Israel and European Allies Working to Stop UNESCO from Ignoring Jewish Ties to Temple Mount

July 12, 2016

By Tovah Lazoroff

The Jerusalem Post

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Israel-and-European-allies-working-to-stop-UNESCO-from-ignoring-Jewish-ties-to-Temple-Mount-460200>

Israel has enlisted the help of three European countries — the United Kingdom, France and Germany — to sway UNESCO against passing a resolution that ignores Jewish ties to the Temple Mount.

“There is an intense diplomatic effort on behalf of Israel to counter this text,” said Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nachshon.

He spoke in response to a push by Jordan and Palestine to sway the 21-members of UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee to approve a resolution that speaks of the Temple Mount solely as how it is referred to in Islam, al-Haram al-Sharif.

The Committee is meeting in Istanbul from July 10 to 20 to vote on new sites for its World Heritage List. On Tuesday and Wednesday it will also be affirming and adding new sites to its endangered list.

Jerusalem and its Old City Walls, which were first inscribed on the World Heritage List by Jordan in 1981, is also on the endangered list. Palestine, which is accepted as a UNESCO member state, placed the Church of the Nativity on that list in 2012, and the ancient terraces of Battir in 2014.

On Tuesday the committee reaffirmed their placements on the endangered list. A Jerusalem resolution was not discussed at that point or even mentioned.

This led to media speculation that the contentious resolution had been shelved. But Nachshon said that Israel was still taking the matter very seriously.

The same is true for some European countries, such as the UK, Germany and France, who are not on the World Heritage Committee but have come to Israel's assistance, Nachshon said.

The more countries that announce their opposition to the text, the less likely it will be that the Palestinians will try and pass it, he said.

The list of countries on the committee include: Angola, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Croatia, Cuba, Finland, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Tunisia, Turkey, United Republic of Tanzania, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

Palestine began its attempt to reclassify Judaism’s holiest site already back at UNESCO in October, but failed to garner enough support for a resolution that would have formally declared the area as an exclusively Muslim site.

Still, when UNESCO’s 58-member Executive Board met in Paris in April it adopted a resolution that spoke solely of Muslim ties to the al-Haram al-Sharif, even though it is considered holy by all three religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam.