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P.M. ADDRESS TO THE KNESSET

TRÈS HONORABLE STEPHEN HARPER: Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. Merci, Monsieur le Président. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prime Minister, leader of the opposition, Chief Justice, Mesdames et Messieurs les ministres et les députés, distingués invités, Mesdames et Messieurs, Shalom, and thank you for inviting me to visit this remarkable country and especially for the opportunity to address the Knesset. It truly is a great honour and I also thank you for the honour of the key to the Knesset.

So now I feel I can come and go whenever I choose.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Whenever you choose.

And if I may, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my wife, Laureen, and the entire Canadian delegation, let me just begin by thanking the government and people of Israel for the warmth of your hospitality. You have made us feel extremely welcome. You've made us feel immediately at home.

Ladies and gentlemen, Canada and Israel are the greatest of friends and the most natural of allies. And with your indulgence, I'd like to offer a

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reflection upon what makes the relationship between Canada and Israel special and important. Because the relationship between us is very strong.

L'amitié entre le Canada et Israël prend ses racines dans l'histoire, se nourrit de valeurs communes et se renforce volontairement au plus haut niveau du commerce et du gouvernement, ce qui est l'expression des fermes convictions.

This friendship between us is rooted in history, nourished by shared values, and it is intentionally reinforced at the highest levels of commerce and government as an outward expression as strongly held in our convictions.

There has for example been a free trade agreement in place between Canada and Israel for many, many years, an agreement that has already proven its worth. The elimination of tariffs on industrial products and some food stuffs has led to a doubling in the value of trade between our countries. But this only scratches the surface of the economic potential of this relationship. And I look forward to soon deepening and broadening our mutual trade and investment goals.

As well our military establishments share information and technology. This has also been to our mutual benefit. For example, during mission to Afghanistan the use of Israeli built reconnaissance equipment saved the lives of many Canadian soldiers. All such connections, and I can mention...

(applause)

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All such connections, and I could mention many more, science and technology, all build strong bridges between us.

Cependant pour bien comprendre la relation particulière entre Israël et le Canada, il faut regarder au-delà du commerce et des institutions. Les liens personnels tissés par l'amitié et la parenté.

However to truly understand the special relationship between Israel and Canada one must look beyond trade and institutions to the personal ties of friendship and kinship.

Jews have been present in Canada for more than 250 years. And generation after generation, by hard work and perseverance Jewish immigrants often starting with nothing have greatly prospered. Today there are nearly 350,000 Canadians who share with you their heritage and their faith.

They are proud Canadians but having met literally thousands of members of this community, I can tell you this: they are also immensely proud of what the people of Israel have accomplished here, of your courage in war, of your generosity in peace, and of the bloom that the desert has yielded under your stewardship.

Laureen and I share that pride. We share that pride and the understanding that what has been achieved here has occurred in the shadow of the horrors of the Holocaust.

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La compréhension du fait qu'il est juste d'appuyer Israël parce qu'après avoir connu la persécution durant plusieurs générations le peuple juif mérite d'avoir son propre pays et mérite de vivre en sécurité et en paix dans ce pays.

The understanding that it is right to support Israel because after generations of persecution the Jewish people deserve their own homeland and deserve to live safely and peacefully in that homeland.

(applause)

Now let me repeat that. Canada supports Israel fundamentally because it is right to do so. This...

(applause)

This by the way is a very Canada trait to do something for no reason other than it is right. Even when no immediate reward for or threat to ourselves is evident. On many occasions Canadians have gone even so far as to bleed and die to defend the freedoms of others in far off lands.

To be clear, we have also periodically made terrible mistakes, as in the refusal of our government in the 1930s to ease the plight of Jewish refugees. But as a country, at the great turning points of history Canada has consistently chosen often to our great cost to stand with others who oppose injustice and to confront the dark forces of the world.

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Il est donc dans la tradition canadienne de défendre ce qui est juste et fondé sur des principes, que ce soit non commode ou populaire. It is thus a Canadian tradition to stand for what is principled and just regardless of whether it is convenient or popular.

But I would argue, and as you know, Prime Minister, I have argued, that support today for the Jewish State of Israel is more than a moral imperative. It is also a matter of strategic importance, also a matter of our own long-term interests.

(applause)

Ladies and gentlemen, I said a moment ago that the special friendship between Canada and Israel is rooted in shared values.

En effet, Israël est le seul pays du Moyen-Orient à s'être ancré depuis longtemps dans les idéaux de liberté et de démocratie à des primautés de droit.

Indeed, Israel is the only country in the Middle East which has long anchored itself in the ideals of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. And these are not mere notions. They are the things that over time and against all odds have proven to be over and over again the only ground on which human rights, political stability, and economic prosperity may flourish.

