



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Executive Board

Two hundred and tenth session

# 210 EX/36

PARIS, 26 October 2020  
Original: English

## Item 36 of the provisional agenda

### OCCUPIED PALESTINE

#### SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 209 EX/Decision 24, by which the Executive Board decided to include the item entitled "Occupied Palestine" in the agenda of the 210th session. The present document provides a progress report on developments since the 209th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Decision required: paragraph 17.



Job: 202003280

### **Sub-item I: “Jerusalem”**

1. “The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (Site proposed by Jordan)”, is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and is the sacred city of the three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The historical, cultural and spiritual significance of Jerusalem, as a microcosm of humanity’s diversity is, in itself, an appeal for dialogue.
2. Pursuant to relevant decisions of the Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee, which have been adopted on a consensual basis by the two governing bodies since October 2017, UNESCO has sought to facilitate exchanges between Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian (including Jordanian Waqf) experts regarding the protection of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls, including to facilitate the UNESCO Reactive Monitoring Mission to the Old City and a UNESCO experts meeting on the Mughrabi Ascent. At the time of the preparation of this document, the monitoring mission and experts meeting had not yet been undertaken.
3. In accordance with the agreement signed between UNESCO and the Norwegian Government in December 2011 on the project, entitled “Ensuring the Sustainability of the Centre for Restoration of Islamic Manuscripts of the Haram al Sharif in Jerusalem”, UNESCO has deployed its assistance to build the Centre’s staff capacities in the preservation of Islamic manuscripts. Since the outset of the project, 14 learning modules were implemented, with over 1,538 hours of training on conservation and restoration techniques, in addition to study tours to restoration centres in Amman, Paris and Florence carried out in 2013. Ten staff of the Centre have been granted permanent positions by Jordan. The project provided the Centre with conservation equipment and materials. UNESCO conducted seven monitoring and consultation missions during the project implementation period, between 2011 and 2015. A new phase of the project to make the Centre operational, autonomous and sustainable through the strengthening of capacities, the restoration of the premises and the elaboration of a strategy has been approved and the Project Agreement was signed by the Norwegian Government on 30 July 2020.
4. Concerning the project, entitled “The Safeguarding, Refurbishment and Revitalization of the Islamic Museum of Haram al Sharif and its Collection”, which is funded by Saudi Arabia, the Jordan Jerusalem Awqaf and Ta’awun, the premises of the Museum have been renovated and equipped, and staff has been appointed and trained in inventorying, cataloguing, basic conservation, restoration, photography, English language and ICTs. Discussions have been initiated with the Jordan and Jerusalem Awqaf about the further rehabilitation and restructuring of the museum and exhibition plans, when the situation allows.
5. Since the 209th session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat has received two letters from the Permanent Delegations of Jordan and Palestine to UNESCO regarding the Old City of Jerusalem and the respect of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. One of these letters refers to plans for the construction of an elevator and a tunnel leading to Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al Haram Al Sharif. The other letter refers to plans for the installation of a Ferris wheel overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls. The Secretariat followed up with Israel, State Party to the Conventions, asking it to provide relevant information in this regard, given the importance of refraining from any actions that may have an impact on the sites’ Outstanding Universal Value. Additionally, a letter was received on 26 July 2020 from the Minister of Culture of Palestine concerning recent attacks against cultural institutions and their staff members in Jerusalem.
6. Information relating to correspondence received during the reporting period is reflected in the annex to this document.

## **Sub-item II: “Reconstruction and development of Gaza”**

7. The COVID-19 pandemic has left a huge negative impact on the livelihoods of people in the Gaza Strip in light of the deteriorating economic, living and humanitarian conditions, and the closure or slowing down of many sectors and economic activities. This has been reflected on the living conditions of families in the Gaza Strip, which have become worse in light of the lockdown caused by the pandemic and the resulting economic, social, living and humanitarian challenges. Gaza is facing today an unprecedented and severe economic distress. There is a grave unemployment crisis, the collapse of local demand for goods and services, the lack of access to financial tools like loans and grants, and the greater complications for exporters and importers have further exacerbated the already fragile situation. While many of these issues pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic by several years, the pandemic has further jeopardized the reconstruction and development perspectives of Gaza.

