
Statement by the Director-General of UNESCO on Withholding of funds by the United States

[بيان للمديرة العامة لليونسكو إثر قرار الولايات المتحدة الأميركية بوقف مساهمتها المالية](#)

In this time of economic crisis and social transformation, I believe that UNESCO's vital work to promote global stability and democratic values is in America's core interests.

The United States is a critical partner in UNESCO's work. The withholding of U.S. dues and other financial contributions – required by U.S. law – will weaken UNESCO's effectiveness and undermine its ability to build free and open societies.

U.S. funding helps UNESCO to develop and sustain free and competitive media in Iraq, Tunisia and Egypt. In Afghanistan, U.S. support is helping UNESCO to teach thousands of police officers to read and write. UNESCO literacy programmes in other areas of conflict give people the critical thinking skills and confidence they need to fight violent extremism. To sustain the democratic spirit of the Arab Spring, UNESCO is training journalists to cover elections objectively.

Across the world, we stand up for each journalist who is attacked or killed, because we are the UN agency with the mandate to protect freedom of expression. In Washington, earlier this year, I awarded the UNESCO Press Freedom Prize to an imprisoned Iranian journalist, Ahmad Zeidabadi.

UNESCO is the only UN Agency with a mandate to promote Holocaust Education worldwide. Using funding provided by the United States and Israel, UNESCO is developing curricula to ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten. Last February I led a historic visit to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp with more than 150 political and religious leaders, mostly from Arab and Muslim countries. I still recall the words of Dr. Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti of Bosnia, who said: "We must teach our young people in mosques, churches and synagogues what happened here."

With U.S. support we put science at the service of people. UNESCO is leading a global effort to expand an ocean-based tsunami warning system. In January, this system saved tens of thousands of lives when a tsunami hit Japan. In the Middle East, UNESCO's Sesame Programme enables world-class research and builds scientific and cultural bridges between neighbouring countries, including Israel and Egypt.

The U.S. Government recognizes the value of all this work. To quote the State Department: "U.S. engagement with UNESCO serves a wide range of our national interests on education, science, culture and communications issues...we will work with Congress to ensure that U.S. interests and influence are preserved."

UNESCO is encouraged that the United States will maintain its membership in the Organization and hopes that a resolution to the funding issue will ultimately be identified. Until that happens, it will be impossible for us to maintain our current level of activity.

The announced withholding of U.S. dues owed for 2011 will immediately affect our ability to deliver programmes in critical areas: achieving universal education, supporting new democracies and fighting extremism. So I call on the U.S. administration, Congress and the American people to find a way forward and continue support for UNESCO in these turbulent times.

Irina Bokova
2 November, 2011

- [VIDEO: UNESCO Director-General Statement on US funding cut](#)