



News Release

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Ottawa – I am pleased to share with you a speech given by the Hon. Stéphane Dion in Montreal on the 59th Anniversary of the Founding of the State of Israel

I'm very happy to be here today, to celebrate the 59th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel – the embodiment of Jewish survival and self-determination.

It is impossible to forget that today's celebration comes soon after Yom HaShoa, Holocaust remembrance day. That is as it should be; because remembering the horror and celebrating the triumph go hand in hand.

I had the privilege to visit Israel in 1998, and the first thing I noticed, coming from Canada, was its size: a jet can cross the country, from top to bottom, in minutes. For a country so small, in an unstable region, the aspirations for peace and security are overwhelming. I, with all Canadians, would be much happier if those aspirations were realized.

Here in Canada, when the United Talmud Torah school is attacked in my riding of St. Laurent-Cartierville here in Montreal; or when the Jewish Community Centre in Irwin Cotler's riding is firebombed on the eve of Passover – it is an attack on the values of every Canadian.

By that same token, when Israel's right to exist is threatened, it is an attack on the values of every democracy. In this way, Israel's fight for existence is our fight; her struggle for peace and security is our struggle. The concept of "Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof" – justice, justice shall you pursue – resonates with us all.

That's why the Liberal policy on Israel and the Middle East is based on several core principles.

We will continue to proudly support, as a cornerstone of our foreign policy, the right of

Israel to exist in peace and security.

We will continue to call for a two-state solution, of an independent and democratic Palestine alongside an independent and democratic Israel.

We will continue to support the right of Israel, like any other state, to be free from threats or acts of force. When the current Iranian government threatens to “wipe Israel off the map,” denying the Holocaust as it incites a new one, the international community must hold it to account.

We will continue to condemn terrorism – from whatever source, for whatever purpose, in whatever form.

We will continue to support the push for democracy, human rights, good governance and the rule of law throughout the Middle East.

We will continue to push for fairness in the United Nations General Assembly, where one-sided resolutions serve neither peace nor the UN.

And finally, we will continue to combat racism, anti-Semitism, hatred and intolerance.

Supporting the right of Israel to exist in a secure and peaceful Middle East is an entrenched policy of my party. But it is not a partisan cause. It is a Canadian cause; it is the common cause of every democracy.

That’s why I am so proud to be here today, not just as a Liberal but as a Canadian, to celebrate Israel’s independence and Canada's partnership with her.

Thank you so much. Shalom.