

UN Secretary-General: Washington's emissary at Tehran summit

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Iranian plans to use this week's Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran to counter US machinations have been punctured by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi. They functioned, in effect, as nothing more than emissaries for Washington and its allies at the gathering.

The US and Israel had publicly urged Ban to boycott the NAM summit, so as to reinforce Iran's diplomatic isolation. But that would have nakedly exposed his role as a tool for the major imperialist powers and snubbed a significant grouping of 120 UN members that includes India, South Africa and Indonesia.

Instead, Ban used his attendance in Tehran to criticise the Iranian regime over "human rights," nuclear programs and opposition to the Zionist state of Israel, and to urge it to distance itself from its ally Syria. These issues were canvassed by Ban in press conferences after meeting with Iranian leaders on Wednesday, then further emphasised in his address to the NAM summit yesterday.

Standing next to Iranian parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani on Wednesday, Ban told a news conference: "We have discussed how the United Nations can work together with Iran to improve the human rights situation in Iran. We have our serious concerns on the human rights abuses and violations in this country."

This selective criticism of Iran over "human rights" is in line with the stance taken by the Obama administration, which backed the so-called Green movement of opposition parties in a bid to oust President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2009. Ban's

comments reek of hypocrisy given his silence on the gross abuses of democratic rights by the US, including detention without trial, torture and assassination under the bogus banner of the "war on terror." Nor did Ban raise "serious concerns" about the human rights abuses of US allies attending the NAM summit, such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

The UN Secretary-General declared that Iran's nuclear programs were a "top concern" of the "international community"—that is, the US and its allies—and urged Tehran's "full cooperation" with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). UN spokesman Martin Nesirky said that in his talks with Iran's leaders, Ban had expressed frustration that "little tangible progress" had been made in international talks on the nuclear issue.

Nesirky said: "These have been very serious meetings and extremely detailed meetings. And of course both sides listened to each other." He added, however, that Ban had "conveyed extremely clearly and in no uncertain terms what the expectations of the international community are on all these questions."

Both the UN and the IAEA have functioned as instruments for the Obama administration to ratchet up the pressure on Iran, with unsubstantiated claims that Tehran is seeking to build nuclear weapons. Iran has consistently denied such plans. Nevertheless, the US and its allies, especially Israel, have repeatedly threatened to attack Iran and have made obvious preparations to do so.

Ban's response to the threat of another unprovoked and illegal US-led war in the Middle East has been

decidedly muted. Without naming Israel or the US, he urged “all parties” to “stop provocative and inflammatory threats,” warning that “a war of words can quickly spiral into a war of violence.”

During his meeting with Ban, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reportedly called on him to take action over Israel’s nuclear weapons, describing them as “a big danger to the region.” The remark again underscores the hypocrisy not only of Ban, but of the US, which, while threatening war against Iran, turns a blind eye to the nuclear arsenals of its ally Israel.

Addressing the summit yesterday, Ban launched a public attack on his Iranian hosts, declaring: “I strongly reject threats by any member states to destroy another, or outrageous attempts to deny historical facts such as the Holocaust, claiming that another state, Israel, does not have the right to exist, or describing it in racist terms.”

Ban was referring to remarks by Iranian President Ahmadinejad and other Iranian leaders, who have not only criticised the Zionist regime in Israel, but lined up with anti-Semitic racists and extreme right-wing Holocaust deniers. Such posturing has been cynically seized upon by the US and Israel as another pretext for war against Iran. Ban was able to exploit the issue to undermine support for Tehran at the NAM summit.

Ban also used his visit to press Iran to loosen its support for the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad. He described Tehran as a major player, able to mediate regional conflicts such as the Syrian civil war.

Iran’s own proposal to form a group that includes itself, Egypt and Venezuela, plus Iraq and Lebanon, to establish a ceasefire and a mechanism for Syrian national reconciliation is opposed by the US, its allies and anti-Assad proxies inside Syria. US State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland urged Ban to press Iran over Syria, declaring that it had to break with the Assad regime.

It was, however, Egyptian President Mursi who most bluntly delivered Washington’s message on Syria at the NAM summit. He denounced Syria’s “oppressive

regime” and called on NAM to intervene, declaring: “The bloodshed in Syria is our responsibility on all our shoulders and we have to know that the bloodshed cannot stop without effective interference from all of us.” Syria’s foreign minister, Walid al-Moualem, walked out during the speech.

While nominally opposing foreign military intervention in Syria, Mursi has collaborated closely with Turkey and the autocratic Saudi Arabian regime, which are openly arming and assisting the various Sunni Islamist and Al Qaeda-linked militias fighting to oust the Assad government. Egypt has put forward its own proposal to include Iran in a Syrian contact group, with Turkey and Saudi Arabia, as a thinly-disguised mechanism for engineering Assad’s removal.

Mursi’s speech was in line with the Obama administration’s push for regime change in Damascus. Not surprisingly, US State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell welcomed the comments, saying they were “very clear and very strong,” particularly as they were made in Tehran “to some people who need to hear it there.”

Mursi’s speech was a useful complement to Ban’s performance in Tehran, which only underscored that the UN—to use Lenin’s phrase—is a “thieves’ kitchen” and its functionaries nothing but the pliable instruments of the imperialist powers.



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