
UNESCO Director General expresses concern about Tomb of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb

The Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, expressed her concern today at the announcement by the Israeli Prime Minister that two sites located in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Tomb of the Patriarchs and Rachel's Tomb, are to be included in a National Heritage Programme. She also expressed concern at the resulting escalation of tension in the area.

Endorsing the [statement](#) by Robert H. Serry, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, that these sites are “of historical and religious significance not only to Judaism but also to Islam, and to Christianity as well”, the Director-General reiterated UNESCO's long-standing conviction that cultural heritage should serve as a means for dialogue.

UNESCO has been mandated by its Member States to provide assistance to the Palestinian Authority in the fields of education and culture. In this regard, UNESCO has been working for many years with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian civil society to protect and preserve the cultural heritage sites in the West Bank and is committed to continue doing so.

Indeed, the Director-General is committed to strengthening “UNESCO's financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian educational and cultural institutions in order to address new needs and problems resulting from recent developments”, as requested by UNESCO's General Conference at its 35th session (resolution 35C/Resolution 75).

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