

# Israel Campaigns Against Palestine Joining UN Tourism Body

By [Middle East Monitor](#)

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*Featured image: Palestinians shop at the market in preparation for Eid. Sellers and vendors have seen a decrease in customers due to the austerity Palestinians are facing due to PA's policies. [Mohammed Asad/Middle East Monitor]*

*Israel is attempting to thwart a Palestinian bid to join the United Nation's World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), arguing that the "State of Palestine" does not exist, according to the Jerusalem Post.*

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) Ministry of Tourism applied for membership into the organisation last year, and the issue is on the meeting agenda of the UNWTO General Assembly in China, which begins on Monday and runs through Saturday.

The UNWTO is based in Madrid, and describes itself as "responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism".

Israel has endeavoured to block the move by appealing to the outgoing WTO Secretary-General, Jordanian diplomat **Taleb Rifai**, and China where the conference is being held.

Tel Aviv has also involved the US, which has reportedly asked PA **President Mahmoud Abbas** to refrain from engaging in international organisations until the US releases its updated peace plan, warning that to act otherwise could damage their bilateral relations.

"Israel has taken all diplomatic measures to block the request," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said. "We are not expecting any negative impact on Israel or its continued activity in the organisation - the expected damage will be to the organisation itself."

If the bid is successful, it would be the second UN organisation, after UNESCO, to which the Palestinians have full membership. Human rights groups and Palestinian officials have regularly called on the UN to condemn the crimes of the Israeli occupation. Israel has ignored all resolutions contrary to their favour, and denounces the UN's limited recognition of Palestine.

Israel was also angered in July following UNESCO rulings that condemned the continued occupation of [Jerusalem](#) and recognised [Hebron](#) as a Palestinian Heritage Site under threat from Israel. In response, Israel [cut its funding](#) to the international organisation by \$1 million,

with **Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman** labelling the UN branch “anti-Semitic”.

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