

The Implications of Biden Appointing Palestinian-American Muslim Maher Bitar to Key Intelligence Post

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Maybe this will all work out. Maybe alarm over the appointment of Maher Bitar will turn out to have been unnecessary. But as of now, the appointment of anti-Israel BDS activist Maher Bitar, a Palestinian-American, to be the senior director of intelligence programs at the National Security Council, promises to be deeply disturbing. A previous Jihad Watch examination of his appointment is [Israel Hayom](#), January 25, 2021.

Maher Bitar will be ideally situated in his new and important post to learn, for example, of American collaboration with Israel on moves to stop Iran's nuclear program. Why should we

assume he would not try to limit that collaboration, or to alert Iran about these moves, or might try to influence policy by focusing on international criticism of Israel's "settlement building," in an attempt to manufacture an unnecessary crisis between the allies, and making that crisis into a reason for America to threaten to cut back on military aid to Israel unless it were to stop enlarging or building settlements? Without knowing Maher Bitar, a Palestinian and a Muslim, shouldn't we assume that he identifies with his own people, and while his outward demeanor may suggest a lack of bias and *parti-pris*, he may be a dab hand at assuming a sober mien of objectivity while being a master of deception? "War is deceit," said Muhammad.

Bitar served under President Obama, the most anti-Israel President in history, whose want of sympathy for the Jewish state, and hostility to Prime Minister Netanyahu, were palpable. It's reasonable to assume that Bitar, in his post as director for Israeli and Palestinian affairs in the National Security Council, faithfully followed – and shared–the anti-Israel animus of Barack Obama. He worked under a series of anti-Israel Obama appointees, including Samantha Power when she was U.N. ambassador and National Security Advisor Susan Rice. Dennis Ross, a longtime Middle East peace-processing diplomat, has described Rice's "combative" tone toward Israel – call it bullying – that unnecessarily worsened American-Israeli relations.

After Trump won in 2016, Bitar moved to a new position, working for Rep. Adam Schiff as a staff lawyer on the House Intelligence Committee; he took part in the first impeachment of President Trump. One wonders if Maher Bitar deliberately sought to work for a Jewish member of Congress as a way to reassure critics – he is playing a long game, and is politically ambitious – that there was not an antisemitic bone in his body. "If Adam Schiff supports him, why should we worry?"

...He earned his master's degree at Oxford University, writing his dissertation on forced migration at the school's Refugee Studies Center. He has worked with the UN agency for Palestinian refugees in Jerusalem.

Let me guess what Palestinian-American Maher Bitar wrote about in his dissertation. Could it have been about the Arabs who left Mandatory Palestine and Israel between 1947-1949, mainly because they were urged to leave by Arab leaders who insisted they should get out of the way of the invading Arab armies, so as not to be hurt in the ensuing battles, and then after the Arab victory, they could return home once the Jews had been either killed or expelled? Might Maher Bitar have left that part out about about Arabs being urged to leave by other Arabs, and considered those who left as the victims of "forced migration," the very subject of his dissertation? Doesn't that seem plausible?

Maher Bitar worked in Jerusalem for UNRWA, an organization riddled with scandal for years. In 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres accused UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl, and other agency officials, of engaging in "sexual misconduct, nepotism, retaliation, discrimination and other abuses of authority, for personal gain, to suppress legitimate dissent, and to otherwise achieve their personal objectives." Krahenbuhl had created a fake job as his "assistant" for his mistress, providing her with a very large salary, and reimbursement for expenses, so that the two of them could travel around the world together in business class and stay in luxury hotels, carrying on their affair at the expense of UNRWA's unwitting donors.

UNRWA's greatest scandal, however, is not about sex and money. The most scandalous and morally intolerable part of its operation is its inculcation of murderous hatred toward Jews, a hatred with which its schoolbooks are filled. So are its children's television programs, where sweet-faced children

sing songs about murdering Jews; they accompany their songs by miming stabbing motions with their tiny daggers.

This is UNRWA, an organization that Maher Bitar apparently found no fault with, chose to work for, and never subsequently denounced for the murderous antisemitism it fostered.

