Sen. Cruz, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen Lead Bipartisan Letter to UNESCO Member States: Do Not Rewrite Jerusalem’s History

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Office of U.S. Senator Ted Cruz

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U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) today led a bipartisan, bicameral letter to members of the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) urging opposition to an item in UNESCO's provisional agenda, a resolution that would diminish the historic and verified Jewish and Christian ties to the Old City of Jerusalem in an effort to delegitimize Israel. Thirty-nine of Sen. Cruz’s and Rep. Ros-Lehtinen’s colleagues in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives joined them in sending the letter.

“I am proud to lead this bipartisan, bicameral effort with Rep. Ros-Lehtinen. The United Nations’ obsessive hostility towards Israel will be on display yet again this week as UNESCO considers another blatantly biased resolution that unjustly singles out our close ally Israel with false accusations and criticism, and attempts to erase the specific deep-rooted, historical connection of Jews and Christians to Jerusalem, Israel’s eternal capital,” said Sen. Cruz. “For thousands  of years, Jerusalm has played a defining, central role in the history and identity of the Jewish people. For Christians, Jerusalem is a seminal spiritual site. This resolution flies in the face of, among other things, science as recent archeological excavations, notably in the City of David, have revealed incontrovertible, physical evidence that reaffirms Jewish and Christian ties to the holy city of Jerusalem. Members of the UNESCO Executive Board should vote against this intentional campaign to deny these historical truths, rewrite the history of Jerusalem, and delegitimize Israel.”

“I’m proud to lead this initiative with Ted and be joined by so many of our colleagues in sending this bipartisan and bicameral letter to these member delegations of UNESCO’s Executive Board, urging them to do the right thing and oppose this shameful resolution which seeks to undermine Jewish and Christian ties to Jerusalem,” said Rep. Ros-Lehtinen. “The resolution’s ill intent is unmistakable: to deny the historical record of the Jewish peoples’ connections to their holiest city and to imply that Jerusalem is inconsequential to Jews and Christians, with the intent of laying the groundwork for additional UN efforts to delegitimize Israel and undermine its status as the capital of the Jewish State. Furthermore, this irresponsible and reprehensible resolution falsely lays the blame for the violence on Israel since last October while ignoring the acts of terror and violence that are being incited by the Palestinian Authority and Abu Mazen. UNESCO was created to build intercultural understanding yet, as is the case across the entire UN system, intolerance and intentionally corrosive behavior on the part of many of the organization's members has undermined its original mission and only further underscores the need for drastic reform throughout the entire UN system.”

Sen. Cruz and Rep. Ros-Lehtinen also sent a separate letter to Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and U.S. Ambassador Crystal Nix-Hines, U.S. Permanent Representative to UNESCO, urging them to use the full voice, vote, and influence of the United States to defeat the measure.

The full text of the letter is included below:

As the 200th session of the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) prepares to meet in the coming days in Paris, France, we write to urge your mission to oppose Item 25 of the provisional agenda under “Occupied Palestine” that diminishes the historic and verified Jewish and Christian ties to the Old City of Jerusalem.

As acknowledged by the draft text of Item 25, the Old City of Jerusalem is important to the three monotheistic religions. Numerous archaeological excavations have uncovered a myriad of antiquities that scientifically prove the historical connection of all three religions to Jerusalem, such as the discovery of the Pool of Siloam or the restoration of floor tiles of the Second Temple in the City of David. We celebrate the heritage and cultural ties of these religions to Jerusalem and the importance of Jerusalem to millions of people around the world.

Yet, this resolution seems to prioritize the Muslim heritage of the Old City, while diminishing the ties of either of the other religions. For example, the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, along with the Western Wall, where Jews from all over the world have come to pray, are described exclusively as Muslim holy sites and referred to only by their Muslim names. When the Western Wall is referenced, it is only with quotation marks, implying that the title is unofficial and not based on historic fact.

UNESCO’s mission is to build intercultural understanding through protection of heritage and support for cultural diversity. This unnecessarily divisive and selective resolution undermines the very purpose and integrity of UNESCO by seeking to rewrite Jerusalem's history, rejects Jerusalem's multi-cultural heritage, and undercuts Jerusalem's extraordinary diversity. Forged in the aftermath of World War II, UNESCO strives to establish peace on the basis of humanity’s moral and intellectual solidarity. Attempting to erase the Jewish and Christian connection to this sacred city will further damage the prospects of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. It is incumbent upon all Member States of the Executive Board to respect and protect the religious, cultural, and historical significance of Jerusalem as they would all other World Heritage sites and to uphold the values and ideals enshrined in UNESCO’s Constitution.

We therefore respectfully urge your mission to UNESCO to oppose Item 25 of the provisional agenda for the Executive Board's 200th session.

Sen. Ted Cruz, Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Sen. David Perdue (R-Ga.), and Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.)

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.), Rep. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio), Rep. David N. Cicilline (D-R.I.), Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.), Rep. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.), Rep. Ted Deutch (D-Fla.), Rep. Robert J. Dold (R-Ill.), Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.), Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), Rep. Lois Frankel (D-Fla.), Rep. Kay Granger (R-Texas), Rep. Alcee L. Hastings (D-Fla.), Rep. Steve Israel (D-N.Y.), Rep. Lynn Jenkins (R-Kan.), Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.), Rep. Leonard  Lance (R-N.J.), Rep. Sander M. Levin (D-Mich.), Rep. Nita M. Lowey (D-N.Y.), Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), Rep. Grace Meng (D-N.Y.), Rep. Jerrod Nadler (D-N.Y.), Rep. Scott Rigell (R-Va.), Peter J. Roskam (R-Ill.), Rep. Edward R. Royce (R-Calif.), Rep. Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.), Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), Rep. Albio Sires (D-N.J.), Rep. Christopher H. Smith (R-N.J.), Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Ohio), Rep. Juan Vargas (D-Calif.), Rep. Randy K. Weber (R-Texas), Rep. Ted Yoho (R-Fla.), and Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.).