



**The Permanent Delegation of the
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to UNESCO**



**The Permanent Delegation of the
State of Palestine to UNESCO**

Paris, December 18th, 2019

Madam Director-General,

On July 2, we have sent you a letter to bring to your attention the detrimental plans of the Occupying Power, Israel, to implement a city cable car. It will stretch over the Occupied Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls; a site inscribed, at the request of Jordan, on the World Heritage list since 1981, and on the list of the World Heritage in Danger since 1982.

On November 4, 2019, according to the Times of Israel article, Israel's Housing Cabinet approved the controversial construction plan of a cable car to the Western Wall of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem's Old City to be implemented by 2021.

(Link to the article: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ministerial-panel-okays-maligned-western-wall-cable-car-plan/>).

Despite protests and pleas, the intended 1.4 kilometer cable car line over the Old City of Jerusalem will start at the German Colony, and end at the Mughrabi Gate in the center of the occupied Palestinian neighborhood, Silwan. These measures constitute a breach to The Hague Convention of 1954, for the protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflict and its additional protocols as well as to the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

As raised by many architects and organizations, in particular by the world-renowned New York Times architecture critic Michael Kimmelman who called the project as "Jerusalem becoming a Disneyland". The construction of the cable car will drastically alter the distinctive character of the Old City of Jerusalem, and its skyline, thus having a large visual impact on the World Heritage property and its Outstanding Universal Value attributes. Mr. Kimmelman article was published on the front page of the New York Times to open up the public's eyes on what he called the "disneyfication" of the Old City of Jerusalem, allowing what he described as "an architecture of occupation" (Links to articles:

(1) <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-jerusalem-is-becoming-a-jewish-disneyland-nyt-s-architecture-critic-warns-1.7941742>

(2) <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/13/world/middleeast/jerusalem-cable-cars.html>)



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The World Heritage Committee raises, regularly, serious concerns regarding visual impacts due to elements less intrusive than the cable car project in Jerusalem. Furthermore, this project is a clear and grave violation of the provisions of The Hague 1954 Convention for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict and its additional protocols.

In consideration of the foregoing factors, all relevant decisions and resolutions of UNESCO which are directly pertinent to this issue, and beside the importance that UNESCO confers to the protection of the World Heritage sites, we urge you, Madam Director-General, to take, within the scope of UNESCO's mandate, the appropriate measures to prevent this damaging project in the Old City of Jerusalem, and urge Israel, the Occupying Power, to refrain from the continuation of such violations and remind Israel, the Occupying Power, of its obligations under the relevant UNESCO conventions as well as the historic status quo in Jerusalem.

We kindly ask you to inform us of the actions you intend to undertake vis-à-vis this project. We trust that your reaction to this serious violation would be commensurate with its importance.

Madam Director-General, we kindly demand you to annex this letter to the appropriate working documents of the executive board at its 209th session and the World Heritage Committee in its 43rd session.

Please accept, Madam Director-General, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Makram Queisi
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate

Elias Sanbar
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate

CC: President of the General Conference
President of the Executive Board
Assistant Director General for Culture
Director of WHC