UN votes to make ruins near ancient biblical city of Jericho a 'World Heritage Site'

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<https://www.foxnews.com/world/un-votes-make-ancient-biblical-city-jericho-world-heritage-site>

A United Nations committee has voted to declare ruins near the ancient city of Jericho a World Heritage Site in Palestine, a move that has angered some Israeli officials.

The World Heritage Committee operates under the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO. Israel quit UNESCO in 2019 over allegations that the group was biased against the country. Jericho remains a densely populated city in the West Bank and is among the oldest continuously inhabited cities on Earth.

The UNESCO vote declares the ruins outside the city, known as Tell es-Sultan or ‘Ancient Jericho,’ to be a heritage site. The group clarified that its declaration does not apply to Jericho in its capacity as a Jewish or Christian historical site. Instead, it recognizes the prehistoric site.

‘Later historical developments, which span over millennia and are demonstrated by material remains beyond the boundaries of Tell as-Sultan, constitute a rich cultural context, worth of historical interest and preservation, covering among others, Jewish and Christian heritage. However, this is not the focus of the proposed nomination,’ a UNESCO official clarified during their deliberations.

Jericho's biblical significance arises from the Book of Joshua, which tells the story of how Israel conquered the city.

Israeli lawmaker Dan Illouz objected to the move ahead of the vote this weekend.

‘Jericho is first and foremost a city of Biblical significance,’ Illouz wrote on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter. ‘Blurring this fact is an insult to the millions of Jews and Christians all over the world.’

Former President Donald Trump's administration [joined Israel in quitting UNESCO](https://www.foxnews.com/world/us-israel-quit-un-agency-unesco-claiming-anti-israeli-bias) in 2019, concurring with the country's claims of bias.

Critics have denounced UNESCO as a hotbed of anti-Israel bias: blasted for criticizing Israel's occupation of east Jerusalem, naming ancient Jewish sites as Palestinian heritage sites and granting full membership to Palestine in 2011.

‘UNESCO is among the most corrupt and politically biased UN agencies,’ Then-U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley wrote at the time. ‘Today the U.S. withdrawal from this cesspool became official.’

[President Biden's administration](https://www.foxnews.com/world/un-u-turn-biden-undo-trump-policy-return-agency-accused-anti-israel-bias) signaled its intent to rejoin UNESCO earlier this year, however.

A [State Department](https://www.foxnews.com/category/politics/foreign-policy/state-department) spokesperson said in June that the Biden administration ‘believes firmly that the United States must be present and active on the global stage wherever U.S. interests can be protected and advanced.’

Those interests include ‘expanding access to education, preservation of cultural heritage, protection of journalists, shaping best practices for new and emerging technologies, Holocaust education, and much more,’ the spokesperson said.

Biden's administration sought some $150 million in U.S. funding to UNESCO for fiscal year 2024.