

UN Peace Coordinator Declared “Persona No Grata” by Palestinians

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The PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) did not object to the appointment of new UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process Nikolay Mladenov, although he was described by Tayseer Khaled, a member of the PLO’s Executive Committee, as “persona non grata” — not trusted by the Palestinians and nor qualified for the job.

The 15-member UN Security Council unanimously voted to appoint Bulgarian Mladenov, 42, to succeed Holland’s Robert Serry. He would also be the representative of the UN secretary general to the International Quartet (the UN, US, EU and Russia), and personal representative of the UN chief to the PLO (the State of Palestine) and the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Although protocol allows the PLO the right to reject diplomatic representatives to the organisation, observers cannot understand why it accepted Mladenov. There is no convincing answer except a futile desire by the PLO to appease the UN and Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, at a time when PLO diplomatic efforts are focused on the UN and its agencies.

Mladenov not only failed in a similar mission as UN envoy to Iraq and resigned, he is someone who describes himself — and is described by the leaders of the Israeli occupation — as “a good friend of Israel”. As Bulgarian foreign minister, Mladenov suggested a “military alliance” between Bulgaria and Israel. He has often spoken about his bias towards “Israel’s right to exist” and its right “to defend itself” against Palestinians resisting Israeli occupation. He even admitted to being a Free Mason, and publicly advocated the US’s “constructive chaos” policies in the Arab world. In fact, his Jewish origins may be the least controversial aspect of him.

Meanwhile, the occupation state does not hesitate in ignoring the UN, its resolutions and representatives, disregarding and even assassinating them when necessary. Most recently, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman threatened to “expel” Mladenov’s predecessor Serry as “persona non grata”. Shortly before that, William Schabas, the head of the UN commission investigating the occupation’s recent war on the Gaza Strip, resigned after Israel refused to cooperate with him or allow him to enter the country.

After the UN tolerated the assassination of its first envoy to Palestine, Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte in 1948, at the hands of the Zionist Stern Gang led by Yitzhak Shamir (who later became prime minister of the occupation state), Israel was emboldened to adopt a permanent policy of disregarding the UN without deterrence so far.

In fact, over the past two years the occupation state has carried out a proxy war against the

UN. It has facilitated logistics, intelligence, firepower and medical assistance to allow the domination of militias fighting the Syrian regime on its side of the disengagement zone between the liberated and occupied Arab Syrian Golan. This compelled the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) to withdraw after its positions were attacked, dozens of its troops kidnapped and their weapons and equipment seized. Until today, the UN has not dared to rectify the situation, which resulted in the collapse of the UN-sponsored ceasefire and rules of engagement between Syria and Israel .

The Middle East is teeming with international peace envoys. The UN has one, so does the US , the EU, Russia , China and the Quartet. Their names change without anything on the ground in occupied Palestine changing. Except for expanding the occupation through settlements under the “peace” umbrella these envoys provide, without any hope that the international community they represent will be able to effect any real tangible change for the present and future of the Palestinian people on the ground.

So what can Mladenov do that his predecessors, the UN, the Quartet, the Arab League and others, couldn't?

Khaled believes the real test, to remove Palestinian doubts about Mladenov's role and mission, will be his position on the siege on Gaza and reconstruction there. However, Mladenov's track record does not indicate there is cause for optimism. Nor does the track record of “UN special coordinators” since the creation of the position in 1994 and the subsequent expansion of its role, as well as the extensive history of choosing UN and US envoys of Jewish origins or related in the first degree to Jews, such as Henry Kissinger, Madeleine Albright, John Kerry, Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk and Quartet representative Tony Blair.

On 6 February, the secretaries general of the UN and Arab League issued a joint statement expressing “deep concern” about conditions in Gaza . They urged Arab and international donors to honour their financial pledges made at the Cairo Conference last October “as soon as possible”, in order to rebuild the Gaza Strip and end the siege there. A few days ago, James Rowley, UN coordinator for humanitarian affairs in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, sent out an “urgent call” for these commitments to be fulfilled and an “immediate” lift of the siege on Gaza, because he is “very concerned another conflict will break out” if not.

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry described the statement by the Quartet on 8 February after it met in Munich , Germany , as “short of expectations” because it ignored “all the old-new and evolving truths” of the occupation state.

The Quartet also said it is “deeply concerned” about the “difficult conditions in Gaza where reconstruction needs to be quicker” and urged donors to “pay their financial pledges as soon as possible”. However, it linked this to encouraging both sides to “restart negotiations as soon as possible”.

Restarting talks “as soon as possible”, nonetheless, must await the outcome of general elections in Israel and the US . This means the Palestinian people must wait for another two years in the vain hope of reconstructing Gaza . It is obvious the occupation state is enjoying the luxury of time, making easy the occupation without resistance, as well as building settlements without deterrence.

Before handing over the reins to Mladenov, Serry described the failure of donors to pay their dues as “scandalous” and warned “if there is no progress in the coming months” — not two years — towards a two-state solution, “the reality will be a one state [solution]”: the single state of Israel . Former UN coordinator Terry Rod Larsen said in 2002, “the Palestinian patient is dying in the interim.”

Last December, Serry warned in his report to the Security Council that a war in Gaza “could re-ignite if conditions on the ground do not change” in the besieged Gaza Strip. It is clear that what Serry described as a “deadly diplomatic vacuum” coupled with the ongoing siege on rebuilding Gaza, are an explosive recipe in the besieged Gaza Strip, the outcome and ramifications of which are unpredictable.

The “scandal” of donors not paying their dues to rebuild Gaza , as Serry described it, under the pretext that the PLO government does not control the Gaza Strip, is a green light given by the international community to the occupation state to carry out another military assault on national resistance forces in Gaza .

The scandal of Arabs not paying their pledges at Arab summits to provide the PA with a financial “safety net” amounts to flagrant Arab pressure on the PLO to accept the Quartet’s proposal to restart talks with the occupation state “as soon as possible”.

This is Mladenov’s dual mission as the new UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process. PLO negotiators continue to wait for a breakthrough by “peace” envoys that are imposed on them and appointed by the US and the UN, although they represent the occupation state. Mladenov is the most recent. He will not change anything on the ground.

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