### ***Education***

8. The situation in Gaza continued to be volatile, affecting the rights of children, youth and adults and their access to quality education.<sup>1</sup> Services have been severely disrupted, including the ability to conduct regular educational activities. Combined with its negative psychosocial effects, the situation has affected student wellbeing, performance and completion rates. In addition, the economic situation in Gaza has been severely impacted and the unemployment rate has increased. According to figures from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate in Gaza reached 46% between January and March 2020.<sup>2</sup>

9. In this context, UNESCO is currently providing support to the fee waivers of selected university students with difficult economic conditions in order to pursue their higher education studies and protect their right to higher education. In addition, within the Youth for Employment in the Mediterranean project (YEM) UNESCO will identify the needed skills in the Palestinian Labour market, including in Gaza, in order to facilitate the employment of youth. UNESCO is also planning to conduct psychosocial activities in some schools including sports, storytelling and drama in order to support the well-being of students and teachers especially after the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Culture***

10. The difficult political situation in Gaza, together with restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, prevented UNESCO to implement a 10-day capacity-building training for strengthening capacities of key stakeholders in Gaza for the effective implementation of the 2003 Convention and community-based inventorying. A pilot inventory exercise in Gaza was also supposed to happen; this activity has been postponed to take place towards the end of September 2020.

### ***Communication and information***

11. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 210 EX/37 “Implementation of 40 C/Resolution 67 and 209 EX/Decision 25 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories”.

### ***Gender Equality***

12. Information on UNESCO's work in this area is available in document 210 EX/37 “Implementation of 40 C/Resolution 67 and 209 EX/Decision 25 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories”.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/state-of-palestine>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3748>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ochaopt.org/reports/situation-reports>

**Sub-item III: “The two Palestinian sites of *Al-Haram al-Ibrāhīmī/Tomb of the Patriarchs* in Al-Khalīl/Hebron and *Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ Mosque/Rachel’s Tomb* in Bethlehem”**

13. Following the inscription of Hebron/Al-Khalīl Old Town on the World Heritage List, as well as on the List of World Heritage in Danger, at the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee (July 2017), a meeting was held in December 2018 at UNESCO Headquarters between the Permanent Delegation of Palestine, Palestinian experts, Advisory Bodies as well as UNESCO Ramallah Office and the World Heritage Centre to initiate a review of the draft statement of Outstanding Universal Value, which is currently underway.

14. The state of conservation of the Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town was examined at the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee (30 June-10 July 2019), which adopted without debate and on a consensual basis Decision 43 COM 7A.29 to retain Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town on the List of World Heritage in Danger. A conservation management plan for Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town is being elaborated with assistance from the World Heritage Fund.

15. The Secretariat received a letter from the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO that denounces the illegal Israeli projects in the Old Town of Hebron, including the construction of an elevator in the Al-Haram al-Ibrāhīmī/Tomb of the Patriarchs and the respect of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. In light of the importance of this issue, the Secretariat followed up with Israel asking it to provide relevant information in this regard.

16. The Secretariat also received a letter that refers to the removal (illicit transfer of ownership) of a Byzantine baptistery from a village near Bethlehem and the respect of the 1970 Convention. In light of its importance, the Secretariat followed up with Israel asking it to provide relevant information regarding this issue.

**Proposed draft decision**

17. The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 210 EX/36 as well as the annexes attached to this decision,
2. Recalling its previous decisions concerning “Occupied Palestine”,
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 211th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.

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**ANNEX I**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**Executive Board**  
Two hundred and tenth session

210 EX/PX/DR.36.1  
PARIS, 26 October 2020  
Original: English

**PROGRAMME AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMISSION (PX)**

**Item 36 OCCUPIED PALESTINE**

**DRAFT DECISION**

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 210 EX/36,
2. Recalling the provisions of the four Geneva Conventions (1949) and their additional Protocols (1977), the 1907 Hague Regulations on Land Warfare, the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its additional Protocols, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) and the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), the inscription of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls at the request of Jordan on the World Heritage List (1981) and on the List of World Heritage in Danger (1982), and the recommendations, resolutions and decisions of UNESCO on the protection of cultural heritage, as well as resolutions and decisions of UNESCO relating to Jerusalem, also recalling previous UNESCO decisions relating to the reconstruction and development of Gaza as well as UNESCO decisions on the two Palestinian sites in Al-Khalil/Hebron and in Bethlehem,
3. Affirming that nothing in the current decision, which aims, *inter alia*, at the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of Palestine and the distinctive character of East Jerusalem, shall in any way affect the relevant Security Council and United Nations resolutions and decisions on the legal status of Palestine and Jerusalem, including United Nations Security Council resolution 2334 (2016),
4. Taking note of the letters addressed to the Director-General by the Permanent Delegations of Palestine and Jordan to UNESCO in 2020 concerning the sub-sections below,

