

United Nations Just Gave Rachel's Tomb and Patriarch Caves to Islam

UNESCO passed a resolution Wednesday declaring two biblical Jewish sites, Rachel's Tomb near Bethlehem and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Islamic holy sites.

An earlier draft of the resolution, sponsored by six member nations of UNESCO's executive board—Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates—included the Western Wall, known in Hebrew as the Kotel, calling it an extension of the al-Aksa Mosque and therefore a Muslim holy site as well. The revised version dropped that claim.

The resolution also accused Israel of “aggression and illegal measures” on the Temple Mount that affect Muslim's freedom of worship and access to the al-Aksa Mosque. It further accused Israel of attempting to change the status quo since 1967, literally the opposite of what Israel is trying to do.

The majority of UNESCO's 58 member nations have historically supported Palestinian resolutions so Wednesday's vote was not totally unexpected.

For Bible-believing Jews and Christians, the idea that these biblical sites somehow morphed into Islamic sites is ludicrous.

The Bible records that Abraham purchased the cave and the field next to it some 3,700 years ago as a family burial site (see Genesis 23-25), with the exception of Jacob's second wife, Rachel, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, who was buried near Bethlehem (see Genesis 35:16-20).

Meanwhile, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon arrived in

Israel Tuesday to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas.

"I think it's time to tell the truth about Palestinian terrorism," Netanyahu said in his initial remarks to the U.N. chief. "It is not about the settlements; it is not about the peace process. It is about the desire to destroy the State of Israel, pure and simple."

Abbas, he said, has joined the ranks of ISIS and Hamas in propagating the lie that Israel is "threatening the Aksa Mosque." The international community should hold him accountable for incitement and support Israel's right to self-defense, he said.

Ban, for his part, said he is "deeply troubled," in fact "concerned," about "instances of inflammatory rhetoric."

"We need to keep the situation from escalating into a religious conflict with potential regional applications," Ban said, admitting that he understands Israel's anger at daily terror attacks, and he also appreciates the "genuine concern about peace and security" that terrorism generates.

In a letter Tuesday to UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova, B'nai B'rith International strongly condemned "the attempt to rewrite history," calling it a "malicious resolution" and urging her to steer the executive board clear of such a "vile proposal."

"The creeping but undisguised historical revisionism and territorial, cultural and civilizational appropriation taking root at UNESCO ... make clear which side in the conflict is truly inciting religious tensions and seeking to alter the status quo in Jerusalem," the letter stated.

Bokova's earlier statement to UNESCO's executive board "to take decisions that do not further inflame tensions on the ground and that encourage respect for the sanctity of the holy

sites," is not reflected in Wednesday's vote.

A Palestinian mob recently torched Joseph's Tomb and attacks on Israelis visiting Rachel's Tomb and the Cave of the Patriarchs are not unusual. It remains to be seen how UNESCO's latest resolutions will play out.