains denial of Israel's right to exist. The Government acknowledges that the PLO, which represents the opinion of a significant portion of the Palestinian people, should be included in the process of seeking a comprehensive settlement. It believes however, that its opportunity to engage productively in such a process is limited and perhaps non-existent while it persists in denying Israel's right to exist. Australian Ambassadors in relevant posts will be authorised to include PLO representatives in their range of political contacts.

The Government calls on Israel to freeze the settlement program in the West bank, and reiterates its belief that these settlements are contrary to international law and a significant obstacle to peace efforts.<sup>74</sup>

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73. ALP, *Platform, constitution and rules: as approved by the 35th National Conference*, ALP, Canberra, 1982, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1032121/upload\\_binary/1032121.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1032121%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1032121/upload_binary/1032121.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1032121%22)

The line in this statement concerning Palestinian statehood—‘their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent state’—would be repeated many times throughout the Hawke and Keating years.

On 7 May 1984 the Foreign Minister Bill Hayden outlined the ‘principles’ which at that time guided the Hawke Government’s approach to the Arab-Israeli dispute. The statement continued the evolution towards recognising the PLO:

The Government believes that there are a number of elements involved in achieving a settlement. The Arabs should follow Egypt's example and negotiate with Israel directly. They should extend formal recognition to the State of Israel. Israel, for its part, should withdraw from the occupied territories in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which Israel herself accepts. We must also recognise that the future of Israel cannot be considered without also considering the fate of the Palestinian people.

The Australian Government acknowledges the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent state. While the Government maintains its refusal to recognise the PLO so long as it maintains its denial of Israel's right to exist, the Government also believes that, as the PLO represents a significant portion of the Palestinian people, it should be included in the process of seeking a comprehensive settlement. But its opportunity to engage productively in that process will be severely limited while it persists in denying Israel's right to exist.

The Government calls on Israel to freeze its settlement program on the West Bank as it considers these settlements illegal and a significant obstacle to peace efforts.<sup>75</sup>

In the quote above Foreign Minister Hayden describes Israeli settlements in the West Bank as ‘illegal’. Although the Fraser Government had not described the settlements, which grew rapidly after the election of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1977, in such explicit terms, it had implied on at least one occasion that it thought Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were illegal under international law.<sup>76</sup> Throughout its years in Government the ALP platform and

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74. L Bowen (Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Middle East: policy review*, media release, 30 September 1983, available in Department of Foreign Affairs, *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, vol 54, no 9, September 1983, pp. 549–550 [emphasis added]

75. B Hayden (Minister for Foreign Affairs), ‘Ministerial Statement: Middle East’, House of Representatives, *Debates*, 7 May 1984, p. 916, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansard%2F1984-05-07%2F0067%22>

76. In response to a Question on notice, Ian Sinclair (Minister Primary Industry) stated in April 1978 that ‘as to the status of the occupied territories, Australia, in addition to making known its support for Israel's right to live within secure and recognised boundaries, has also made known in international forums its view that the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 are occupied territories in the international legal sense of that expression and that the Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (that is, the Fourth Geneva Convention) is applicable to those territories.’ Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that ‘The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies’. I Sinclair (Minister Primary Industry), ‘Response to a Question on notice: Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab territories’, [Questioner: G Whitlam], House of Representatives, *Debates*, 8 June 1978, p. 3358, viewed 6 June 2012,

constitution consistently referred to Israeli settlements as contrary to international law and an obstacle to peace in the region.<sup>77</sup>

In February 1987 Prime Minister Hawke visited Israel, the first serving Australian Prime Minister to do so. He also visited Jordan and Egypt, and on his return made a detailed parliamentary statement on the Middle East. Besides reiterating the Government's Middle East policy—described above—the Prime Minister discussed a number of new elements to the conflict (and its possible resolution) which provide insight into the Government's public position. On a prospective multilateral conference to kick-start a Middle East peace process, something that was opposed by then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Hawke said:

Some parties want such a conference involving the five permanent members of the Security Council, the nations of the region and the PLO. They do not envisage it imposing solutions on the parties concerned but rather providing a framework in which negotiations can take place between the parties principle.... Australia sees merit in such a proposal.<sup>78</sup>

Hawke also discussed recognising the PLO as an organisation to represent the Palestinian people:

It is clear that there is no organisation at this point which speaks for the Palestinians more than does the Palestine Liberation Organisation, not just in the West Bank and Gaza but more broadly in what can be thought of as the Palestinian Diaspora... This is not a value judgement about the PLO but simply a statement of fact. I believe this fact is understood in Israel.

It is equally clear that Israel's antagonists, including surely the PLO or at least the more sane elements of the organisation, now except that Israel exists and will continue to exist... They know this is a fact.

But these realities are not yet explicitly recognised in the stated policies of those parties involved. Progress towards peace in the region could be made if both sides were to issue a simultaneous statement acknowledging each other's existence.

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[http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1978-06-08/toc\\_pdf/19780608\\_reps\\_31\\_hor109.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1978-06-08/0316%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/hansard80/hansardr80/1978-06-08/toc_pdf/19780608_reps_31_hor109.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22hansard80/hansardr80/1978-06-08/0316%22)

77. ALP, *Australian Labor Party platform, constitution and rules as approved by the 36th National Conference*, ALP, Canberra, 1984, p. 105, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1032125/upload\\_binary/1032125.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1032125%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1032125/upload_binary/1032125.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1032125%22); ALP, *Australian Labor Party platform, constitution and rules as approved by the 39th National Conference*, ALP, Hobart, 1991, p. 116, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1032031/upload\\_binary/1032031.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1032031%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1032031/upload_binary/1032031.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22library/partypol/1032031%22); and ALP, *Australian Labor Party platform, constitution and rules as approved by the 40th National Conference*, ALP, Hobart, 1994, pp. 156–157, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1032034/upload\\_binary/1032034.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22middle%20east%20%201990s%20alp%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1032034/upload_binary/1032034.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22middle%20east%20%201990s%20alp%22)
78. RJ Hawke (Prime Minister), 'Ministerial Statement: visit to Jordan, Cyprus, Israel, Switzerland and Egypt', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 19 February 1987, p. 631, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansardr%2F1987-02-19%2F0064%22>

December 1987 witnessed the outbreak of the first Intifada in the Palestinian territories.<sup>79</sup> In January 1988 Foreign Minister Hayden expressed some sympathy for the frustration of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza:

Without the reasonable prospect of their right to self-determination being fulfilled ... many Palestinians of the occupied territories will increasingly see violence as the only way open to them. This must inevitably be to the advantage of those elements which assert no peaceful solution to the dispute is possible.

