Danon to ‘Post’: UN Quietly Admires Israel, but Publicly Bashes It

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Two months after taking office as [ambassador to the UN](http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Netanyahu-appoints-Danny-Danon-as-Israels-envoy-to-the-UN-412135), former minister of science, technology and space Danny Danon seems to have found his bearings.

“I have been in the position for two months but it feels like two years,” he told The Jerusalem Post, sitting on the leather couch of his office in the Israeli Consulate in New York, located on a block of Second Avenue renamed “Yitzhak Rabin Way.”

When asked about his first impressions on the job, Danon said there is “a public UN and a quiet UN.”

“During the day, I have many meetings with ambassadors and officials and quietly you see that there is a lot of appreciation, I would even say admiration for Israel,” he explained.

However, he said, publicly, the UN exhibits a strong anti-Israel bias.

“There are many countries whose sole mission at the UN is to bash Israel,” he said.

“We are fighting against hundreds of people who wake up in the morning and think: What can we do to bash Israel at the UN?” Danon added that he found the Jewish state to always be at the center of discussions and that most reports coming out of the international body, regardless of the issue they relate to, contain a section about Israel.

“It’s very hard living in New York, which is a semi-Jewish city, and walking to the UN,” he said. “In New York, you feel the support of Jews and non- Jews alike, but when you walk into the UN it’s a different ballgame.”

Although he doesn’t believe the UN’s support will come overnight, Danon thinks it is important to look at the “moral quality” of those voting with Israel rather than the number of countries doing so.

“When you look at the UN the way it was built 70 years ago, it was with good intentions, but the strong democracies are not in charge in the UN and there is a majority of small countries, most of them are not democratic, who have the control.”

Since the beginning of his term in the international body, Danon has engaged in what he calls a blame game with his Palestinian counterpart, Riyad Mansour, at a time when Palestinian stabbing attacks and shootings reached a peak in Israel.

“He blamed Israel and I blamed him for the incitement, and he blamed us for ‘harvesting’ the terrorists’ bodies, then I blamed him for blood libel,” he detailed. “The blaming game will continue, but at the same time we have to create and generate activity that will show other sides of Israel.”

Showing “other sides of Israel” is part of Danon’s diplomatic plan at the United Nations.

He believes Israel needs to engage both in defense and offense.

“In terms of defense, I believe in zero tolerance,” he said. “When someone is lying, we will call it, we will chase it, we will fight it.

“In terms of the offense, we want to be active at the UN,” he explained.

Danon’s team at the Israeli mission has organized several events in recent weeks touching upon topics ranging from water technology to Jewish refugees from Arab lands and the commemoration of Kristallnacht.

“Every time we generate activities, people look at what we’re doing. It shows that we are a strong player in the UN,” he said.

This month, Danon is the chairman of the Western European and Others Group at the world body, and plans to use this position to illustrate Israel’s engagement at the UN.

“It’s a marathon. It looks like a boxing ring sometimes, but it’s more of a marathon because there is no knockout here. You have to keep up,” he told the Post.

As the conflict with the Palestinians has been put on center stage both at the General Assembly and especially at the Security Council, which held several sessions on the issue in recent weeks, Danon called on Israel’s allies and “those who want to get involved” to stop supporting Palestinians in these forums.

“The more easy victories they will have in the UN, the harder it will be to promote the negotiations,” he said. “For example, they had a celebration about raising their flag here. So what? It’s not helping the lives of the Palestinians and I think it’s actually creating the opposite [result].”

When asked about the argument that Israeli settlements are what blocks the advance toward peace negotiations, Danon answered that he just “can’t accept it.”

“I don’t think that the fact that you have a Jewish community in Judea and Samaria is the reason for the conflict, and the situation in Gaza is the best example for that,” he said.

“We uprooted Jewish families and we haven’t received a new peaceful neighbor. The very presence of Jews in the Land of Israel is not accepted since 1948 by many countries in the UN, by the Palestinians.

“Settlements are being used against Israel. I don’t think that it’s a main cause. I think our enemies will find other explanations to fight against us,” he added.

Danon also addressed last month’s decision by the European Union to allow the labeling of products made in the West Bank to signify that they were not made in Israel, saying it is “unacceptable.”

In light of the German government’s decision to back the resolution after Israel sought its help in convincing EU member states to reject it, Danon said he supports the position of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“I think his argument is very valid: We expect from countries who work with us and with whom the bilateral relationship is very good, to have the same kind of relationship [with Israel] also within international organizations like the UN or the EU,” the ambassador said.

“It is unacceptable that you have a very good relationship with Israel, but when it comes to an international organization you don’t care and you support the group that you belong to. That’s something that we will work hard to change.

“Some members in the EU will work with Israel privately and quietly, but when it comes to an international organization, including the UN, they won’t be on our side,” he said. “They know who is to blame here and maybe they have to pay a price for doing so, but when you have evil against good forces, you have to choose the good forces.”

Danon told the Post he believes that by the end his term at the United Nations, “the way Israel is seen will be different.

“We will not convince our enemies. The enemies will ignore the reality and they will be full of hatred,” he said. “But I think we need to convince many countries in the middle and move them from the position where they are to being fair and looking at the facts. It is not easy but I think it is possible.”