Wonder Woman Dropped as UN Envoy

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By Times of Israel Staff and AP

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The United Nations said Tuesday it has decided to end the use of the DC Comic’s heroine Wonder Woman in a campaign to promote empowerment for women and girls.

Although the UN did not give any specific reasons for the sudden decision to end the role, some 45,000 people have signed an online petition — started by UN staffers — asking UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to abandon using the fictional character for the campaign, Reuters reported.

The superheroine’s image was to have been used by the UN on social media platforms to promote women’s empowerment, including on gender-based violence and the fuller participation of women in public life (using the hashtag #WithWonderWoman). The push, hoping to reach young people, was backed by DC Entertainment and Warner Bros., which produce both comics and films featuring Wonder Woman.

UN spokesman Jeffrey Brez explained that campaigns using fictional characters usually only go on for a few months and as an example cited the use of “Angry Birds” from the popular online game as climate envoys for a single day.

He added that Wonder Woman would finish her role on Friday.

DC Entertainment, publisher of DC Comics, noted that despite the sudden turnaround it was pleased with the publicity Wonder Woman received from the short-lived campaign.

Courtney Simmons, from DC Entertainment, said, “Wonder Woman stands for peace, justice and equality, and for 75 years she has been a motivating force for many and will continue to be long after the conclusion of her UN Honorary Ambassadorship.”

Simmons added that the release in 2017 of a special edition Wonder Woman comic book on empowerment for women and girls, announced in October, would still go ahead.

In the petition protesters argued that “although the original creators may have intended Wonder Woman to represent a strong and independent “warrior” woman with a feminist message, the reality is that the character’s current iteration is that of a large breasted, white woman of impossible proportions.”

The protest also took issue with Wonder Woman’s skimpy outfit, arguing that the world might not embrace a scantily clad character in a thigh-baring body suit with an American flag motif and knee high boots.

On October 21 the UN celebrated Wonder Woman’s 75th birthday by naming the comic book character as its new Honorary Ambassador for the Empowerment of Woman and Girls, despite frustration from both inside and outside the world organization that the spot should go to a real — and less sexualized — woman.

A carefully choreographed ceremony was marred by some 50 UN staffers protesting by the visitors’ entrance to the UN, who then went inside the Economic and Social Council chamber and silently turned their back to the stage during the opening speech, some with their fists in the air.

The event brought together actress Lynda Carter, who played Wonder Woman in the 1970s TV series, and Israeli actress Gal Gadot, who has taken on the role in the forthcoming “Wonder Woman” film.

Honorary ambassadors — as opposed to goodwill ambassadors like Nicole Kidman and Anne Hathaway — are fictional characters. The UN previously tapped Winnie the Pooh to be an honorary Ambassador of Friendship in 1998, and Tinker Bell as the honorary Ambassador of Green in 2009.