The end result of this deplorable situation can only be to the detriment of Israel's future as a liberal democratic state.<sup>80</sup>

In September 1988 Senator Gareth Evans replaced Bill Hayden as the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In December, Evans outlined the Australian Government's position on the Middle East conflict in the context of the first Intifada:

The uprising in the Occupied Territories [the first Intifada], whatever one may think about its motives or its future, has added a new and complicated element to the already complex cluster of issues at the centre of the Arab/Israel dispute.

The Australian Government has watched with concern the increasing levels of violence, including loss of life, injury and destruction of property. We recognise that the Israeli Defence Force faces a difficult situation for which, especially in the early days of the unrest, it was ill-prepared. Yet the Australian Government cannot condone the arbitrary measures being used by Israel to contain the unrest. In particular we have condemned practices such as the use of live ammunition against Palestinian demonstrators.

...

[I]n the final analysis peace and justice for Israel will only be found when there is also peace and justice for the Palestinians.<sup>81</sup>

On 15 November 1988 the PLO issued its 'Declaration of Independence'. While the document does not recognise Israel's 'right to exist', the accompanying Political Communiqué issued by the Palestine National Council, explicitly mentions UNSC Resolution 242, which calls for the 'acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area'.<sup>82</sup> A month later, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat stated that he recognised the 'right of all parties concerned in the

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79. For details on the first Intifada see EY Alimi, *Israeli politics and the first Palestinian Intifada*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2007; and RO Freedman, *The Intifada: its impact on Israel, the Arab world, and the superpowers*, Florida International University Press, Miami, 1991.

80. Quoted in L Moustafine, 'Hayden attacks Israeli "violation"', *The Australian*, 15 January 1988.

81. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade), *Peace in the Middle East: speech to the annual conference of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry*, transcript, media release, 11 December 1988.

82. UNSC Resolution 242, op. cit.; Palestine National Council, *Palestinian declaration of independence*, PLO, Algiers, 15 November 1988, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Palestinian\\_Declaration\\_of\\_Independence](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Palestinian_Declaration_of_Independence); and Palestine National Council, *Political communiqué*, PLO, Algiers, 15 November 1988, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.al-bab.com/arab/docs/pal/pal4.htm>

Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security ... including ... Israel' and renounced terrorism.<sup>83</sup> This was enough for the US administration to declare that it would 'enter into a substantive dialogue with the PLO'.<sup>84</sup>

Australia's position on these developments was outlined in a number of statements by Foreign Minister Evans in late 1988. On 14 December 1988, Evans told the Senate:

From any objective perspective, a major shift in the Palestinian position has occurred.

In the Australian Government's judgment, the PLO has gone sufficiently far to warrant a more constructive and positive response than has been forthcoming from Israel and the United States. We are not naive enough to believe that there are no elements of public relations in the stance that the PLO has now taken, but in our judgment it would be wrong simply to dismiss the Palestinian initiative as no more than that. If the moderate forces within the PLO, now represented by Arafat, are not encouraged and reinforced by appropriate responses from the principal parties, the risk of a return to dominance of the remaining extremists within the PLO umbrella is all too starkly apparent. Of course, there are risks involved for Israel in any step down the settlement path, but that country has been prepared to take enormous risks in the past to secure its viability and integrity. We simply hope that the Israeli Government will share our judgment that there are greater risks inherent in standing back now from the peace process than in participating actively in it.<sup>85</sup>

The next day, following Yasser Arafat's press conference cited above, Senator Evans was again asked about Australia's position on the PLO, to which he replied:

Today's developments on the Middle East represent a major breakthrough and one which Australia unreservedly welcomes.

This is a clear and unambiguous statement of the PLO's position and undoubtedly now provides the basis for discussions which can lead to a settlement of the Middle Eastern dispute. The statement clearly meets the three conditions spelt out initially by Prime Minister Hawke not only in Australia but in his visits to Israel, Jordan and Egypt in early 1987 and in a subsequent meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev, namely, a recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure

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83. Y Arafat (PLO Chairman), *Speech at the UN General Assembly*, Geneva, 13 December 1988, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/arafat88-en>; and Reuters, 'Statement by Arafat on peace in Mideast', *New York Times*, 15 December 1988, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/12/15/world/statement-by-arafat-on-peace-in-mideast.html>
84. R Reagan (US President), *Statement by President Reagan*, media release, 14 December 1988, available on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1984-1988/420%20Statement%20by%20President%20Reagan-%2014%20December%201988>
85. G Evans (Minster for Foreign Affairs), 'Response to a Question without notice: Palestine Liberation Organisation', Senate, *Debates*, 14 December 1988, p. 4165, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansards%2F1988-12-14%2F0078%22>

and recognised borders, acceptance of resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for any settlement and an unequivocal rejection of the use of terror and acceptance of the process of negotiation.<sup>86</sup>

The last major issue concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict while Hawke was Prime Minister was the multilateral Madrid peace conference, which convened on 30 October 1991. The Madrid Conference would result in the ‘Madrid peace process’—a ‘two track’ negotiating mechanism, where multilateral negotiations took place on key regional issues and separate, bilateral negotiations occurred between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon and between Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating team.<sup>87</sup> The Australian Government threw its support behind a multilateral conference as one began to look more likely following the end of the first Gulf War in 1991:

‘Australia wholeheartedly supports the proposed peace conference based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of land for peace,’ he [Gareth Evans] said. ‘The United States has remarkable perseverance since the Gulf War in pursuing the Middle East peace process—fulfilling President Bush’s undertaking that successful resolution to the Gulf crisis would be a springboard for renewed international efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute and the Palestinian issue.’

Australia supported the idea of reciprocal and balanced confidence-building measures which might improve the atmosphere for negotiations and facilitate a final settlement.<sup>88</sup>

## The Keating Government (1991–1996)

In May 1991, as acting Prime Minister, Paul Keating delivered a speech to the Zionist Federation of Australia, in which he labelled Israel’s settlement policy in the West Bank ‘contrary to international law’:

The Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, indeed much of the Arab world, have expressed concern at the continued movement of people into the Territories [i.e. Israeli settlement activity]. It needs to be understood that such movement will not encourage Palestinians to pursue negotiations towards a dialogue with Israel — indeed it can only add fuel to the Intifada, now in its third year.