Since 2017, Maher served as general counsel for Democratic members of the House Intelligence Committee. As Rep. Adam Schiff's top legal adviser, he was deeply involved in the first impeachment of then-US President Donald Trump.

As senior director for intelligence programs, Bitar will receive sensitive information from intelligence agencies and coordinate covert operations between the intelligence communities and the White House. The office of the senior director also houses the server that stores the most sensitive classified information.

Speaking to Politico, Schiff called Bitar "a superb choice," saying, "I can't think of anyone more suited to the role."

No one "more suited" to be in charge of all the communications between the White House and the various intelligence services? You can't think of anyone at all? How about curbing that enthusiasm, and saying – if you must, Adam Schiff – that his appointment "is a good choice" and leave it at that? No over-the-top stuff, please. I don't think Adam Schiff, in his desire to loyally support a former staff member, quite grasps what a serious intelligence worry Maher Bitar presents. He has a long record of working for those with anti-Israel attitudes – from UNRWA, to Samantha Power (when she was the U.N. ambassador) to Susan Rice, to President Barack Obama. He will route to the White House all the intelligence that comes in from various sources – satellite photo, drones, human agents – both our own and those of allies including, of course, Israel.

Even more enthusiastic that Schiff about Maher Bitar's

appointment was Robert Malley, who responded in a tweet: "Can't think of a better choice than Maher. The most professional, principled, dedicated public servant I've had the honor to work with, a wonderful colleague, and a dear friend."

Robert Malley has been in and out of the government for decades. He's the son of Simon Malley, an Egyptian Jewish Communist; Malley's mother worked for the Algerian FLN, the terrorist group that has ruled Algeria ever since 1962. Malley is well known for advocating an American rapprochement with Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood. Malley served as the Middle East director for Barack Obama's National Security Council. Before that, under Clinton, Malley took part in the Israeli-Palestinian talks that failed; Clinton said the talks ended because Arafat refused to negotiate; Malley was the only American official who blamed the Israelis for the failure, even though Ehud Barak was prepared to give up nearly 100% of the West Bank. Malley wrote a piece in the New York Review of Books exculpating Arafat and attacking the "unreasonable" Israelis for not giving Arafat absolutely everything he demanded.

Then in 2008, Malley stopped advising the Obama presidential campaign on foreign policy after reports emerged that he had met with leaders of Hamas. Yet here he is again, having just been appointed a special envoy to Iran. It hardly need be said that he is all for lifting sanctions on Iran right away, and for returning to the 2015 nuclear deal without demanding any modification of its content. The Iranians are delirious with joy that they will be dealing with Robert Malley. The Biden appointments of Malley, and of Maher Bitar, whom Malley enthusiastically praised as "the most professional, principled, dedicated public servant I've had the honor to work with, a wonderful colleague, and a dear friend," fill me with dread.

It's not hard to see that putting Bitar in charge of the flow

of intelligence into the White House ideally positions him to acquire a deep knowledge of what America's various intelligence agencies, as well as those of her countries, allies and enemies alike, are doing in their own intelligence operations. Would our closest ally, Israel, want intelligence it is sending about Iran to the White House, or about its own plans and objectives in dealing with Iran, including possible military action either alone, or with the United States, to be seen by Maher Bitar? If Israel has been in the habit, under the Trump administration, to keep Washington abreast of its security collaboration with Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., and Egypt, would it want to continue the practice if that information passes through the office of Maher Bitar?

If you were Yossi Cohen, the head of Mossad, would you feel confident that information you sent to President Biden would not be seen by Maher Bitar, a Palestinian-American whom what you have reason to believe has sympathies with Iran and with the PA, or still worse, with Hamas? Might Bitar not leak to the media scare stories about "Israeli attempts to stir up a U.S.-Iran conflict"? Or about how "the Mossad stymies Iran's peace overtures to the U.S."? Won't Bitar's appointment result in Israel and the Gulf Sunni states being more reluctant to share information with the American government at the very moment when America, Israel, and the Gulf Sunni states should – more than ever before – be coordinating their efforts to halt Iran's nuclear program and its regional aggression?

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