

Canada's Position on Egypt Breaks With Other Western Countries

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

Global Research, February 05, 2011

[Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#) 4 February 2011

Region: [Canada, Middle East & North Africa](#)

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Montreal, February 4th, 2011 - Lawrence Cannon, Canada's Foreign Affairs minister came out in support of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's plan for a "slow" transition to greater freedoms. Earlier in the week, Mubarak had enraged Egyptian protesters by grudgingly announcing that he would not run for re-election in September. After days in the streets, and sometimes bloody clashes with pro-Mubarak agitators, protesters were hoping for an immediate and complete change of regime in Egypt. Cannon's statement Thursday defined a significantly more cautious position as compared to that of the United States, and other Western countries.

Pundits suspected that Canada's current position is intended to emphasize Middle East stability, and peace with Israel, over rapid democratic reform. Cannon defended his position by asserting, "I think the question is what's next. A vacuum does not mean transition. The transition must be orderly." Last week, Israel's Ha'aretz newspaper reported that Israeli ambassadors had been asked to encourage countries to reduce criticism of Mubarak, presumably in an effort to prolong "stability" from Israel's perspective.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) believes that the government's position stifles the organic democratic yearnings of the Egyptian people. "It is unfortunate that Canada is advancing a position which prolongs a painful status quo for the Egyptian people, and which reflects no discernable principle," argued Thomas Woodley. "Egypt's democratic reform movement should not be discouraged because Israel and the West are more comfortable with the status quo," continued Woodley. CJPME points out that Canada and other Western countries have often argued that one of their regional objectives is the democratization of the Middle East. "The reluctance of Canada to pursue this objective when it really counts is disappointing," concluded Woodley.

The United States, the UK, Germany and France have taken more progressive stances than Canada in support of imminent democratic reform in Egypt. While each of these countries also stresses the need to maintain existing regional peace deals, each of them has been more adamant about the need for the Mubarak regime in Egypt to come to an end. Mubarak's government has a long-standing and infamous reputation as a government which obstructs civil and political expression, and which resorts to torture and violence to maintain its grip on power.

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