

## Congressman Rothman Initiates Bipartisan Letter Urging UNESCO to Reject the Unilateral Declaration of Statehood at the U.N. by the Palestinians

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, DC &ndash; On October 7, 2011, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) sent a letter to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which was signed by each member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, the House panel that appropriates UNESCO's U.S. funding. The letter, initiated by Congressman Rothman, urges UNESCO not to admit the Palestinian Liberation Organization into UNESCO. The letter states that "any recognition of Palestine as a Member State would not only jeopardize the hope for a resumption of direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, but would endanger the United States' contribution to UNESCO."

The full letter:

Ms. Irina Bokova

Director-General

United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

7, Place De Fontenoy

F75352 Paris 07SP, France

Dear Ms. Bokova:

We write with distress that UNESCO's Executive Board considered the Palestine Liberation Organization's request to become a Member State on October 5. This action was in direct contravention of UNESCO's stated purpose "of advancing, through the educational and scientific and cultural relations of the peoples of the world, the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of mankind," and jeopardizes future financial contributions to UNESCO by the United States.

It is our sincere hope that an independent state of Palestine can be realized, alongside the Jewish State of Israel, so that Palestinians and Israelis can live as neighbors in peace. However, the Palestinians are endangering this hope by pursuing a reckless agenda of recognition of statehood at the United Nations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. By pursuing statehood outside of direct bilateral Israeli-Palestinian negotiations the Palestinians guarantee that a true and lasting peace in the region will not be achieved.

As U.S. Permanent Representative to UNESCO, Ambassador David T. Killion stated, "Granting the Palestinians full membership now in a specialized agency such as UNESCO is premature. Given that the UN Security Council is reviewing the Palestinian application, it is inappropriate for a UN specialized agency to also take up the same matter."

We therefore respectfully request that you do everything in your power to ensure that the Palestine Liberation Organization's application to become a Member State does not come before the UNESCO General Conference. Any recognition of Palestine as a Member State would not only jeopardize the hope for a resumption of direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, but would endanger the United States' contribution to UNESCO.

We appreciate the important work that UNESCO does, but must stress the significance of elevating the Palestine Liberation Organization from observer to Member State. We hope you will consider this request with the appropriate seriousness and look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Steven Rothman

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