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86. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs), ‘Response to a Question without notice: Middle East’, Senate, *Debates*, 15 December 1988, p. 4278, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansards%2F1988-12-15%2F0052%22>
87. On the Madrid summit and the ‘Madrid process’ see E Bentsur, ‘The way to peace emerged at Madrid: a decade since the 1991 Madrid Conference’, *Jerusalem Letter/Viewpoints*, no. 472, Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, 15 February 2002, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://jcpa.org/jl/vp472.htm>; and M Feuerwerger, M Indyk and R Satloff, *Peacewatch anthology: analysis of the Arab-Israeli peace process from the Madrid Peace Conference to the eve of President Clinton’s Inauguration*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington DC, 1993. The speeches by the main participants at the Conference are available on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Archive/Peace%20Process/1991/The%20Madrid%20Conference%20Speeches%20-%20October-November>
88. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Middle East peace process*, media release, 3 August 1991, available in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *The Monthly Record*, vol. 62, no. 8, August 1991, pp. 495–496.

The Australian Government urges Israel and all other parties to refrain from actions which might jeopardise the prospects for peace in the region. Australia, together with most other countries, has expressed the view that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, and in East Jerusalem, are contrary to international law and are a significant obstacle to peace.<sup>89</sup>

In May 1992, in Keating's first major speech on the Middle East as Prime Minister, he told the Zionist Federation of Australia:

You can be sure that the Australian Government values the Federation's [Zionist Federation of Australia's] opinion — just as you can be sure of our belief in the Federation's cause, Israel.

...

As a non-participant, our broad policy objective is to encourage all parties to recognise that long-term peace and stability in the region can only be achieved through negotiated settlement.

...

Australia is not only committed to Israel's security, but also recognises the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

Foreign Minister Evans visited Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Iran in March 1992, and made the following observations on his return:

[I] found in the Middle East a political landscape very different to that which confronted Bill Hayden [the previous Minister for Foreign Affairs] in 1988, and indeed very different to that which had prevailed since the foundation of Israel.

...

[T]wo other factors making it harder every day for moderate Palestinians and other Arabs to hold the line against their extremist brethren. Those factors were the continuation unabated of the massive program of settlement building in the Occupied Territories, and the continuation unabated in those territories of occupation policies perceived as highly oppressive in human rights terms.

...

[F]ully half the land in the West Bank and one-third of the land in Gaza has in fact been set aside for Israeli use.

...

Australia's policy is now, as it was before the Gulf Crisis, to be prepared to engage in dialogue with the PLO at both ministerial and official levels if that dialogue seems likely to be productive.

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89. P Keating (Treasurer and Acting Prime Minister), *Address to the Zionist Federation of Australia*, media release, 20 May 1990.



We regard the PLO as a non-monolithic body in which, for the moment at least, the moderates are ascendant.<sup>90</sup>

On 13 September 1993 the Israeli Government and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.<sup>91</sup> The Declaration of Principles would come to be known as the 'Oslo Accords' as they were negotiated secretly, and outside the established Madrid process, between PLO and Israeli interlocutors in Oslo, Norway, between December 1992 and August 1993. The main components of the Accords were:

- mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO—meaning that the PLO recognised Israel's right to exist and renounced 'terrorism' and the Government of Israel recognised the PLO as 'the representative of the Palestinian people'<sup>92</sup>
- the establishment of an elected Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority
- negotiations leading to permanent settlement of the conflict based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973)
- initial Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian 'self rule' in most of the Gaza Strip and in the Jericho area of the West Bank<sup>93</sup> and
- the provision of a framework in which 'permanent status negotiations' were to occur. Negotiations on these issues—namely 'Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and co-operation with other neighbours, and other issues of common interest'—were to commence by 1996.<sup>94</sup>

On 10 September 1993, just prior to the official Declaration of Principles signing ceremony in Washington, Foreign Minister Evans stated that the Australian Government 'unreservedly welcomed' the agreement, 'formally ending nearly 30 years of unbroken hostility'.<sup>95</sup> The next month

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90. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Australia, Israel and the Middle East: speech to public forum sponsored by the Zionist Federation of Australia*, media release, 12 July 1992.

91. Government of Israel and the PLO, *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*, 13 September 1993, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Declaration+of+Principles.htm>

92. These statements of mutual recognition were contained in letters exchanged between PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 9 September 1993; see *Israel–PLO recognition (September 9, 1993)*, Jewish Virtual Library website, no date, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/recogn.html>

93. This aspect of the Declaration of Principles was implemented through the May 1994 'Agreement on Gaza and Jericho area'; see *Agreement on Gaza Strip and Jericho Area*, 4 May 1994, available on the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Agreement%20on%20Gaza%20Strip%20and%20Jericho%20Area>

94. *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*, op. cit.

95. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Mutual recognition agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation*, media release, 10 September 1993.



Australia announced that it was providing \$15 million over three years ‘for a range of development activities’ relating to the peace process.<sup>96</sup>

In December 1993 Foreign Minister Evans was sent a petition, signed by a number of Federal and State Labor Party parliamentarians (including by, it seems, by then Minister for Trade Peter Cook), which urged the Australian Government to ‘take immediate steps towards recognition of the State of Palestine’.<sup>97</sup> Evans dismissed the idea of recognition and also detailed Australia’s post-Oslo Accords policy towards the conflict and Palestinian statehood:

Senator Evans said that Australia warmly welcomed the Declaration of Principles ... between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, and remained a strong supporter of the Middle East peace process.

Senator Evans said that the Declaration of Principles, which provided for the gradual transfer of authority in the occupied territories to the Palestinian people, made clear that negotiations on the permanent status of the occupied territories would commence ... in April 1996.

Senator Evans said that the creation of an independent state of Palestine may well be the outcome of the peace process, but it would be quite premature to anticipate that outcome at this stage.<sup>98</sup>

On 28 September 1995 the *Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip* (which would come to be known as ‘Oslo II’) was signed in Washington.<sup>99</sup> The main aspects of the Oslo II agreement were:

- the withdrawal of Israeli Defence Force personnel from the main cities in the West Bank and Gaza
- the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council and the President of the PA
- the creation of areas A, B and C in the occupied territories: in Area A the PA would have jurisdiction over security and administrative matters, in Area B the Palestinians would have administration jurisdiction but Israeli military forces would remain, and Area C would be under full Israeli control
- the establishment of a Palestinian police force and
- the commencement of final status negotiations no later than 4 May 1996.<sup>100</sup>

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96. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs) and G Bilney (Minister for Development Cooperation), *Australia pledges \$15 million assistance package to support Middle East peace*, media release, 2 October 1993, viewed 14 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/1650059/upload\\_binary/1650059.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/1650059%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/1650059/upload_binary/1650059.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/1650059%22)

97. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Australian policy on recognition of a State of Palestine*, media release, 23 December 1993.

