The Trump Administration Was Right To Drop UNESCO

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On October 12, the Trump administration announced it was withdrawing the United States from UNESCO by December 31, 2018. The Left immediately took this as the latest evidence of President Trump’s isolationism. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the U.S. decision and instructed his foreign ministry to prepare for Israel’s withdrawal as well. In a news-packed week, such an important announcement didn’t get the kind of attention it deserved.

At the end of the World War II, 37 countries founded the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1946. As defined in its [constitution](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/history/constitution/), the purpose of the organization is: “to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among 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.”

Such an objective sounds very noble. Unfortunately, UNESCO’s deeds haven’t measured up to its noble goal. Like many other large international bureaucracies, UNESCO has a long history of corruption and mismanagement. Audits [show](https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/oct/18/jonhenley1) “Cronyism seems all but endemic, with about 40% of the organization’s appointments and promotions failing to meet UNESCO’s own criteria for fair competition.” Also, “it has promoted so many managers to senior posts and taken on so many consultants that, despite a two-yearly budget of $544m (£340m), it cannot afford the properly qualified staff it needs to run its programmes effectively.”

## UNESCO Has Long Displayed Anti-U.S. and Anti-Israel Bias

Not only is UNESCO a poorly managed and corrupt organization, it’s also a highly politicized place. Although the United States is the organization’s largest funder, UNESCO has long held an anti-U.S. bias. Citing the organization’s mismanagement of funds, corruption, and “hostility toward the basic institutions of a free society, especially a free market and a free press,” President Ronald Reagan pulled the United States out of UNESCO in 1984. His decision received bipartisan support, including nods from The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Wall Street Journal (yes, those were the good old days).

The United States was neither the first nor only country to drop UNESCO. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland didn’t participate from 1986 to 1997 and Singapore didn’t from 1986 to 2007.  The United States rejoined UNESCO under President George W. Bush in 2002. In 2011, the Obama administration cut funding to the organization after UNESCO admitted the Palestine Authority as a full member. Since then, UNESCO has exhibited anti-Israel bias again and again, although Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.

For example, UNESCO passed [six resolutions](http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/UNESCO-passes-six-resolutions-condemning-Israel-327916) condemning Israel in 2013. In 2016, the Palestine delegation sponsored a UNESCO [resolution](http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/10/26/unesco-to-vote-on-new-controversial-report-on-jerusalem.html) referring to the Temple Mount and Western Wall only by their Muslim names and negating Jerusalem’s undeniable historical connection with Christians and Jews. [In 2017, UNESCO designated the ancient city of Hebron, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, a Palestinian World Heritage site](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/01/travel/unesco-sites-2017-asmara-okinoshima-dauria.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FUnited%20Nations%20Educational%2C%20Scientific%20and%20Cultural%20Organization&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics&region=stream), denying Judaism’s historical tie.

## UNESCO Embraces Human Rights Violators

UNESCO’s mission is to “further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Yet, throughout UNESCO’s history, it has done many things as a direct mockery to this mission.

For example, in 2013, UNESCO honored Che Guevara by including “The Life and Works of Ernesto Che Guevara” in 2013’s additions to its Memory of the World Register, although Guevara was Cuban dictator Fidel Castro’s chief executioner, and both committed crimes against humanity. Honoring such a mass-murderer was an insult to Cubans who lost family members and are still suffering under the oppressive communist regime.

While UNESCO doesn’t hesitate to honor a Communist executioner, it hasn’t done much to honor victims of Communism oppression. The famous image of the “tank man,” a brave young Chinese man who stood in front of a row of tanks on their way to Tiananmen Square in 1989, is at risk of being erased from history forever after the owner of this image, Cobris Image, sold its content to a Chinese government affiliated firm, Visual China Group (VCG) in 2016.

Time magazine called the “tank man” photo “a symbol of resistance to unjust regimes everywhere.” In 2016, several organizations [nominated](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/will-unesco-save-the-tank-man-of-china_us_59316154e4b0649fff21180f) the image of the “Tank Man” to be inscribed into UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register as part of the world’s documented heritage. Yet UNESCO, lacking moral courage, so far has remained silent on the topic.

No one should be surprised, because UNESCO has an unusually close relationship with the Chinese government despite China’s poor human rights and cultural preservation records. No country has pursued a “world heritage site” designation with the zeal that China has. China now has the same number of world heritage sites as Italy. Behind the Chinese government’s aggressive push is a political motive: using the designation to promote nationalism, exhibit cultural superiority, and boost the communist government’s legitimacy as the protector and defender of Chinese culture, despite its history of destroying countless priceless cultural relics and historical sites that are now lost to humanity forever.

## UNESCO Doesn’t Deserve Taxpayers’ Money

UNESCO has been a bloated and corrupt bureaucracy. Throughout its tortured history, it has become a political tool used by authoritarian regimes and left-leaning organizations to advance their political agenda. Rather than promoting peace and understanding as it should, some of its conduct has instigated more hatred and violence.

President Trump was right to withdraw the United States from UNESCO because it doesn’t deserve a dime from U.S. taxpayers. UN bureaucrats should take this as a wake-up call to implement some badly needed reforms.