

Dear Governor Rankin,

We write to ask you to (i) reject the appointment of Mr. Leandro Rizzuto to the post of Consul General/Principal Officer at the United States ("US") Consulate in Bermuda; and (ii) declare the same individual a *persona non grata* in Bermuda. In further support, we attach a petition to reject Mr. Rizzuto's appointment that has garnered over 93,000 signatures.

We note that the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations explicitly allows for these actions, notably the following clauses:

Article 4

1. *The sending State must make certain that the agreement of the receiving State has been given for the person it proposes to accredit as head of the mission to that State.*
2. *The receiving State is not obliged to give reasons to the sending State for a refusal of agreement.*

Article 9

1. *The receiving State may at any time and without having to explain its decision, notify the sending State that the head of the mission or any member of the diplomatic staff of the mission is persona non grata or that any other member of the staff of the principal mission is not acceptable. In any such case, the sending State shall, as appropriate, either recall the person concerned or terminate his functions with the mission. A person may be declared non grata or not acceptable before arriving in the receiving State.*
2. *If the sending State refuses or fails within a reasonable period to carry out its obligations under paragraph 1 of this article, the receiving State may refuse to recognize the person concerned as a member of the mission.*

We note that the Republican-lead US Senate deemed Mr. Rizzuto to be unacceptable for a diplomatic post, refusing to approve his nomination as ambassador to Barbados after his controversial tweets promoting conspiracy theories about Senator Ted Cruz's wife and trashing Mitt Romney, Hillary Clinton, and others became public. In response to Mr. Rizzuto's nomination, a spokesman for Republican Senator Ben Sasse stated that "people who want to serve Americans as our diplomats and spokespeople abroad should know that words and truth matter, even during campaigns. Cynics and nuts are probably going to have a hard time securing Senate confirmation."

It is our position that Mr. Rizzuto remains unacceptable and unfit for a diplomatic post. If his own political party considers him unfit for a diplomatic post, we do not believe the receiving State should accept him. To quote Michael Camilleri of Inter-American Dialogue, "Mr. Rizzuto was deemed unqualified to lead a U.S. mission overseas by the Republican-held United States Senate. President Trump's decision to install him at the head of the consulate general in Bermuda betrays a lack of respect for the Senate, for Bermud[i]ans and the broader Caribbean community, and for the crucial work of American diplomats."

While no further reason needs to be given, we believe that it is important to note that Mr. Rizzuto is a political appointee rather than a career diplomat. Although Bermuda has had past political appointees in this role, we believe that this selection is a much greater risk in the current political climate. Mr. Rizzuto is an avid supporter and significant donor of Mr. Trump, the current President of the USA. Mr. Trump has actively aided and abetted the growth of white supremacy in the USA, as well as engaged in a violent

crackdown of civilians and overseen the use of violent repression of journalists covering this crackdown. In this context, we think it is highly inappropriate for a supporter of a white supremacist enabler and advocate of violent repression to be welcome in our island. He should rightly be considered a persona non grata, and his appointment, should the United Kingdom ("UK") Government accept it, will be seen by the majority of our population as a tacit endorsement of these views. In an island still dealing with an unresolved racial history, and with a majority non-White population, appointing such a person to this post is an insult to both Bermuda and the UK Government.

As such, we call upon the UK Government to reject this appointment by invoking the powers allowed under the Vienna Convention, as outlined above.

Furthermore, we ask that you – in consultation with the Premier and Opposition Leader – issue a statement on behalf of the people of Bermuda to:

- Express concern about the use of excessive force against protesters in the US by US security forces;
- Express concern about the use of force and other harassment of journalists covering these protests, and reaffirm the need for the US security forces to abide by international law in protecting the rights of journalists to operate without fear of violence or harassment;
- Express concern about the systematic racism exhibited by US security forces, especially as this has, and may continue, to affect Bermudians when in the US;
- Call for an international investigation of:
 - Excessive force by US security forces;
 - Systematic racism in the US;
 - Harassment of journalists in the US;
- Call for an immediate halt to the sale of riot gear (inclusive of tear gas and crowd control guns) from the UK to the US, consistent with UK law prohibiting the sale of such commodities to countries that use them for internal repression; and
- Express our displeasure at the proposed appointment of Mr. Rizzuto to the US Consulate in Bermuda.

We respectfully request a substantive response to the above by Monday, June 15, 2020.

Regards,

Social Justice Bermuda

Encl: petition