**Canada boycotting events marking UN anti-racism conference over concerns about anti-Israel statements**

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The federal government says it will boycott events commemorating the 20th anniversary of a United Nations anti-racism conference in South Africa, citing the event's legacy of criticizing Israel.

A government spokesperson said Canada will join the U.S. and Australia, which have announced already that they won't be attending any of the commemorations scheduled for September.

"Canada remains committed, at home and abroad, including at the UN, to advancing human rights, inclusion and combatting antisemitism, islamophobia and systemic racism in all its forms. Canada opposes initiatives at the United Nations and in other multilateral forums that unfairly single out and target Israel for criticism," said the spokesperson.

"Canada is concerned that the Durban Process has and continues to be used to push for anti-Israel sentiment and as a forum for antisemitism. That is why we do not plan to attend or participate in events surrounding the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action."

The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, also known as Durban I after the South African city in which it was held, was disrupted by walkouts staged by national delegations offended by anti-Israel sentiments.

Canada sent a delegation but then-foreign minister John Manley stayed behind and voiced concerns about the draft communique and a push by some countries to argue that Israel was founded on racist principles.

In the end, Canada issued a statement of reservation on its final declaration, which included a statement of concern for the "plight of Palestinian people under foreign occupation." The document stopped short of directly condemning Israel.

The Conservative government subsequently boycotted similar events in 2009 and 2011; then-immigration minister Jason Kenney called the conferences a "hatefest."

Earlier this year, at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Canada signed an American statement which cited the Durban anniversary and called on countries to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. That led to speculation that the Liberal government would attend events in the fall.

B'nai Brith Canada and the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center (FSWC) issued a statement urging Canada to boycott the event again.

"This process has received longstanding support from antisemites who have hijacked the conference agenda to advance their venomous attitudes towards Israel and Jews," they wrote in a media statement.

"At a time of continuously rising antisemitism worldwide, Canada must continue its longstanding policy of boycotting Durban and rejecting all efforts to glorify or honour the outrageous events of Durban I."