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These values are not proprietary, they do not belong to one people or one nation. Nor are they a finite resource. On the contrary, the wider they are spread, the stronger they grow. Likewise, when they are threatened anywhere, they are threatened everywhere. And who threatens them?

Or more precisely what today threatens the societies that embrace such values and the progress they nurture? Those who scorn modernity, those who loathe the liberty of others, and those who hold the differences of peoples and cultures and religions in contempt. Those who often begin by hating the Jews but history shows us end up hating everyone who is not like them.

(applause)

Those forces which have threatened Israel, the State of Israel, every single day of its existence and which as 9/11 graphically showed us today, threaten all of us.

Où bien nous défendons nos valeurs et nos intérêts ici en Israël, nous défendons l'existence d'un état libre et démocratique et distinctement juif, ou bien nous amorçons un recul sur nos plans... sur le plan de nos valeurs et de nos intérêts dans le monde.

And so we either stand up for our values and our interests here in Israel, stand up for the existence of a free democratic and distinctively Jewish state, or the retreat of our values and our interests in the world will begin.

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(applause)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, just as we refuse to retreat from our values, so we must also uphold the duty to advance them. And our commitment as Canadians to what is right, fair and just is a universal one. It applies no less to the Palestinian people than it does to the people of Israel.

Autant nous soutenons sans réserve le droit d'Israël de se défendre, autant nous reconnaissons depuis longtemps un avenir juste et sûr pour le peuple palestinien.

Just as we unequivocally support Israel's right of self-defence, so too Canada has long supported a just and secure future for the Palestinian people.

And I believe we share with Israel a sincere hope that the Palestinian people and their leaders will choose a viable, democratic Palestinian state committed to living peacefully alongside the Jewish state of Israel.

As you, Prime Minister, have said when Palestinians make peace with Israel, Israel will not be the last country to welcome a Palestinian state as a new member of the United Nations. It will be the first.

Sadly, we have yet to reach that point but when that day comes, and come it must, I can tell you that Israel may be the first to welcome a sovereign Palestinian state but Canada will be right behind you.

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(applause)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, even support, firm support doesn't mean that allies and friends will agree on all issues all of the time, as you and I know, Prime Minister. No state is beyond the legitimate questioning or criticism. Indeed, Israel as a democratic state makes such criticism a part of your national life. But our support does mean at least three things.

First, Canada finds it deplorable that some in the international community still question the legitimacy of the existence of the State of Israel.

(applause)

Notre point de vue sur le droit à l'existence d'Israël en tant qu'état juif est absolu et non-négociable.

Our view that Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state is absolute and non-negotiable.

(applause)

Deuxièmement, le Canada est convaincu qu'Israël devait pouvoir exercer ses pleins droits d'état membre de l'ONU et profiter de sa souveraineté dans toute sa mesure.

Second, Canada believes that Israel should be able to exercise its full rights as a UN member state and to enjoy the full measure of its sovereignty.

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For this reason Canada has spoken on numerous occasions in support of Israel's engagement and equal treatment in multilateral fora. And in this regard, I should mention that we welcome Israel's induction this month into the Western Democratic Group of States at the United Nations.

(applause)

Troisièmement, nous nous refusons à critiquer Israël de façon isolée sur la scène internationale.

Third, we refuse to single out Israel for criticism on the international stage.

Now, friends, I understand that in the world of diplomacy with one solitary Jewish state and scores of others, it is all too easy to go along to get along and single out Israel. But such going along to get along is not a balanced approach, nor is it a sophisticated one. It is just quite simply and weak and wrong.

(applause)

Unfortunately, ladies and gentlemen, we live in a world where that kind of moral relativism today runs rampant. And in the garden of such moral relativism the seeds of a much more sinister notion can easily be planted. And so we have witnessed in recent years the mutation of the old disease of anti-Semitism and the emergence of a new strain.

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We all know about the old anti-Semitism. It was crude and ignorant and it led to the horrors of the death camps. Of course in many dark corners it is still with us.

But in much of the western world the old hatred has been translated into more sophisticated language for use in polite society. People who would never say they hate and blame the Jews for their own failings or the problems of the world instead declare their hatred of Israel and blame the only Jewish state for the problems of the Middle East.

As once Jewish businesses were boycotted, some civil society leaders today call for a boycott of Israel. On some campuses intellectualized arguments against Israeli policies thinly mask underlying realities such as the shunning of Israeli academics and the harassment of Jewish citizens.

Most disgracefully of all, some openly call Israel an Apartheid state. Now think about that statement. Think about the twisted logic and outright malice behind that. A state based on freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Founded so that Jews can flourish as Jews. And seek shelter from the shadow of the worst racist experiment in history, that is condemned and it is condemned in language, in the masked language of anti-racism.

Friends, that is nothing short of sickening!

(applause)

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Mais il s'agit du nouveau visage de l'antisémitisme, un antisémitisme qui vise le peuple juif en prétendant viser Israël.