98. Ibid.

99. State of Israel and PLO, *The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip*, 28 September 1995, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/interim.html>

Just before the signing of Oslo II, but after the agreement had been initialled, Foreign Minister Evans was asked in Parliament about the 'prospects for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East', to which he replied:

[Oslo II] is an historic step forward for the peace process. It does pave the way for the holding of Palestinian elections and, indeed, the commencement on schedule next year, hopefully, of the final status talks, including on matters as sensitive as the future of Jerusalem.

...

There is no acceptable, practicable alternative to a negotiated settlement in the Middle East. A return to the past of failures to meet and confront these issues across the negotiating table would be a disaster for everyone concerned. We certainly hope that both parties will seek practical responses to Israel's security concerns that do not entail economic hardship to Palestinians.<sup>101</sup>

The final major event in the Arab-Israeli conflict that occurred under the Keating Government was the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzakh Rabin on 4 November 1995. On 13 November Foreign Minister Evans moved a motion in the Senate expressing 'deep regret' over the assassination and urging Israel 'to respond to this outrage by strengthening their commitment to the peace process'. In his speech on the motion, Evans discussed Australia's practical contribution to the peace process:

Australia has long supported the right of Israel to a secure and peaceful existence among its Arab neighbours in the context of a comprehensive regional settlement. We have added to that position of principle a practical commitment of applying, to the extent that we reasonably can, Australian resources, skills and support in what is still a very vulnerable peace process. We have been part of the multilateral arms control and regional security track of the peace process and in that capacity have played an active role in trying to establish regional security centres in the Middle East to help promote confidence building measures and to enhance conflict prevention arrangements.

We have also been involved in another track of the multilateral process to do with water resources, in which capacity we have hosted discussions in Australia among Arab, Israeli and Australian water experts, seeking to address what obviously remains one of the most critical long-term threats to the political stability of the region as well as one of the most important elements of its future economic prosperity: water resources.

Another small contribution of ours to peace building is through a program of exchanges involving Israeli, Arab and Australian artists. These are modest contributions, and I do not pretend otherwise; but we do want to make a contribution to the Middle East peace process.

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100. Ibid.

101. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs), 'Response to a Question without notice: Middle East peace process', [Questioner: Senator T Wheelwright], Senate, *Debates*, 25 September 1995, p. 1341, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansards%2F1995-09-25%2F0024%22>

We do want to make a contribution to Yitzhak Rabin's vision of a Middle East blessed by peace and prosperity, and we will continue to do what we can in support of peace in the Middle East.<sup>102</sup>

The condolence motion had broad support in the Senate, and a similar motion was passed in the House of Representatives on 23 November 1995.<sup>103</sup>

## The Howard Government (1996–2007)

When the Howard Government came to power in March 1996 it had already espoused a slightly different Middle East policy compared with its Labor predecessor. The Coalition's February 1996 election document, *A confident Australia: Coalition foreign affairs policy*, states:

The Middle East is a region pivotal to global security and economic prosperity. The Peace Process is critical to the long term security and harmony of the region and as such the Coalition supports it unequivocally.

In the area of security, although Australia can make some contribution to the Middle East peace process, our capacity to influence events within the region is limited and should not be overstated.

The Coalition has a special respect for the democratic achievements of Israel and recognises the great security problems facing that country[.]

...

The principles which will govern Australia's involvement under a Coalition Government in any Middle East peace process are firstly a commitment to ensuring that Israel has a guarantee of security, and secondly, recognition of the need for a just resolution of the question of autonomy for the Palestinian people.<sup>104</sup>

Regarding the Palestinians, this document makes no reference to 'self-determination' or 'the possibility of their own independent state', which had been a long-term policy position of the previous Australian (Labor) Government. Prime Minister John Howard clarified this aspect of Coalition policy in June 1996:

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102. G Evans (Minister for Foreign Affairs), 'Condolences: Yitzhak Rabin', Senate, *Debates*, 13 November 1995, p. 2734, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansards%2F1995-11-13%2F0032%22>

103. P Keating (Prime Minister), 'Condolence motion: Mr Yizhak Rabin', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 23 November 1995, p. 3681, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22chamber%2Fhansard%2F1995-11-23%2F0032%22>

104. Liberal Party of Australia and National Party of Australia, *A confident Australia: Coalition foreign affairs policy*, Liberal Party of Australia and National Party of Australia, Sydney, 10 February 1996, pp. 24–25, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1279319/upload\\_binary/1279319.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22liberal-national%20coalition%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/partypol/1279319/upload_binary/1279319.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22liberal-national%20coalition%22)

A just outcome for the Palestinian people, in which their legitimate and political rights are respected, is clearly also necessary for the achievement of an enduring peace.

As Rabin said not long before his death, the nature and final shape of the Palestinian entity will be defined in the permanent status negotiations. The settlement is for the Israelis and Palestinians to decide.<sup>105</sup>

This seeming shift in language was however tempered by other statements. For example, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer stated in the same month that ‘the Government ... supports—as did the previous Australian Government—the right of the Palestinians to self-determination’.<sup>106</sup> By late 2000, Foreign Minister Downer was saying that the Government ‘recognise[s] the legitimate right and aspiration of the Palestinian people to a homeland’.<sup>107</sup> By April 2002, the Howard Government was stating that a Palestinian ‘state’ would be part of any peace settlement. Previous public statements had emphasised that a Palestinian state or homeland **could be** part of a resolution to the conflict, but this was the first time the Australian Government said explicitly that this **should** happen. In April 2002, in the context of increasing violence in Israel and the Palestinian territories, Foreign Minister Downer told reporters:

