# Israel Seeks Secret Ballot on Hebron Inscription on World Heritage List

June 28, 2017

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Jerusalem Post

http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-seeks-secret-ballot-on-Hebron-inscription-on-World-Heritage-List-498225

Israel hopes to sway the World Heritage Committee to vote by secret ballot when it decides on July 7 whether to inscribe Hebron’s Old City and the Tomb of the Patriarchs on the List of World Heritage in Danger under the “State of Palestine.”

“There is no doubt that if there is a public ballot, we will lose,” Ambassador to UNESCO in Paris Carmel Shama-Hacohen told The Jerusalem Post on Wednesday.

With only 10 days left until the committee’s 21 member states cast their votes, Israel is seeking every edge possible to ensure that the necessary twothirds majority of those present oppose the move.

It’s so close, Shama-Hacohen said, that one vote could make the difference.

Four of the 21 member states – Cuba, Indonesia, Kuwait and Lebanon – do not have diplomatic ties with Israel. Shama- Hacohen believes that one of those nations would oppose the inscription of Hebron if the ballot were secret.

Typically, inscription votes are by consensus, unless a roll call vote is requested. Two World Heritage Committee member states can also ask for a secret ballot. Israel has yet to find two such states.

Alternatively, it has asked Poland, which chairs the committee, to hold a secret ballot on the matter, but has yet to receive a response.

Israel has also asked the World Heritage Committee, which is under the auspices of UNESCO, to change the way secret ballots are held, to ensure maximum privacy.

Member states fill out the slips while sitting in their seats, and it is possible for their neighbors or a photographer with a zoom lens to see how they voted, Shama- Hacohen said.

“The subject of a secret ballot is critical, and it’s sad that we have to fight for something that is so obvious,” he said.

The other member states of the committee are: Angola, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Croatia, Finland, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Tunisia, Turkey, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

Jewish roots in Hebron date back to the book of Genesis, when Abraham bought the burial cave. The Herodian structure also houses the Ibrahimi Mosque.

On July 10, the same committee will also vote on a resolution submitted by Jordan that disavows Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem.