

U.S. Announces Withdrawal from UNESCO



Washington/Paris, October 12 (RHC-Agencies)-- The U.S. State Department has confirmed the country is officially withdrawing from UNESCO, the UN's cultural body it helped found back in 1945. The move is to take effect on December 31st.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the State Department said the decision was prompted by US concerns with mounting arrears at UNESCO, the need for fundamental reform in the organization and what it called "anti-Israel bias" at UNESCO.

Washington will remain in the organization "as a non-member observer state in order to contribute US views, perspectives and expertise," the statement said.

Meanwhile, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova said she regretted the decision, saying it meant a loss to the organization. "At the time when the fight against violent extremism calls for renewed investment in education, in dialogue among cultures to prevent hatred, it is deeply regrettable that the United States should withdraw from the United Nations agency leading these issues," she said in a statement.

This is the second time the U.S. withdraws from the Paris-based multilateral organization. The U.S. previously withdrew under Ronald Reagan, only to rejoin under George W. Bush.

UNESCO has drawn the ire of Israel and the Trump administration for a series of decisions, including the listing of Hebron, a city in the southern part of the occupied Palestinian territories, as a Palestinian World Heritage Site.

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