# Israel bars UNESCO from Hebron

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Israel has turned down UNESCO’s request to visit Hebron, citing “politicization” of the holy site.

Israel has turned down a request by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to visit Hebron ahead of an upcoming vote by the organization to register the town’s Old City as a Palestinian World Heritage Site.

“As a matter of principle, Israel will not provide legitimization to any Palestinian political move under the guise of culture and heritage,” said Israel’s ambassador to UNESCO, Carmel Shama-Hacohen.

The Palestinian Authority submitted a request to list Hebron’s Old City, including the Tomb of the Patriarchs, as a World Heritage Site in 2012 – a process that could take years – but is now trying to fast-track the application by claiming that the site is endangered.

Shama-Hacohen described the Palestinian request as “tainted by politicization, lies and libel against the State of Israel and against the Jewish people’s connection to the site… the Palestinians have opened another front in the religious and cultural war they are trying to impose on us.”

UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee meets July 2-12 in Krakow, Poland, for its annual assembly. Hebron’s Old City is listed on the agenda as ‘Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town, Palestine.’

“The Cave of Machpelah is the world’s most ancient Jewish site and the second holiest place for the Jewish people, after the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The Cave and the adjoining field were purchased—at full market price—by Abraham some 3700 years ago. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah were all later buried in the same Cave of Machpelah. These are considered the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jewish people. The only one who is missing is Rachel, who was buried near Bethlehem where she died in childbirth,” AICE-Jewish Virtual Library explains.

The 21 member nations of the World Heritage Committee will vote on the Palestinian request in a secret ballot. Israel needs seven votes against in order to block the motion.