UNESCO’s Latest Resolution on Jerusalem: Much of the Same

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On May 2, 2017, the 58 member Executive Board of the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – an organization ostensibly devoted to science, education, and culture, adopted a resolution entitled “Occupied Palestine.”

This politicized resolution, initiated by the Palestinian leadership and formally sponsored by such paragons of educational and cultural virtue as Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar and Sudan, was supported by 22 nations including such sidekicks as Sweden, South Africa, Russia, Iran, China, Brazil, Vietnam and even Mauritius!

Twenty-three nations abstained, and 10 opposed the resolution, including the United States, Italy, the UK, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Greece, Germany, Paraguay, Togo, and Ukraine.

Curiously, the adoption of this resolution coincided with Israel’s 69th Independence Day celebration.

A Non-Binding Resolution with No Legal Status

Nobody should take this resolution seriously. It is nothing more than a non-binding, politicized expression of the political opinion of the extremist, anti-Israel states voting for it. It has no legal status whatsoever.

In a highly transparent and obvious attempt by the Palestinian Authority to “camouflage” in UNESCO language, the motion is nothing other than one more blatantly hostile, Israel-bashing resolution. The Palestinian leadership has, once again, devoted its international efforts at abusing an international organization in order to delegitimize Israel, rather than to instill mutual good faith and seek peace.

Such hysteria and concentrated activity by the Palestinian leadership aimed at delegitimizing Israel, on the eve of the projected visit meeting by Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the Palestinian Authority, with U.S. President Donald Trump, represents a distinct “poke in the eye” of the new U.S. administration. It is a telling sign of the disdain by the Palestinian leadership for any serious attempt to restore a peace-negotiation process.

Hiding behind accepted UN and UNESCO terminology of “safeguarding the cultural heritage of Palestine and the distinctive character of East Jerusalem,” the Palestinian leadership is once again dragging UNESCO – once a credible and reputable professional organization – into the pit of politicization.

Ostensibly, in order to deceive and to recruit the support of the European countries and others for what they claim is a “watered down” text, the Palestinians and their Arab colleagues have devised curious terminology that is tantamount to political and legal acrobatics.

While attempting to pay “lip-service” to the “importance of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls for the three monotheistic religions” and to the “religious significance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam of the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel’s tomb in Bethlehem,” they deny and nullify any legal, historical, or political affinity between the Jewish people and the State of Israel with the “Holy City of Jerusalem” and the Jewish sites in Hebron and Bethlehem.

For good measure, the resolution also includes the usual, commonplace, and routine UN-style condemnations of Israel’s actions to defend its citizens and its territory from terror emanating from the Gaza Strip and the Hebron area. Curiously, they even attempt more legal acrobatics by dressing this in UNESCO camouflage, adding that such actions by Israel have a “negative impact in the fields of competence of UNESCO.” After years of conducting their own unsupervised and pirate excavations under the mosques of Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, including trashing thousands of tons of valuable historic and religious artifacts, the Palestinians and their Arab supporters have the hypocritical gall to use – and abuse – UNESCO to condemn Israel’s supervised and scientific archeological excavations.

All this in order to persuade a naïve international community that they have produced a reasonable and moderate resolution that they feel is acceptable to all.

This resolution, as well as the previous resolutions of UNESCO adopted at the behest of the Palestinian leadership and Arab states and supported by a majority of state members of the organization, were generated out of a blatant and deliberate lack of *bona fides* and in dire disregard of the purposes and functions of the organization.

They are inherently partisan and politically motivated, as part of a general aim to deny and invalidate the prior Judaic and Christian origins of the various holy sites, whether in Jerusalem, Hebron, or Bethlehem.

In so attempting to rewrite and corrupt history and truth and in permitting itself to be manipulated and politicized, UNESCO is, in fact, acting contrary to its own constitution. Since accepting the full membership of the Palestinians in UNESCO in 2011, the organization has permitted itself to be taken hostage by elements intent on undermining the universal character of UNESCO as a professional, educational, and cultural organization, all with the political aim of delegitimizing Israel.

UNESCO Has Abandoned Its Constitutional Principles

According to the founding constitution of UNESCO adopted in 1945 (as amended from time to time):

*The purpose of the organization is to contribute to peace and security through promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.*

In its constitutional principles, the organization views ignorance, suspicion, and mistrust to be the main causes of prejudice, inequality, and war.

The UNESCO Constitution heralds the wide diffusion of culture and the education of humanity for justice, liberty, and peace as indispensable to the dignity of man, constituting a “sacred duty which all the nations must fulfill in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern.”

“Intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind,” and “unrestricted pursuit of objective truth” are declared to be the basic components of peace.

Sadly, UNESCO can no longer be regarded as an objective, universal, and professional specialized agency. As such, its special character as the educational and cultural organ of the UN has been gravely and irreparably polluted and prejudiced.

For this reason, one might expect that serious and responsible states disassociate from and reject such resolutions and review their positions regarding continued membership of UNESCO.

By the same token, one might expect the Palestinian leader to come to the President of the United States with clean hands.