Israel's U.N. Ambassador: West Bank Settlement Criticism Shows 'Disconnection' to Facts

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<http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/08/30/Israels-UN-ambassador-says-West-Bank-settlement-criticism-shows-complete-disconnection-to-facts/2711472566230/?spt=sec&or=tn>

Israel's U.N. ambassador was critical Tuesday of a United Nations official who called Israeli West Bank settlements an obstacle to peace.

After Nickolay Mladenov, the U.N.'s Middle East envoy, referred to "Israeli settlement expansion" as [eroding the possibility](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/08/29/Israel-pushing-into-West-Bank-ignoring-pleas-from-US-UN-EU-Russia/5151472499034/?spt=sec&or=tn) of a two-state solution with Palestine, Danny Damon, Israel's U.N. ambassador, called the remarks a "complete disconnection from the facts on the ground."

"Israel will continue to build in its eternal capital of Jerusalem, just as the nations of the world will continue to build in their capitals without asking the permission of the United Nations. The U.N. should concentrate on the main obstacle to a solution in the region, which is the Palestinian refusal to condemn terrorism and return to the negotiating table," Damon said. He called Mladenov's [assertions baseless.](http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.739339)

Israel has built thousands of homes for Jews in the West Bank, and construction has expanded in the past two months. The United States, Russia, the United Nations and the European Union, known as the Quartet, have called for a halt to construction of Jewish housing on Palestinian land. The Quartet, formed in 2002, has also urged an end to Palestinian violence.

In 1979, the U.N. Security Council declared Israeli settlements in occupied territory illegal. Settlements have grown in East Jerusalem and across the West Bank, an indication Israel has no plans to cede the territory to a future Palestinian state.

The office of Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](http://www.upi.com/topic/Binyamin_Netanyahu/) also [rejected Mladenov's comments](http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/217111), saying Monday, "The remarks of the U.N. envoy to the Security Council today distort history and international law and only distance peace. Jews have lived in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria for thousands of years and their presence there is not an obstacle to peace. The obstacle to peace is the attempt to incessantly deny the relationship of Jews to their historical land and the stubborn refusal to acknowledge that they are not foreigners there... The Palestinian demand for ethnic cleansing of Jews in its future state is horrifying, and the U.N. should be condemning it instead of adopting it."