Look, at the end of the day neither of the parties of the conflict there have any choice but to sit down and negotiate a peace agreement. They can’t conduct war forever and war is going ultimately to be counterproductive and we hope not only that it will be possible for the Palestinian authority and the Israelis to conclude a ceasefire before too long but also that it might be possible to sit down at a diplomatic conference and begin proper negotiations about a long term peace settlement. Because in the end you’re going to end up with two states, you’re going to end up with Israel and you’re going to end up with the Palestinian state.<sup>108</sup>

Similarly, in September 2002, Prime Minister Howard told reporters:

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105. J Howard (Prime Minister), *Inaugural Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Oration: 37th Biennial Conference of the Zionist Federation of Australia*, media release, 1 June 1996, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FA3X20%22>
106. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Address to the 37th Biennial Conference of the Zionist Federation of Australia/ United Israel Appeal: Australia, Israel and the Middle East—time to rebuild*, transcript, media release, 2 June 1996, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/1996/zionistf.html>
107. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Australia and the Middle East peace process: Annual assembly of the State Zionist Council of Victoria*, media release, 5 December 2000, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/98336/upload\\_binary/983361.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/98336%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/98336/upload_binary/983361.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/98336%22)
108. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Doorstop interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer in East Perth*, transcript, media release, 17 April 2002, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/RKC66/upload\\_binary/rkc663.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/RKC66%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/RKC66/upload_binary/rkc663.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/RKC66%22)

[T]he long-term solution in the Middle East is a home and a state for the Palestinians, as well as the protection of the right of Israel to exist behind secure and internationally recognised boundaries.<sup>109</sup>

Another aspect of the Howard Government's Middle East policy was a desire to strengthen bilateral relations with Israel. As Foreign Minister Downer said in June 1996:

Australia's relations with Israel will be a high priority for this government.

...

The Australian Government intends to build a relationship between Australia and Israel which is based on solid assessments of national interest, shared concerns, common objectives and mutual benefit.

...

Australia and Israel should cooperate more actively on multilateral issues. For example, Australia has intensified its dialogue with Israel on arms control and United Nations reform.

Unlike its predecessor, this Government is prepared to give tangible form to its commitment to strengthening bilateral dealings with Israel in the multilateral area.<sup>110</sup>

Downer also suggested that the Australian Government's focus on bilateral relations with Israel was also about 'moving our bilateral relations with Israel away from a perspective dominated by the peace process'.<sup>111</sup>

The first four years of the Howard Government saw significant progress in the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The Hebron Protocol, which facilitated the withdrawal of Israeli forces from 80 per cent of the West Bank city of Hebron, was agreed to by Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in January 1997, and was 'welcomed' by the Australian Government.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, Foreign Minister Downer 'warmly welcomed' the signing of the Wye River Memorandum of October 1998, in which Israel agreed to withdraw its military personnel from an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank and the Palestinians agreed, among other things, to 'take all measures necessary' to combat terrorism and terrorist organisations. As well, the Sharm al-Sheikh Memorandum of September 1999 outlined a framework for the implementation of previous

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109. J Howard (Prime Minister), *National Press Club: transcript of address [and] Questions and answers*, transcript, media release, 11 September 2002, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/TWD76/upload\\_binary/twd766.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/TWD76%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/TWD76/upload_binary/twd766.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/TWD76%22)

110. Downer, *Address to the 37th Biennial Conference of the Zionist Federation of Australia*, op. cit.

111. Ibid.

112. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Hebron Agreement welcomed*, media release, 15 January 1997, viewed 12 January 2010, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25168/20020910-0000/www.dfat.gov.au/media/releases/foreign/1997/fa2\\_97.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25168/20020910-0000/www.dfat.gov.au/media/releases/foreign/1997/fa2_97.html); for the text of the Hebron Protocol see State of Israel and Palestinian Authority (PA), *Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron*, signed in Jerusalem, 17 January 1997, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/hebprot.html>

agreements and a timetable for final status negotiations.<sup>113</sup> The Australian Government also expressed its 'concern' on a number of occasions in the late 1990s regarding the delays in beginning final status negotiations.<sup>114</sup>

Prime Minister Howard and Foreign Minister Downer also sought throughout their years in office to demonstrate their commitment to Israel and Israel's security. For example, in an address to the United Israel Appeal on the 50th Anniversary of Israel's independence, Prime Minister Howard outlined his opinion on the origins of the Middle East conflict:

By any measure, it has been a remarkable fifty years for Israel—years of struggle, years of war, and the terrible price of senseless terrorism.

It has also been fifty years of democracy, of fighting for principle, of survival in the face of constant attacks on Israel's very right to exist.

...

The 1948 [independence] declaration offered to Israel's neighbours 'peace and good neighbourliness' and committed Israel to doing her share in a common effort for the advancement of the Middle East.

That offer, and Israel's right to exist, were rejected—setting the scene for the tumultuous struggles which have threatened Israel, destabilised the region and provided the conditions for terrorism to flourish.<sup>115</sup>

Likewise, in a speech to the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce in August 1999, Prime Minister Howard stated that he was 'very proud of the fact that I've led a government which ... deported itself in a way that is profoundly sympathetic and understanding towards the Government and the people of Israel'.<sup>116</sup>

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113. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Middle East Interim Agreement*, media release, 24 October 1998, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/1998/fa132\\_98.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/1998/fa132_98.html) and A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Middle East Peace Process: signing of the revised Wye River Agreement*, media release, 6 September 1999, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25168/20020910-0000/www.dfat.gov.au/media/releases/foreign/1999/fa098\\_99.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25168/20020910-0000/www.dfat.gov.au/media/releases/foreign/1999/fa098_99.html); State of Israel and PA, *The Wye River Memorandum*, signed at Wye River, Maryland, 23 October 1998, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://www.state.gov/www/regions/nea/981023\\_interim\\_agmt.html](http://www.state.gov/www/regions/nea/981023_interim_agmt.html); and State of Israel and PA, *The Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum on Implementation Timeline of Outstanding Commitments of Agreements Signed and the Resumption of Permanent Status Negotiations*, signed at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, 4 September 1999, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/sharm0999.html>
114. See for example Downer, *Hebron Agreement welcomed*, op. cit.; and Downer, *Middle East Interim Agreement*, op. cit.
115. Howard (Prime Minister), *Address to the United Israel Appeal dinner: 50th Anniversary of Israel*, transcript, media release, 10 March 1998, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FS0105%22>
116. J Howard (Prime Minister), *Transcript of the address Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce*, transcript, media release, 18 August 1999, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/parchive/2001/Z2001-Feb-1/www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/1999/address1808.htm>

