**ARAB STATES TO UNESCO: REJECT ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL OF JERUSALEM**

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​Arab states plan to contest Israeli sovereignty over all of Jerusalem at the upcoming UNESCO Executive Board meeting in Paris, according to a draft text obtained by Israeli officials.

The resolution, due for a vote on May 1, states: “any action taken by Israel, the Occupying Power, to impose its laws, jurisdiction, and administration on the City of Jerusalem, are illegal and therefore null and void and have no validity whatsoever.”

Past resolutions approved by UNESCO have refused to accept Israel’s annexation of east Jerusalem, including the Old City.

This text marks the first time that the Arab states have asked the UNESCO Executive Board to reject Israeli sovereignty over western Jerusalem.

It plunges the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural body even further into one of the most emotional and hotly contested areas of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the status of Jerusalem.

Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar and Sudan submitted the resolution on behalf of the Palestinians. It was drafted as US President Donald Trump is weighing the question of relocating the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to the western part of Jerusalem.

The international community recognizes that west Jerusalem is part of Israel, but countries have placed their embassies in Tel Aviv.

The resolution comes in the midst of a renewed US drive to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by bringing in regional players such as Egypt.

The May 1 text also reaffirms that the Jewish holy sites of the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, and Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem are “an integral part of Palestine.” Muslims consider both places to be holy to Islam and refer to them as the Ibrahimi Mosque and the Bilal bin Rabah Mosque.

Absent from the text is the controversial issue of [the Temple Mount.](http://www.jpost.com/Breaking-News/UNESCO-No-connection-between-Temple-Mount-and-Judaism-470050)

For the last two years, Arab states at UNESCO, backed by the Palestinians have attempted to reclassify the Jewish holy sites of the Western Wall and the Temple Mount solely by their Muslim names of the Buraq Wall and the al-Haram al-Sharif.

Israel was not able to prevent the passage of the resolutions, but its Ambassador to UNESCO Carmel Shama-Hacohen said that Western governments and Russia pressed the Palestinians to drop the matter.

In the new text on Jerusalem, there is no mention in any language of the two holy sites. Instead the resolution reaffirms “the importance of the Old City of Jerusalem and its walls for the three monotheistic religions.”

It does however, have a line asking for reaffirmation of past texts referencing the sites only by their Muslims names.

Shama-Hacohen said that the sudden absence of the Temple Mount issue from the written portions of the text marked a clear victory for Israel and for the Foreign Ministry and his office, which had worked hard on the issue.

It’s clear, Shama-Hacohen said, that the public support Israel has received from Trump and the US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley has suddenly made the impossible seem possible when dealing with a body with a long history of supporting anti-Israel resolutions.

In the next month, he said, “we plan to work around the clock to continue to explain our historical and contemporary truth.”