Bye UNESCO

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Israel will join the United States in removing itself and its funding from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

It’s about time.

The decision by the US was precipitated by UNESCO’s decision in 2011 to accept “Palestine” as a full-fledged member, even though there is no such thing as a Palestinian state, only a failed, quasi-political entity that is split between an Islamist enclave ruled by Hamas in Gaza and a corrupt fiefdom controlled by Fatah on the West Bank.  
  
A 1990s-era law prohibits US funding for any UN agencies that recognize Palestine as a state. Former US president Barack Obama failed to convince Congress to change the law and restore funding. The Trump administration, meanwhile, is following through on the spirit of the law.  
  
But the American and Israeli decisions are not just about the acceptance of “Palestine.” Like other UN institutions, UNESCO has in recent years proven to be an organization hijacked by an anti-American, antisemitic agenda that completely disregards concern for individual rights.  
  
The US footed a large portion of UNESCO’s budget – most of which went to the payment of salaries and workers’ expenses – that did nothing to endear America to UNESCO’s functionaries.

Some examples of obscene UNESCO decisions:  
  
• **In 2011**, it elected Syria to its human-rights committee. We need say no more.  
  
• **In the same year**, it emerged that UNESCO had been funding a Palestinian children’s magazine that, among other things, praised Adolf Hitler.  
  
• **In 2012**, UNESCO’s head, Irina Bokova, awarded Saudi King Abdullah “UNESCO’s highest honorary recognition award” for holding international forums and conferences and furthering dialogue and peace. Once again, this speaks for itself.  
  
• **More recently** and closer to home, UNESCO rewrote history to leave out the Jews. The body that is charged with educating and protecting culture decreed last October that Jews have no connection with the Temple Mount. The area, the single-most holy place in the world for Judaism, was referred to as Buraq Plaza, after the black-winged horse on which, at that spot, the Prophet Muhammad supposedly mounted for his night flight to Mecca. Later, Israel managed to get UNESCO to begrudgingly acknowledge the existence of the Temple Mount. Thanks.  
  
• **In July**, UNESCO adopted another ridiculous resolution that referred to Hebron as belonging to the “State of Palestine,” listing it as a heritage site in danger, even though the prayer rights of Muslims are meticulously protected there.  
  
UNESCO has a long history of tensions with the US and Israel. Though the US was instrumental in creating the body in the aftermath of the Second World War, as part of the educational project of “denazification” in Europe, UNESCO began deviating from its original mandate. More and more nations joined, many of which were created as a result of decolonization, and many under the sway of the Soviet Union that had little regard for democratic values.  
  
• **In 1974**, UNESCO excluded Israel from a regional working group, because it had allegedly altered “the historical features of Jerusalem” during archaeological excavations and “brainwashed” Arabs, according to a Time magazine article that explained US president Ronald Reagan’s decision to finally pull out of UNESCO in December 1983.  
  
Reagan said at the time: “UNESCO has extraneously politicized virtually every subject it deals with. It has exhibited hostility toward a free society, especially a free market and a free press, and it has demonstrated unrestrained budgetary expansion.”  
  
The US decision, which was not reversed until 2002, when president George W. Bush did so as part of an effort to garner international support for the war on terrorism, prompted UNESCO to initiate reforms.  
  
The main argument against the decision to leave UNESCO is that by removing themselves from international forums, the US and Israel limit their ability to bring about change from within.  
  
UNESCO has an opportunity to change. But for that to happen it will need to clean shop and rid itself of the anti-Israel bias that has been a stain on the organization since it was founded in 1945.   
  
For now, it has become apparent that little can be gained by participation in UNESCO. American and Israeli taxpayers’ money can be put to better use.