

# Canada's diplomatic disaster: Tehran is officially non grata in Ottawa

By [Eric Walberg](#)

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On 7 September, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird announced that Canada is suspending all diplomatic relations with Iran, expelling all Iranian diplomats, closing its embassy in Tehran, and authorizing Turkey to act on Canada's behalf for consular services there. Baird cited Iran's enmity with Israel, its support of Syria and terrorism. "Canada views the government of Iran as the most significant threat to global peace and security in the world today," Baird said at the Asia Pacific Economic Conference in Vladivostok, Russia.

Canada has not had a full ambassador in Iran since 2007. Relations between the two countries cooled after Iranian-Canadian free-lance photographer Zahra Kazemi died in Iran in 2003 under disputed circumstances, and went from bad to worse under the Conservative government in power in Ottawa since then.

While indeed Iran has been the nation most outspokenly critic of Israel, and is actively working to thwart the Western-backed insurgency in Syria, there is no evidence of its support for "terrorism". It is in fact the victim of terrorism on the part of Israel and the US, which boast about assassinating Iranian nuclear scientists and destroying Iranian computers with viruses made-to-order, among other officially-sponsored acts of subversion.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast suggested that the real reason for Harper's latest targeting of Iran was because of Iran's successful hosting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran in August. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says Tehran's hosting of the 16th NAM Summit was a "humiliating defeat" for the West.

Humiliation is indeed the operative word for Canada in particular. The past five years of Conservative rule in Canada under the fiercely pro-Israeli Prime Minister Stephen Harper have brought nothing but disgrace to Canada internationally, and this present move adds further humiliation.

As if scripted, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately commended Canada's decision. With good cause, as it looks suspiciously like a response to a direct Israeli request. Canadian foreign policy is now made in consultation with Israeli advisers under a public security cooperation "partnership" signed in 2008 by Canada and Israel to "protect their respective countries' population, assets and interests from common threats". Israel security agents now officially assist Canada's security services, the RCMP and CSIS, in profiling Canadians citizens who are Muslims and monitoring individuals and/or organisations in Canada involved in supporting the rights of Palestinians and other such nefarious activities.

The barring of British MP George Galloway from entering Canada in 2009 on a North

American tour was done as a result of this cooperation. Baird's claim that Iran supports terrorism is one that Israeli agents have been making in Ottawa under this partnership. Harper has publicly stated he is convinced that Iran is trying "beyond any doubt" to develop nuclear weapons, with 'evidence' supplied by these advisers, though it is unlikely that such claims convince anyone, but rather merely confirm public perception of his devotion to Israel.

"It's hard to find a country friendlier to Israel than Canada these days," chirped Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman on his official visit in 2010. He is right. Stephen Harper's Conservatives

- called Israel's 2006 invasion of Lebanon a "measured response" (Two Canadian UN peacekeepers were targeted and killed by Israeli in the invasion. Harper refused to protest, asking rhetorically in parliament what they were doing there in the first place.)

- refused to condemn the invasion of Gaza in December 2008 or the siege of Gaza (the only "Nay" at the UN Human Rights Council)

- refused to condemn the Israeli murder of nine members of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in May 2009

- opposed an attempted IAEA probe of Israel's nuclear facilities as part of an effort to create a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East

- cut off UN humanitarian aid to Gaza because it was going through the Hamas government there

- allow goods manufactured in occupied territories by illegal settlers to be labelled "Made in Israel" under the 1997 Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement 1997.

And as is the case in the Obama/Romney 'race' next door, there is no peep of protest from Canada's opposition liberals or socialists. Interim Liberal leader Bob Rae (whose wife Arlene Perly is past vice president of the Canadian Jewish Congress) met with Netanyahu on his official visit to Canada in February this year, and afterwards said the visit "gives all Canadians the chance to reflect on the deep friendship and strong ties between Israel and Canada".

In a bizarre non sequitur, the 'Liberal' leader added, "Iran's regime is a threat to the security of the region and the world. A nuclear armed Iran would mean the threat of even greater proliferation and instability in the region, is a direct flouting of international law, and obviously raises the deepest concerns in Israel for its security." Apparently a very much 'nuclear armed Israel' which daily threatens to bomb Iran does not raise his 'deepest concerns' for Iran's security.

After meeting with Israeli President Shimon Peres during *his* official visit to Canada this May, New Democrat leader Tom Mulcair, told the press, "My in-laws are Holocaust survivors. Their history is part of my daily life. That's why I am an ardent supporter of Israel in all circumstances." Mulcair's wife, Catherine Pinhas, was born in France to a Sephardic Jewish family from Turkey. Canadians for Peace and Justice in the Middle East and Independent Jewish Voices criticized Mulcair for accepting financial support from pro-Israel lobbyists.

So there will be little if any protest in parliament over Harper's unprovoked violation of diplomatic norms. In fact, rumor has it that this Canadian move is in preparation for an Israeli-US attack on Iran, though Baird demurred when asked about this as the motive for advising all Canadians to leave Iran immediately. However, the Harper government actually supports Israel's threats of a pre-emptive air strike against Iran as being within its rights.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Americas Peter Kent told the G8 in Toronto in 2010, "It's a matter of timing and it's a matter of how long we can wait without taking more serious pre-emptive action."

It appears Ottawa is ready and willing to join Israel in any attack. Harper has said, "An attack on Israel is an attack on Canada." There have already been US-conducted military 'exercises' involving Canadian ships off Iran's coast. 160 Canadian troops have died senselessly in Afghanistan over the past decade. Now Harper wants them to die for Israel in an invasion of Iran, orchestrated to look like it is in defense of Israel.

The NAM summit clearly ruffled some feathers. Iran is supported by the great majority of the world's people and governments, both as a courageous opponent to US and Israeli imperial intrigues, and as a model for countries that want to develop independent, peaceful nuclear power as an alternative to oil. The summit strongly supported Iran on both counts.

Iranian leadership of NAM during the next three years promises to be innovative and energetic. Even as Baird embarrassed Canadians with his undocumented accusations and violations of diplomatic norms, Mehmanparast called on the UN to fulfill its obligations towards Palestinians and respond forcefully to Israel's killing of six Palestinians in besieged Gaza last week. "As the rotating president of NAM, the Islamic Republic of Iran expects all international institutions affiliated to the United Nations to adhere to their responsibilities towards the Palestinian nation." The hysteria in Tel Aviv, Washington, and now Ottawa is not without cause.

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A version of this appeared at <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/09/260603/canadas-diplomatic-disaster/>

Eric Walberg is author of *Postmodern Imperialism: Geopolitics and the Great Games* <http://claritypress.com/Walberg.html>. You can reach him at <http://ericwalberg.com/>

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#### About the author:

Canadian Eric Walberg is known worldwide as a journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. A graduate of University of Toronto and Cambridge in economics, he has been writing on East-West relations since the 1980s. He has lived in both

the Soviet Union and Russia, and then Uzbekistan, as a UN adviser, writer, translator and lecturer. Presently a writer for the foremost Cairo newspaper, Al Ahram, he is also a regular contributor to Counterpunch, Dissident Voice, Global Research, Al-Jazeera and Turkish Weekly, and is a commentator on Voice of the Cape radio. Eric Walberg was a moderator and speaker at the Leaders for Change Summit in Istanbul in 2011.

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