Israel: UNESCO is a full partner in Palestinian incitement

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Israel has charged that UNESCO’s actions have helped Palestinians use the Temple Mount to incite violence against Israel.

“UNESCO is a full partner to the false incitement by Palestinians and radical Islam who claim that Al-Aksa [Temple Mount mosque] is in danger,” Israel’s ambassador to UNESCO in Paris Carmel Shama HaCohen said on Thursday.

HaCohen said that Israel hopes to see an end to the incitement that comes from sensational and false stories put out by Arab and Palestinian media about the Temple Mount.

This year, both UNESCO’s Executive Board and its World Heritage Committee passed a resolution that disavowed Israeli sovereignty on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem’s Old City, known to Muslims as Al-Haram/Al-Sharif. This followed two years of resolutions that also ignored Jewish ties to the Temple Mount - as well as the city of Jerusalem as a whole - by referring to Judaism's holiest site solely by its Muslim name.

He spoke as tensions mounted in Jerusalem’s Old City in the aftermath of last Friday’s terror attack, in which two Israeli policemen were killed by three Israeli Arabs. The assailants were shot and killed by Israeli police as they attempted to flee the site of the attack.

Israel’s decision to place metal detectors at the entrances to the site to ensure that weapons would not be brought in has sparked outrage among Muslim worshipers.

Instead of entering the Temple Mount compound, the worshipers have stood daily next to the metal detectors at the Lion’s Gate and held prayer services in protest.

Shama HaCohen said he is certain that in October, UNESCO’s Executive Board will condemn Israel for placing the metal detectors at the site. The text of that resolution will most likely state that the metal detectors harm the site’s integrity, freedom of worship, and the status quo of the area.

To help remedy the situation his office has called on UNESCO’s Director-General Irina Bokova to condemn any attempts to use the Temple Mount as a location from which to launch terror attacks.

It is important that Bokova state that incitement and terrorism are the true threats here, Shama HaCohen said. The letter his office sent stated: The Old City of Jerusalem, and its Walls, including Har-Habait (Temple Mount), is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and as the Director-General of [that] organization, I urge you to strongly condemn this deadly and shameful attack, [which] occurred within a UNESCO World Heritage Site.”

“Furthermore, I urge you to condemn the use of Har-Habait (Temple Mount), as a place for launching terror attacks against Israel , and condemn as well the violations of the holiness of this sacred place by terrorists,” the letter stated.