But this is the face of the new anti-Semitism. It targets the Jewish people by targeting Israel and attempts to make the old bigotry acceptable to a new generation.

Now of course friends criticism of Israeli government policy is not in and of itself necessarily anti-Semitic. But what else can we call criticism that selectively condemns only the Jewish state and effectively denies its right to exist, to defend itself, while systematically ignoring or excusing the violence and oppression all around?

What else can we call it when Israel is routinely singled out, targeted at the United Nations and when Israel remains the only country to be subject to a permanent agenda item at the regular sessions of its human rights council?

Ladies and gentlemen, any assessment, any judgement of Israeli actions must start with this understanding.

Depuis 65 ans qu'existe comme nation l'état moderne d'Israël les Israéliens ont enduré d'innombrables attaques et calomnies et n'ont pas eu une seule journée de véritable pays.

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In the 65 years that modern Israel has been a nation Israelis have endured attacks and slanders beyond counting and have never known a day of true peace.

And we understand, we Canadians understand that Israelis live with this impossible calculus. If you act to defend yourselves, you will suffer widespread condemnation over and over again. But should you fail to act, you alone will suffer the consequence of your inaction.

And that consequence will be final, it will be your destruction.

La vérité est que le Canada et que beaucoup des forces hostiles dirigées contre Israël s'exercent aussi sur tous les pays occidentaux. Israël y fait face pour beaucoup des mêmes raisons que nous mais Israël y est confrontée de beaucoup plus près.

The truth that Canada understands is that many of the hostile forces Israel faces are faced by all western nations. Israel faces them for the same reasons, many of the same reasons we face them. You just happen to be a lot closer to them.

Of course no nation is perfect but neither Israel's existence nor its policies are responsible for the instability in the Middle East today. One must look beyond Israel's borders to find the causes of...

(applause)

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To find the causes of the relentless oppression, poverty and violence in much of the region. Of the heartbreaking suffering of Syrian refugees, of the sectarian violence and the fears of religious minorities, especially Christians, and of the current domestic turmoil in so many states.

So what are we to do? Most importantly we must deal with the world as we find it. The threats in this region are real, deeply rooted and deadly, and the forces of progress often anemically weak. For too many nations it is still easier to scapegoat Israel than to emulate your success. It is easier for them to foster resentment and hatred of Israel's democracy than it is to provide the same rights and freedoms to their own people.

Je suis convaincu qu'un état palestinien viendra et l'une des conditions qui va lui permettre de venir c'est lorsque les régimes qui financent le terrorisme se rendront compte que le chemin de la paix est celui de la conciliation et pas celui de la violence.

Thank you very much

I believe that a Palestinian state will come and one thing that will make it come is when the regimes that bankroll terrorism realize that it is ... that the path to peace is accommodation, not violence.

Which brings me to the government of Iran. Late last year the world announced a new approach to diplomacy with the government in Teheran.

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Canada has long held the view that every diplomatic measure should be taken to ensure that regime never obtains a nuclear weapon.

(applause)

We therefore appreciate the earnest efforts of the five permanent members of the Security Council in Germany. Canada will evaluate the success of this approach not on the merit of its words but on the implementation and verification of its promised actions.

Nous espérons vraiment qu'il soit possible d'obtenir que le gouvernement iranien renonce à s'engager sur la voie sans retour de la fabrication des armes nucléaires. Mais pour le moment le Canada maintient intégralement en vigueur les sanctions que nous avons imposées.

We truly hope that it is possible to walk the Iranian government back from taking the irreversible step of manufacturing nuclear weapons. But for now, Canada's own sanctions will remain fully in place.

(applause)

And should our hopes not be realized, should the present agreement prove ephemeral, Canada will be a strong voice in the world for renewed sanctions.

Now ladies and gentlemen, let me just conclude with this thought.

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Je crois que l'histoire d'Israël est une des plus belles, plus belles pour le monde entier.

I believe the story of Israel is a great example to the world. It is a story essentially of a people whose response to suffering has been to move beyond resentment and build a most extraordinary society. A vibrant democracy, a freedom loving country, with an independent rights affirming judiciary, an innovation world leading start-up nation.

You've taken the collective memory of death and persecution to build an optimistic, forward-looking society. One that so values life you will sometimes release 1,000 criminals and terrorists to save one of your own.

In the democratic family of nations Israel represents values which our government takes as articles of faith and principles to drive our own national life.

And therefore through fire and water, Canada will stand with you.

Friends, you've been...

(applause)

Thank you, friends. I know I should quit right there. You've been very generous with your time and attention. Laureen and I and I know the

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entire delegation thank you for your tremendous hospitality. Once again, thank you.

Merci. Thank you for having us and may peace be upon Israel.

(applause)

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