

Dear Members of Temple Judea,

In following through with my promise to keep us apprised of issues concerning Israel and the Jewish people – I am sending this letter in response to UNESCO'S vote on Monday, October 31ST, 2011.

On Monday, UNESCO voted to admit "Palestine" as a member of its organization. Yet, as you know, there is no place called Palestine. It is not a country, nor is it a recognized state with recognized borders. Yet, let us make no mistake by thinking, "So what - UNESCO admitted a country that doesn't exist." In truth, this is a matter of great concern to us and to Israel!

First, what is UNESCO? It is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It certainly sounds like an organization we would all support. As they define themselves on their website, "UNESCO works to create the conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon mutual respect for commonly shared values. It is through this dialogue that the world can achieve global visions of sustainable development encompassing observance of human rights, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty, all of which are at the heart of UNESCO'S mission and activities."

The most obvious problem by this vote is that UNESCO violated its own primary and core principle: defiantly and angrily sidestepping the process of creating conditions for dialogue between civilizations. Let us not forget that in September, Mahmoud Abbas appealed to the U.N.'s Security Council, on behalf of the Palestinian people, to grant it admission into the U.N. as a recognized state – without negotiations with Israel. In fact, Abbas and other Palestinian leaders have repeatedly rejected any negotiations with Israeli leaders.

In addition, in the proposal for Palestinian statehood, it makes reference to resolution 181 - the 1947 Partition plan! The 1947 U.N. partition plan recommended borders that gave nearly all of the Galilee and Beer Sheba to a proposed Arab state and excluded Jerusalem from both the Arab and Jewish states. Not to mention that the 1947 borders (which Israel had willingly accepted and the Arabs did not) are no longer valid. Following Israel's declaration of independence, the surrounding Arab countries attacked it. Israel legally and justifiably acquired land in that war. Then in the war of 1967 (also a defensive war), Israel again acquired land.

Another problem with this UNESCO vote is that it reveals that this recognized world peace-building organization is corrupt. For example, how can an organization that stands on the principles of ensuring human rights, gender equality and religious freedoms allow countries into their organization such as "Palestine" and Saudi Arabia? Hamas (which rules Gaza and is partnered with the Palestinian Authority) teaches hatred towards Jews in its elementary schools, and will not allow Jews to be citizens of their country (if it is formed.) Saudi Arabia still practices judicial corporal punishment. That is the system of punishment that allows for amputations of hands and feet for robbery and flogging for "sexual deviance" and drunkenness. Not to mention that it also engages in public beheading (by sword) of adulterers and those who commit apostasy. Saudi Arabia also does not allow Jews to become citizens, nor even to enter its borders if they have an Israel stamp on their passports. In addition, Saudi Arabia has a law banning women from driving cars (with a punishment of flogging if they violate this law).

An additional major problem with this vote is that it thumbs its nose at the U.S. Prior to the vote on Monday, the U.S., which has been contributing over 20% of the budget to UNESCO, threatened to cut off its support to UNESCO if it voted to approve "Palestine" as a member. The

U.S.'s official position has been that all countries should only be supportive of "Palestine" when proper negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians occur.

The U.S.'s response to this vote seems to indicate that the U.S. will follow through with its position and cut off its financial support to UNESCO. I am proud of the U.S. for standing up for justice and not bowing to mob opinion.

So I ask the question again. Why would this matter to us? It matters because this organization speaks with the voices of many, many countries; because this vote is a litmus test for where the U.S., Israel and the Jewish people stand in the world community; and, because it is a barometer for where the world is on true justice. The vote was 107 to 14 (with 52 abstentions (cowards!)) in favor of admitting "Palestine" to UNESCO.

As I asked on the High Holidays - are you screaming yet?

Let your congress people know how you feel about this (see a list of them below). Plus, check out the countries that voted in favor of this and exercise your voice by not purchasing products made in their countries. Check out the countries that voted against this and make sure to support them (Israel, United States of America, Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sweden, Vanuatu).

Yet, we still work for and hope for peace. We must not let them change us.

L'Shalom,

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