

Nikolay Mladenov: Israelis, Palestinians lose envoy of peace

REGIONAL AFFAIRS: For six years, Nikolay Mladenov was the behind-the-scenes official who kept the wheels of a two-state solution moving

By Tovah Lazaroff / Jan. 14, 2021

United Nations envoy Nikolay Mladenov, a diplomatic pillar on which the uneasy calm that has characterized the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the last six years has rested, quietly left for his home country of Bulgaria at the end of last month.

[...]

The Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University dubbed his form of diplomacy the “Mladenov approach.”

Nowhere was that felt more than in Israel’s conflict with Hamas in Gaza, which had thrice broken out into war – in the winter of 2008-2009, in 2012 and in the summer of 2014.

During his six years in office, Gaza crises erupted, rockets flew and the IDF struck Hamas targets. But each time, just as Israel was on the brink of war, effective behind-the-scenes diplomacy by his office restored an uneasy calm.

This included the eventual neutralization of the Hamas-led Great March of Return, which began in 2018 and sparked weekly and at times daily violent riots on Israel’s border and included the launching of incendiary balloons against southern Israel.

[...]

Former US ambassador **Dan Shapiro** said, “He did something that others who have held that position have found difficult to do, which is to win the confidence and trust of all the relevant players.” This included, Shapiro said, “the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority, the Arab states, the American and European leaders and Hamas.”

Shapiro added that “because he had that trust and was seen as a straight shooter,” he could “call any party out for an action that needed to be addressed or changed.”

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