Prime Minister Howard was also the first Australian Prime Minister to meet with PLO Chairman and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. Howard had previously opposed the idea, sponsored by his Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer in 1997, of having Arafat visit Australia in an official capacity.<sup>117</sup> However, by May 2000 Howard thought that the peace process was at 'an entirely different stage', and while on a bilateral visit to Israel he visited Arafat in Gaza and held a joint press conference. During the press conference Howard stated that he had invited Arafat to visit Australia at a 'mutually convenient time' and that he had found in his discussions with Arafat a 'very strong personal commitment' to the peace process.<sup>118</sup> The next day, while talking to journalists at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Howard was asked about his impression of Chairman Arafat. Howard responded by stating that he thought Arafat was 'a man who's gone through an enormous amount. A man who is searching for peace'.<sup>119</sup>

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process collapsed after the failed final status negotiations at the Camp David Summit in July 2000, and the violence that resulted led to a long-term hiatus in serious peace negotiations.<sup>120</sup> The Howard Government, for its part, blamed Arafat for the collapse of the Camp David Summit. In a speech to the Australia/Israel Jewish Affairs Council and United Israel Appeal in November 2000, Prime Minister Howard said:

I don't believe any Prime Minister of Israel could have offered more than did Ehud Barak at Camp David ... he went 90% of the way in relation to territory and he was agreeable to joint suzerainty in relation to Jerusalem. It was an offer that should have been accepted and it is tragic in the extreme that it has not been accepted. But we must all of us who remain staunch and reliable friends and allies of Israel, we must all of us continue in our different ways to encourage diplomatically and otherwise the resumed move towards peace. In the end I believe there is a deep desire, certainly in the hearts of the people of Israel and I believe also in many Palestinian hearts for peace.<sup>121</sup>

Prime Minister Howard would later express stronger criticism of Arafat, stating:

[I]t remains a terrible tragedy that Yassar Arafat didn't show the courage and leadership needed back at the time of Camp David when Ehud Barak, the former Israeli Prime Minister, promised

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117. M Grattan, 'Arafat is a man of peace, says Howard', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 2000, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressclp%2FQ6E16%22>

118. J Howard (Prime Minister), *Joint press conference with Mr Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation*, media release, 1 May 2000, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/parchive/2001/Z2001-Feb-1/www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/2000/PLO0105.htm>

119. J Howard (Prime Minister), *Press conference at King David Hotel, Jerusalem*, transcript, media release, 2 May 2000, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/parchive/2001/Z2001-Feb-1/www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/2000/jerusalem0205.htm>

120. For differing interpretations of the reasons for the collapse of the peace process see D Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2004, chapters 24 and 25, pp. 650–758; and C Swisher, *The truth about Camp David: the untold story about the collapse of the Middle East peace process*, Nation Books, New York, 2004, chapter 13 and Epilogue, pp. 250–405.

121. J Howard (Prime Minister), *Address at Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council and United Israel Appeal*, transcript, media release, 22 November 2000, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/parchive/2001/Z2001-Feb-1/www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/2000/speech551.htm>



the Palestinians 90 per cent of what they'd asked for and right at the end Arafat couldn't summon the leadership to seal that deal.<sup>122</sup>

In late September 2000, rioting broke out first in Jerusalem and then throughout the West Bank, Gaza; these events came to be known as the second Intifada. The next six years witnessed a serious deterioration in Israel-Palestinian relations, with a large number of Palestinian suicide bombings, the reoccupation of parts of the Palestinian territories which had been under Palestinian security control, thousands of deaths, and an effective suspension of the peace process.<sup>123</sup> Throughout the second Intifada the Howard Government:

- consistently condemned Palestinian suicide bombings<sup>124</sup>
- regularly called for 'restraint' on both sides<sup>125</sup> and

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122. J Howard (Prime Minister), *Interview with David Speers, Sky News*, transcript, media release, 6 November 2003, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/tvprog/7MUA6/upload\\_binary/7mua61.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/tvprog/7MUA6%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/tvprog/7MUA6/upload_binary/7mua61.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/tvprog/7MUA6%22)
123. For the various arguments on the outbreak and progression of the Intifada see: J Pressman, 'The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict', *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Fall 2003, pp. 114–141, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/JCS/Fall03/pressman.pdf>; M Yaalon, 'Lessons from the Palestinian "war" against Israel', *Policy Focus no. 64*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 2007, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocus64.pdf>; MK Esposito, 'Resource file: the al-Aqsa Intifada: military operations, suicide attacks, assassinations, and losses in the first four years', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2, Winter 2005, pp. 85–122; 'What caused the current wave of Palestinian terrorism', Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, November 2003, website viewed 6 June 2012, [http://web.archive.org/web/20110514035427/http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000\\_2009/2003/11/Israel-the+Conflict+and+Peace+Answers+to+Frequent+2003.htm#cause](http://web.archive.org/web/20110514035427/http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2003/11/Israel-the+Conflict+and+Peace+Answers+to+Frequent+2003.htm#cause); JF Miskel, 'The Palestinian Intifada: and effective strategy?' *World Policy Journal*, Winter 2004–05, pp. 48–56; and J Slater, 'What went wrong? The collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process', *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 116, no.2, 2001, pp. 171–199.
124. See for example A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Israeli-Palestinian violence*, media release, 28 March 2002, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2002/fa042\\_02.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2002/fa042_02.html); A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Megiddo suicide bombing*, media release, 6 June 2002, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2002/fa088\\_02.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2002/fa088_02.html); A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Suicide bombing in Jerusalem*, media release, 20 August 2003, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2003/fa102\\_03.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2003/fa102_03.html); A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Jerusalem suicide bombing*, 30 January 2004, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2004/fa014\\_04.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2004/fa014_04.html); and A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Beersheba suicide bombings*, media release, 1 September 2004, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2004/fa132\\_04.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2004/fa132_04.html)
125. See for example A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Mitchell report into violence in the Middle East*, media release, 25 May 2001, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/QM546/upload\\_binary/qm5462.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/QM546%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/QM546/upload_binary/qm5462.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/QM546%22); and A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Middle East situation*, media release, 13 October 2000, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/NYM26/upload\\_binary/nym261.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/NYM26%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/NYM26/upload_binary/nym261.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/NYM26%22)



- supported US initiatives designed to restart the peace process—the most important of which was the ‘Road Map to Peace’.<sup>126</sup>

One aspect of the Government’s policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian dispute that was emphasised by Foreign Minister Downer and Prime Minister Howard was its position on UNGA Resolutions. As Foreign Minister Downer stated in November 2005:

Since my first days as Foreign Minister, I have been presented with UN resolution after resolution.

