Donald Trump is right to ditch Unesco

October 14, 2017

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The Spectator

<https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2017/10/donald-trump-is-right-to-ditch-unesco/>

Donald Trump and the United Nations don’t appear to have much in common. Trump is loud, angry, insular, lumpen and uncultured. The UN is caring, sharing, virtuous, and busy saving the world from war, famine and disease. But they do share something important: they are both worms in an apple. Trump is a statist hollowing out a conservative movement and a nativist who made it to the top of a nation of immigrants. The UN, founded on horror and hope after World War II, was supposed to uphold international norms and universal rights. It was an idealist’s dream. Yet that mission has been debased by a General Assembly packed with member states that practice few of the ideals it preaches, a Security Council which includes global destabiliser Russia, and institutions alternately corrupt and ideological.

So, Trump and the UN are, in fact, something of a perfect match: arrogant wreckers of principles and institutions they are sworn to defend, all the while demanding praise for their depredations. The President’s decision to [withdraw the United States from Unesco](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/12/us/politics/trump-unesco-withdrawal.html), the UN’s educational and cultural arm, is a lovers’ quarrel of sorts, for both seek the same thing. Trump wants to reduce America’s role in the world and Unesco thinks that role is a malign one.

The sound and fury is over the reason Trump has given: Unesco’s anti-Israel bias. It’s a fig leaf, of course, but somehow Trump at his most disingenuous has hit on a good point. The President is right to pull out of Unesco to punish its putrid little obsession with the Jewish state and he should consider a few more UN bodies for this treatment. Ronald Reagan first took America out of this racket in 1984 over its pro-Soviet bias and it was a mistake to return.

Unesco prompts a rewrite of Bob Conquest’s Second Law — any international organisation that isn’t explicitly committed to Western liberalism, American leadership, and support for the State of Israel will in time become a detractor of all three. Of course, Unesco is not so much a detractor of Israel as a schoolyard bully that regularly rounds on the Jewish state. In this function, it is a useful tool for Arab and Islamic despots who appreciate the value of Israel as a bogeyman to distract their populaces. But its real significance is as a global disseminator of prejudice against Israel and Jews.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Unesco is the cuddly, cultured, We-Are-the-World face of anti-Semitism. Tasked with promoting peace through culture, it strives the world over to protect and preserve heritage sites, cultural artefacts, and holy places. Everywhere, that is, apart from Israel. There Unesco engages in undisguised bigotry against the Jewish people and their history. In July, Unesco [voted to reclassify](https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2017/07/unesco-enacted-grim-piece-historical-revisionism-israel/) Ma’arat HaMachpelah, the Cave of the Patriarchs, a ‘Palestinian’ heritage site. The tomb, resting place of the patriarchs and matriarchs of Judaism, is sacred to Jews, second only to Temple Mount.

And even Temple Mount isn’t off-limits. Last year, Unesco [passed a resolution](https://www.timesofisrael.com/unesco-backs-resolution-ignoring-jewish-link-to-temple-mount/) asserting it was a Muslim site. Not Muslim as well as Jewish. Just Muslim. The hill in Jerusalem where Isaac was bound, where Jacob dreamed, and where the temples stood was not the Jewish Har HaBayit but the Muslim Haram al-Sharif. Unesco added for good measure that the Kotel, the Western Wall where Jews come to pray and rend their garments in mourning for the lost temple, was actually Buraq Plaza, the place where the Prophet Mohammed tethered his steed during the Isra and Mi’raj. So egregious were these actions that Unesco’s own director-general [voiced her dissent](https://www.timesofisrael.com/unesco-head-calls-temple-mount-holiest-place-in-judaism/) and Ban Ki-moon, then UN secretary-general, [issued a statement](https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4866955,00.html) pointedly referring to the Jewish connections.

The purpose of this cultural vandalism is to separate the Jewish people from their holy sites and their history, in doing so denying their shared identity and nationhood. Dejudaisation is part of the project to deny the Jewish connection to Eretz Yisrael, cast Jews as interlopers in their homeland, and undermine the rationale for the State of Israel. If Ma’arat HaMachpelah, Temple Mount and the Western Wall can be divested of their Jewish ties, so too can Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa.

These are not the only examples of Unesco’s animosity towards the Jews and their state. The NGO UN Watch [points out](https://www.unwatch.org/factsheet-unesco-israel/) that, between 2009 and 2014, Unesco passed 46 resolutions condemning Israel. In the same time period, there was one motion critical of Syria and none on Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Russia or anyone else for that matter.

Unesco is a den of prejudice and hypocrisy, two things Donald Trump has never before expressed squeamishness about. His decision to pull out of this corruption of the UN’s founding ideals may not have been motivated by lofty ideals but it is right nonetheless. And if the President wants to take on anti-Zionism, and cut the State Department’s budget at the same time, he shouldn’t stop at Unesco.