

August 24, 2016

Her Excellency Ms. Irina Bokova
Director-General
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP
France

Dear Madame Director-General,

On behalf of B'nai B'rith International, we write to urge you to address the danger currently posed to the Tomb of Nahum. The tomb is an important Jewish heritage site in the city of Al Qosh in Iraq that is also revered by Christians, Muslims, Yazidis and others.

Nahum was an ancient Hebrew prophet whose vision of the fall of the Assyrian Empire is recorded in the Bible. The tomb is in a synagogue in Al Qosh, which is located in the northern part of Iraq. Most Iraqi Jews, including the custodians of this site, were forced to flee Iraq following the establishment of the State of Israel. Since the exodus of the Jewish population, Iraqi Christians have been taking care of the site. It is reportedly in desperate need of structural repairs and under threat from the Islamic State group, which operates in areas nearby and whose penchant for the destruction of world heritage sites has been on horrific display in recent years, as you know.

Given UNESCO's forefront role in the preservation of prime historical and cultural assets, we ask you to help bring urgent attention to an ancient heritage site in danger. Recognition of the importance of Nahum's Tomb, and the threats posed to it, by UNESCO could be an important step for the organization in acknowledging and honoring Jewish history.

We ask you to lend your voice and resources to efforts to save Nahum's Tomb, in the hopes that it will help spur UNESCO member states and the international community to action.

Sincerely,

Gary P. Saltzman
President

Daniel S. Mariaschin
Executive Vice President