**I Jerusalem**

5. Reaffirming the importance of the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls for the three monotheistic religions,
6. Bearing in mind that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the “basic law” on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith,
7. Recalling the eighteen decisions of the Executive Board: 185 EX/Decision 14, 187 EX/Decision 11, 189 EX/Decision 8, 190 EX/Decision 13, 192 EX/Decision 11, 194 EX/Decision 5.I.D, 195 EX/Decision 9, 196 EX/Decision 26, 197 EX/Decision 32, 199 EX/Dec.19.1, 200 EX/Decision 25, 201 EX/Decision 30, 202 EX/Decision 38, 204 EX/Decision 25 and 205 EX/Decision 28, 206 EX/Decision 32, 207 EX/Decision 38 and 209 EX/Decision 25, and the ten World Heritage Committee decisions: 34 COM/7A.20, 35 COM/7A.22, 36 COM/7A.23, 37 COM/7A.26, 38 COM/7A.4, 39 COM/7A.27, 40 COM/7A.13, 41 COM/7A.36, 42 COM/7A.21 and 43 COM/7A.22;
8. Regrets the failure of the Israeli occupying authorities to cease the persistent excavations, tunnelling, works and projects in East Jerusalem, particularly in and around the Old City of Jerusalem which are illegal under international law, and reiterates its request to Israel, the occupying Power, to stop all violations which are not in conformity with the provisions of the relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions;
9. Also regrets the Israeli refusal to implement the UNESCO request to the Director-General to appoint a permanent representative to be stationed in East Jerusalem to report on a regular basis about all aspects covering the fields of competence of UNESCO in East Jerusalem, and reiterates its request to the Director-General to appoint, as soon as possible, the above-mentioned representative;

## II Reconstruction and development of Gaza

10. Deeply deplores the ongoing military developments around the Gaza Strip and their heavy toll of civilian casualties as well as their continuous negative impact in the fields of competence of UNESCO;
11. Deplores the continuous Israeli closure of the Gaza Strip, which harmfully affects the free and sustained movement of personnel, students and humanitarian relief items and requests Israel to immediately ease this closure;
12. Thanks the Director-General for initiatives that have already been implemented in Gaza in the fields of education, culture and youth and for the safety of media professionals, calls upon her to continue her active involvement in the reconstruction of Gaza's damaged educational and cultural components and reiterates, in this regard, its request to her to upgrade the UNESCO Antenna in Gaza and to organize, as soon as possible, an information meeting on the current situation in Gaza in the fields of competence of UNESCO and on the outcome of the projects conducted by UNESCO;

## III The two Palestinian sites of *Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi/Tomb of the Patriarchs* in Al-Khalil/Hebron and the *Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque/Rachel's Tomb* in Bethlehem

13. Reaffirms that the two concerned sites located in Al-Khalil/Hebron and in Bethlehem are an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and shares the conviction affirmed by the international community that the two sites are of religious significance for Judaism, Christianity and Islam;
14. Deplores the ongoing Israeli excavations, works, construction of private roads for settlers and of a Wall inside the Old City of Al-Khalil/Hebron which are illegal under international law and harmfully affect the authenticity and integrity of the site, and the subsequent denial of freedom of movement and freedom of access to places of worship and asks Israel, the occupying Power, to end all violations which are not in conformity with the provisions of relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions;
15. Regrets the visual impact of the Wall on the site of Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem as well as the strict ban on access of Palestinian Christian and Muslim worshippers to the site, and demands that the Israeli authorities restore the original character of the landscape around the site and lift the ban on access to it;

## IV

16. Decides to include these matters under an item entitled "Occupied Palestine" in the agenda at its 211th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a progress report thereon.

## ANNEX II

### THE UNESCO REACTIVE MONITORING MISSION TO THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM AND ITS WALLS

#### The Executive Board

1. Stresses the urgent need to implement the UNESCO reactive monitoring mission to the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls;
2. Invites the Director-General and the World Heritage Centre to exert all efforts, in line with their mandates and in conformity with the provisions of the relevant UNESCO conventions, decisions and resolutions, to ensure the prompt implementation of the mission and, in case of non-implementation, to propose effective measures in the report to it at its 211th session;
3. Expresses its commitment to exert its utmost efforts to resolve this issue at its next session.

## ANNEX TO THE DOCUMENT

During the reporting period, the following correspondence has been received by the Secretariat in relation to this item:

Date	From	Subject
10 July 2020	Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Jordan to UNESCO and Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<a href="#">The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</a>
21 July 2020	Ambassador, Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<a href="#">The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls</a>
21 July 2020	Ambassador, Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<a href="#">Removal of Cultural Property from the Occupied Territory of Palestine</a>
26 July 2020	Minister of Culture of Palestine	<a href="#">Cultural institutions in Jerusalem</a>
24 September 2020	Ambassador, Alternate Permanent Delegate of Palestine to UNESCO	<a href="#">Archaeological sites in the Governorate of Salfit</a>