

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 11, 2016

Secretary of State John Kerry
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We are writing to express our concerns about yet another attempt by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to attack the State of Israel. In the upcoming agenda for the Executive Board of UNESCO's 200th session, Item 25, a draft decision on "Occupied Palestine" authored by Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, and Sudan, seeks to deny Jewish and Christian ties to holy sites in Jerusalem. We urge the United States to strongly condemn this draft UNESCO measure.

In April 2016, UNESCO passed a resolution that denied any Jewish historical connection to the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. In this latest attempt by UNESCO members to delegitimize the State of Israel and deny Jewish historical claims to the ancient city of Jerusalem, this draft decision refers to many of the sites holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims by their Muslim names, and describes Israel as the "Occupying Power."

At a time when great uncertainty surrounds the Middle East and when radical Islamic terrorist groups, such as ISIS, continue to destroy historical heritage sites, UNESCO's focus on Jerusalem is simply misplaced and senseless. This is just another step in a disturbing trend of UNESCO member states denying the Jewish people have any connection with Jerusalem, their ancient and historical capital.

Under U.S. laws passed in 1990 and 1994, the United States is required to withhold funding to any U.N. organization that grants membership to the Palestine Liberation Organization or "any organization or group that does not have the internationally recognized attributes of statehood." After UNESCO admitted "Palestine" as a member in October 2011, the United States accordingly withheld funding from UNESCO. UNESCO's pending draft decision is anti-Jewish and anti-Christian, and only reinforces the necessity of withholding American funding from UNESCO pursuant to U.S. laws.

The State of Israel remains committed to defending the rights of all religious groups in Israel and it is disheartening to see them continuously attacked on the international stage. We therefore urge you to strongly condemn this draft anti-Israel measure at the UNESCO Executive Board's 200th session and any other attempts by UNESCO to re-write history and delegitimize the State of Israel.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Mark Kirk
U.S. Senator