



The Honorable
Ms. Irina Bokova
Head of the UNESCO
Paris, France

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Dear Ms. Bokova,

Greetings from the little town of Bethlehem

I write to you in deep concern of an utmost matter to the citizens of Bethlehem specifically and to the Palestinian people generally.

Earlier this week Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu announced the designation of Rachel's Tomb a Jewish heritage site. A site which has always been a part of the town of Bethlehem which lies under the rule of the Palestinian National Authority since 1995, and is considered one of its famous religious and historical places. This announcement came as an encroachment upon all agreements, offended all our citizens and overstepped all boundaries. This area is a part of Bethlehem and falls under the jurisdiction of our Municipality, therefore the Israelis have no right whatsoever claiming it as a part of Jewish heritage.

This announcement coincides with the proposal to enlist Bethlehem on the list of the World's historical heritage and cultural cities, while the Israelis continue carelessly to disrespect all conventions and concluded agreements. Throughout the years Israel has managed to isolate the tomb's area from Bethlehem, wrapping it with the apartheid wall and stripping it off from its natural environment, suffocating the main historical entrance from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and depriving our people from their freedom of worship in the religious sites located in that area which are the Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque and the Islamic cemetery. Above all seriously affecting the numbers of tourists and pilgrims to our Holy town.

Palestinian National Authority
Bethlehem Municipality



السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية
بلدية بيت لحم

I would like to convey my grave concern over this latest announcement which is the latest episode in the long running series of attacks on Bethlehem, and is certainly neither accepted nor justified under any alleged reason and should be confronted by people of good will and peace.

Sincerely,

Dr. Victor Batarseh
Mayor of Bethlehem

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