And I soon discovered that too many of these resolutions are aimed at condemning Israel.

You would think by looking at these resolutions that this small country — with a population roughly equivalent to that of New South Wales and a land mass one fortieth its size — is responsible for the worst human rights violations and much of the world's ills ...

[T]hese UNGA resolutions single Israel out for blame in the most inflammatory and biased of language.<sup>127</sup>

Likewise, in an interview with the *Middle East Quarterly* in September 2005, Downer accused the United Nations secretariat of anti-Israel bias:

Australia has expressed its concern about the high level of United Nations secretariat resources devoted to anti-Israel activity.... We will continue to oppose resolutions that do nothing to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.<sup>128</sup>

In December 2003 Australia was one of eight countries to vote against UNGA Resolution ES-10/14, which asked the International Court of Justice to provide an advisory opinion on whether the ‘separation barrier’ being constructed by Israel in the West Bank was in breach of international law.<sup>129</sup> Explaining Australia’s position, Foreign Minister Downer said:

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126. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Release of the Road Map to Peace*, media release, 1 May 2003, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/4E796/upload\\_binary/4e7963.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/4E796%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/4E796/upload_binary/4e7963.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/4E796%22); on the Road Map for Peace see *The Road Map: full text*, 30 April 2003, available on the BBC website, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/2989783.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2989783.stm); and S Otterman, *Middle East: The Road Map to Peace*, Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, 7 February 2005, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east/middle-east-road-map-peace/p7738>
127. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Speech to the Annual General Meeting of the United Israel Appeal of New South Wales: The Australia-Israel relationship over recent times: How it has evolved under the Howard Government*, transcript, media release, 30 November 2005, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2005/051130\\_united\\_israel\\_appeal.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2005/051130_united_israel_appeal.html)
128. J Kerin, ‘Downer blasts UN for “bias” on Israel’, *Australian*, 8 September 2005, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressclp/74FH6/upload\\_binary/74fh66.pdf;fileType%3Dapplication%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressclp/74FH6/upload_binary/74fh66.pdf;fileType%3Dapplication%2Fpdf)
129. The other countries to vote against the Resolution were Ethiopia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, and the US. Note that 74 countries abstained from voting on this particular Resolution.; UNGA, *General Assembly Resolution ES 10-14: Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the*

We voted against the idea of the General Assembly seeking an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of Israel's security barrier because we thought it was neither appropriate nor helpful to the peace process.

The Australian Government was concerned that the use of the ICJ advisory opinion mechanism would distract Israel and Palestine from the urgent need to resume negotiations to achieve a viable and sustainable two-State solution.

In taking this stance, the Australian Government emphasised that it did not want to see the barrier become a de facto border, and urged the Israeli Government to consider moving the barrier closer to the 1967 line.<sup>130</sup>

The International Court of Justice ruled, in July 2004, that the separation barrier was indeed a violation of international law—a position Downer regretted.<sup>131</sup>

Australia also showed understanding of Israel's military actions during the July–August 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, with Prime Minister Howard stating in an interview:

Well, once you are attacked ... and if that attack is in the context of a 50-year rejection of your right to exist, which is the situation in relation to Iran – and bear in mind the link between Iran and Hezbollah; bear in mind the exhortations from the Iranian President that Israel should be destroyed and wiped off the map – you can understand the tenacity with which the Israelis have responded.<sup>132</sup>

Christopher Pyne, then Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, also publicly supported Israel's actions during the war in Lebanon, and strongly condemned those of Hezbollah:

People say in this current time that there is no point in pointing the finger at any one side and laying the blame on a particular group, or country. People say that there is fault on both sides, and both sides need to change.

I don't believe that that is true, and I don't believe that we should allow it to be said without being challenged and rebutted.

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*Occupied Palestinian Territories*, 8 December 2003, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/0163EF0C6E99036F85256EB3004E6EBF>

130. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Speech to the Annual General Meeting of the United Israel Appeal of New South Wales: The Australia-Israel relationship over recent times: How it has evolved under the Howard Government*, transcript, media release, 30 November 2005, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2005/051130\\_united\\_israel\\_appeal.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2005/051130_united_israel_appeal.html)
131. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Regret over ICJ opinion on Israel's security barrier*, media release, 5 July 2004, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2004/fa0104\\_04.html](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/25167/20081110-0000/www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2004/fa0104_04.html); for the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion see *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004, IC J Reports 2004, p. 68, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=4&k=5a&case=131&>
132. K O'Brien, 'Interview with John Howard: Howard says Israel must defend its "right to exist"', transcript, *7.30 Report*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 25 July 2006, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/s1696790.htm>

...

Israel is left with very few options but do [sic] defend itself and its people. This conflict began because Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers and killed eight more in northern Israel.

...

The other piece of moral relativity that we hear about, is that Israel is killing civilians. Israel doesn't target civilians. Israel targets military infrastructure, and those people who are firing weapons into northern Israel.

Hezbollah on the other hand – they do target civilians. That is their *modus operandi*. They are proud of the fact that less military personnel have been killed than civilians in the last ten days in Lebanon. They are proud of that fact. There are reports of Hezbollah terrorists firing at Israeli soldiers from behind civilians.

Hezbollah drive and park their rocket launchers, their anti aircraft machinery, alongside flats and accommodation in built up suburbs, in order to make it harder for Israel to take them out in a military sense. And it is a very clever strategy. For when civilians die, the world accuses Israel of a disproportionate response, and insists that there be a cease fire which would allow Hezbollah to regroup and reposition itself in southern Lebanon. It is a very clever strategy and it has usually worked.

It is a tragedy that Hezbollah would be such cowards, who would hold themselves out as military personnel. But most of the armies that I have studied in history march out and fight their opponents on the field of battle. They don't hide behind the skirts of women and school children in a desire to avoid the real battle with the enemy. And that is what Hezbollah does. Hezbollah are cowards.

