International mayors denounce UNESCO for ignoring Jewish ties to Temple Mount

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By Tamara Zieve

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An international delegation of mayors presented a resolution to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday, decrying the recent UNESCO resolution that denies Jewish and Christian ties to the Temple Mount.

The resolution states that UNESCO must cease to repeatedly exacerbate tensions.

“In recent days, UNESCO joined the community of deniers by voting in a secret ballot that Jews and Christians have no connection to the Old City of Jerusalem, and referencing religious sites there by only their Arab name,” states the letter, signed by 20 of the visiting 21 mayors.

In Israel to attend the American Jewish Congress’ annual Mayors Conference, the mayors stated their resolve to “work to end politically inspired falsehood and distortion, and to speak truth about all relevant history.”

The delegation is led by AJCongress President and American Council for World Jewry Chairman Jack Rosen. The mayors in the delegation hail from cities across five continents, including Beverly Hills and Miami Beach (US), Lviv (Ukraine), San Miguelito (Panama), Homabay County (Kenya), Dar e Salam (Tanzania), George (South Africa) and Viseu (Portugal).

This is the 31st year AJCongress has held this event. Rosen explained that the idea behind the delegation is to bring to Israel potential future decision makers who can have an impact in their countries.

“We try to choose mayors who will have a political platform,” he told The Jerusalem Post, noting that two years ago Argentinean President Mauricio Macri was in the delegation, and the year before that Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

The organization strives to show the mayors a side of Israel they can’t read about in the news, “to see facts on the ground, so that they be a voice of reason concerning issues surrounding Israel,” Rosen says.

The AJCongress has been leading a science diplomacy initiative working with Israeli companies and political leaders to advance Israel’s case to the world through showcasing technology and innovation.

“It is not just about hard politics, but also about smart technologies, science and innovation,” Rosen said. “We are working with key figures in Israel such as MK Erel Margalit and Prime Minister Netanyahu to make this happen.”

John Mirisch, mayor of Beverly Hills, described the visit as a “wonderful way for mayors from around the world to understand not only the history of Israel, but the future of Israel and how important Israeli tech is within what we consider to be disruptive technologies of today. Not only is it a great place to do business, but a wonderful asset to the world in terms of the development of technologies.”

Melvin Naik, mayor of George, said, “I can take a lot from here. I would like to connect with Israelis and take some of the expertise back home.”