UNESCO Has Blood on Its Hands

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#### By Shimon Samuels

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The following is a transcript of a speech delivered by Dr. Shimon Samuels — the director of International Relations for the Simon Wiesenthal Center — at the UNESCO World Heritage Committee gathering this week in Krakow, Poland.

Mr. Chairman,

As the only Jewish NGO accredited to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC), the Simon Wiesenthal Center speaks for its 400,000 membership and concerned Jews and Christians worldwide.

We have the greatest respect for the WHC’s work and called upon it for the protection of Auschwitz, when a discotheque was opened within its protected zone.

Unfortunately, to paraphrase the German strategist von Clausewitz’s aphorism that “diplomacy is war by other means,” since the Palestinian entry into UNESCO in November 2011, the WHC has become “heritage as war by other means!” — a veritable battlefield.

From 2012 the Church of the Nativity, 2014 Battir (Beitar — the site of the Bar Kochba Jewish revolt against the Roman occupation in the year 132) to the Western Wall and the Temple Mount of Solomon, identity theft is a voracious campaign to validate a Palestinian identity.

At this meeting in Poland, on soil soaked with Jewish blood, to witness the ravages on Jewish affinity to Jerusalem and the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, could only be matched by the temerity of an amalgam drawn, on the one hand by a moment of silence for the million Jews —  including children — gassed and shot not 70 kilometers from here in Auschwitz-Birkenau. And on the other hand, a second moment of silence in support of “the Palestinians,” many of whom rejoice at the terrorist murder of Jews today — among them children.

To stand in silence in succession for both is a form of Holocaust revisionism, casting Israelis as Nazis, in violation of the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) and the European Parliament’s Working Definition of Antisemitism, and its signatory countries — all represented here.

Mr. Chairman, no other people or religion has been so maligned in the WHC. We would have been the first to protest were the victim have been Islamic heritage, but the Judeo-Christian heritage is continually under attack in this chamber.

Mr. Chairman, save the WHC from further abuse, from fast track demands based on spurious claims of emergency, while other member-states wait for years to inscribe their heritage.

Mr. Chairman, find the means to leave this politicization to New York.

The WHC must return to its pristine integrity — the acknowledgement, protection, preservation of heritage, in an atmosphere of peaceful dialogue — what we call “tikkun olam” — to redeem and improve the world’s heritage in mutual respect for the narrative of the other.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.