Israel fumes as UNESCO weighs designating ancient Jericho as Palestinian heritage site

September 3, 2023

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Israel Hayom

<https://www.israelhayom.com/2023/09/03/israel-fumes-as-unesco-weighs-designating-ancient-jericho-as-palestinian-world-heritage-site/>

Israel harshly criticized the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization this week for plans to designate the ancient city of Jericho as a Palestinian World Heritage site.

Ancient Jericho is one of 53 natural and cultural sites the World Heritage Committee will be voting to include on its list when it convenes in Saudi Arabia in two weeks.

MK Dan Illouz (Likud) blasted the decision, saying ‘Jericho is first and foremost a city of biblical significance.’

According to Jewish tradition, Jericho was the crossing point of the Israelites into the Land of Israel after wandering in the desert for forty years following the Exodus from Egypt.

Illouz called on President of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay to deny the Palestinian Authority's request for the recognition that is ‘archaeological false.’

‘This is not only an insult to Jews, but also an insult to Christians around the world who admire the site for its biblical history,’ Illouz wrote in a letter to Azoulay.

‘The Palestinian Authority is systematically working to erase all ties of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. This is evident on the Temple Mount, where valuable archaeological findings were destroyed, as well as throughout Judea and Samaria, where acts of vandalism and deliberate destruction of biblical evidence frequently occur. It is our duty to stop this and insist on our right to our country against enemies at home and abroad,’ the letter said.