They are not military personnel. They are terrorists and we should name them as such, and not treat them any differently.<sup>133</sup>

The last two years of the Howard Government coincided with the victory of Hamas in the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections, the international semi-boycott placed on the Palestinian Authority (PA), and the June 2007 'Battle of Gaza' which saw the breakup of the PA and Hamas rule in Gaza and Fatah-led rule in the West Bank.<sup>134</sup> The election of Hamas, according to

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133. C Pyne (Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing), *Federal Liberal MP Christopher Pyne's speech in Support of Israel*, 10 August 2006, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/AQKK6/upload\\_binary/aqkk65.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/AQKK6%22](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/AQKK6/upload_binary/aqkk65.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf#search=%22media/pressrel/AQKK6%22)

134. On the elections see AD Pina, 'Palestinian elections', *CRS Report for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, Washington DC, 9 February 2006, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33269.pdf>; and 'Palestinian PM to quit after poll', *BBC News*, 26 January 2006, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4649606.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4649606.stm). On the economic sanctions applied on the Palestinian Authority prior to the Battle of Gaza see E Pan, *Hamas and the shrinking PA budget*, Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, 21 April 2006, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/economics/hamas-shrinking-pa-budget/p10499>. On the Battle of Gaza see 'A pyrrhic victory', *The Guardian*, 16 June 2007, viewed 6 June 2012,

Foreign Minister Downer, restricted the opportunity for the Australian Government to provide official development assistance to the PA:

[As] a listed entity under the Charter of the United Nations Act 1945, it is illegal for Australians to provide assistance to Hamas. This will constrain any Australian support to the PA as long as Hamas retains its current charter.<sup>135</sup>

Following the Battle of Gaza, Foreign Minister Downer stated that he supported the formation of an 'emergency Government' in the West Bank, and that Australia would initially provide \$4 million to the 'Palestinian Authority'.<sup>136</sup> The issue of aid to the Palestinian Authority and the change that resulted from the formation of the emergency Government in the West Bank is discussed in another Parliamentary Library Background Note, *The Rudd and Gillard Governments and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: November 2007–May 2012*.<sup>137</sup>

## Conclusion

When summing up the Howard Government's publicly stated policy, it is important to note a couple of factors. This Government has been labelled 'pro-Israel' by supporters and critics alike, and Foreign Minister Downer said in February 2006 that the 'American government is probably the only government that has been as supportive of Israel as this government has been. We have been enormously supportive of Israel'.<sup>138</sup> The statements highlighted earlier in this Background Note show that there was indeed some policy shift during the Howard years—the Foreign Minister and Prime Minister seemed more likely to defend Israeli actions, changed some votes at the UNGA, and came out in support of Israel when the peace process collapsed in 2000. However, these changes are tempered by the fact that Prime Minister Howard was the first Australian Prime Minister to meet PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, and his was the first Australian Government to state that a 'viable, independent Palestinian state' was destined to be part of any final peace settlement.

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/jun/16/israel.comment>; and 'Hamas battles for control of Gaza', *BBC News*, 13 June 2007, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6748811.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6748811.stm).

135. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Challenges in the Middle East: speech to the United Israel Appeal: Melbourne*, media release, 5 April 2006, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2F8IAJ6%22>
136. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), *Australia supports formation of emergency Palestinian Government*, media release, 27 June 2007, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FNLHN6%22>
137. M Harris, *The Rudd and Gillard Governments and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, op. cit.
138. A Downer (Minister for Foreign Affairs), 'Speech: Censure motion', House of Representatives, *Debates*, 7 February 2006, pp. 25–27, viewed 6 June 2012, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/chamber/hansardr/2006-02-07/0037/hansard\\_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/chamber/hansardr/2006-02-07/0037/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf); for commentators referring to the Howard Government as pro-Israel see I Leiber, 'John Howard: champion for Israel', *Jerusalem Post*, 4 October 2007, viewed 6 June 2012, <http://www.jpost.com/LandedPages/PrintArticle.aspx?id=63935>; Rubenstein and Fleischer, 'A distant affinity', op. cit.

This demonstrates the evolution in Australian foreign policy towards the Middle East conflict—where a self-described ‘pro-Israel’ government comes to power, but continues a decades-old trend towards supporting Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza.

The difference between Governments in this policy area seems to be about the tone of the statements or the language used, rather than about overarching policy objectives. Certainly the various Australian Governments have spoken about the conflict differently and have been described as ‘pro-Israel, ‘even-handed’ or ‘pro-Soviet’ for doing so. Australian governments have consistently stated their support for Israel to exist within secure and internationally recognised borders, and since the 1970s, have inched closer to explicitly advocating for the creation of a Palestinian state as part of a final peace settlement, culminating in the Howard Government’s statement to that effect.

## Appendix: Australian Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers: 1947–December 2007

Table 1: Australian Prime Ministers: 1947–December 2007

Prime Ministers: 1947–December 2007	
<b>Ben Chifley</b>	July 1945–December 1949
<b>Robert Menzies</b>	December 1949–January 1966
<b>Harold Holt</b>	January 1966–December 1967
<b>John McEwen</b>	December 1967–January 1968
<b>John Gorton</b>	January 1968–March 1961
<b>William McMahon</b>	March 1971–December 1972
<b>Gough Whitlam</b>	December 1972–November 1975
<b>Malcolm Fraser</b>	November 1975–March 1983
<b>Bob Hawke</b>	March 1983–December 1991
<b>Paul Keating</b>	December 1991–March 1996
<b>John Howard</b>	March 1996–December 2007

Table 2: Australian Ministers for External/Foreign Affairs: 1947–December 2007

Foreign/External Ministers: 1947–December 2007	
<b>Herbert Vere Evatt</b>	October 1941–December 1949
<b>Percy Spender</b>	December 1949–April 1951
<b>Richard Casey</b>	April 1951–February 1960
<b>Robert Menzies</b>	February 1960–December 1961
<b>Garfield Barwick</b>	December 1961–April 1964
<b>Paul Hasluck</b>	April 1964–February 1969
<b>Gordon Freeth</b>	February 1969–November 1969
<b>William McMahon</b>	November 1969–March 1971
<b>Leslie Bury</b>	March 1971–August 1971
<b>Nigel Bowen</b>	August 1971–December 1972
<b>Gough Whitlam</b>	December 1971–November 1973
<b>Don Willesee</b>	November 1973–November 1975
<b>Andrew Peacock</b>	November 1975–November 1980
<b>Tony Street</b>	November 1980–March 1983
<b>Bill Hayden</b>	March 1983–September 1988
<b>Gareth Evans</b>	September 1988–March 1996
<b>Alexander Downer</b>	March 1996–December 2007

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