

Israel Announces Withdrawal from UNESCO, After U.S. Announces Same Decision



Tel Aviv, October 13 (RHC)-- Israel says it plans to pull out of the United Nations cultural and education agency, UNESCO, hours after the U.S. announced its decision to do the same, accusing the body of “anti-Israel bias.” According to a statement released by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office on Thursday, the premier “instructed the foreign ministry to prepare Israel’s withdrawal from the organization alongside the United States.”

Tel Aviv’s move came just a few hours after U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert announced that the White House would withdraw from the Paris-based agency, citing growing “arrears” at UNESCO, the need for “fundamental” reform in it and its “continuing anti-Israel bias.” Nauert added that the U.S. withdrawal would take effect on December 31st this year.

The Israeli premier’s office further said that Netanyahu welcomed “the decision by U.S. President (Donald) Trump to withdraw from UNESCO.” It described the move as a “courageous and moral decision because UNESCO has become the theater of the absurd and because instead of preserving history it distorts it.”

The United States has announced that it will withdraw from UNESCO over the organization's "anti-Israel bias." UNESCO, which has 195 member states, is known for designating world heritage sites such as Syria's Palmyra, the Grand Canyon in the U.S. state of Arizona and twenty-two sites in Iran.

Meanwhile, the head of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, voiced "profound regret" over the U.S. decision, calling it a "loss to multilateralism." The U.S. also pulled out of the agency in 1984 during the administration of U.S. President Ronald Regan, accusing it of being biased in favor of the former Soviet Union. Former U.S. President George W. Bush rejoined UNESCO in 2003.

However, Washington stopped funding the body in 2011, after the organization recognized Palestine as a full member. The U.S. and Israel at the time were among just 14 of 194 members that opposed the membership of Palestine in the international organization.

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