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USA Set To Re-Join UN Cultural Agency UNESCO

Why In The News?

- The United Nations' Cultural And Scientific Agency (UNESCO) Has Announced That The United States Plans To Rejoin - And Pay More Than \$600m In Back Dues - After A Decade-long Dispute Sparked By The Organization's Move To Include Palestine As A Member.
- UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay Informed Ambassadors Of The Member States Of The US Decision In A Special Meeting On Monday. US Decides To Rejoin UNESCO After 5-year Hiatus.



US officials had expressed concern that China was filling the gap left by its absence. Beijing said it had no objection to the US joining, as it would need a vote before it's allowed back in the cultural body.

Why Did The US Quit The Agency?

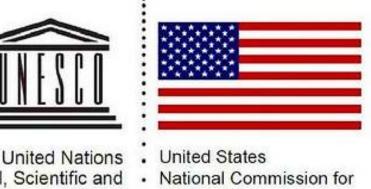
- A Founding Member Of UNESCO, The US Started Falling Out With The Agency In 2011, When The **Body Admitted Palestine As A Member State**, Prompting The Ire Of Both The **US And Israel.**
- Palestine Is Not Recognized As A State By Many Western Countries, Including The US, The UK, Germany - While A Two-state Solution Is Supported, The Countries Argue That Statehood For The Palestinian Territories Would Need To Result From Direct Talks Between The Palestinian Authority And Israel.
- The Move First Triggered An End To US Contributions To The Agency, Which Until That Point, Contributed By Around 22% To UNESCO's Budget. A National Law Requires The US To Cut Funds To Un Agencies That Recognize Palestine As A Full Member. Israel Also Stopped Paying Its Dues.

SSBCrack

 In 2017, Former US President Donald Trump Announced The Us Was Completely Withdrawing From The Agency, Alongside Israel. The US State Department Accused The Body Of Anti-Israel Bias. The Withdrawal Came Into Effect The Next Year.



Cultural Organization • UNESCO



Why Is The US Returning To UNESCO?

- US Officials Have Owed The Return To Washington's Concern That The Void It Left In The Agency Was Being Filled By Beijing. In March, US Secretary Of State Antony Blinken Said The US Absence Allowed China To Write The Rules On Artificial Intelligence.
- On Monday, China's UNESCO Ambassador Jin Yang Said His Country Appreciated UNESCO's Efforts To Restore The Us Membership, Acknowledging The "Negative Impact" Of The USA's Absence On The Agency's Work.
- This Wasn't The US's First Exit From The UN Cultural Agency. In 1984, Washington Withdrew Under President Ronald Reagan, Citing Mismanagement, Corruption And Advancement Of Soviet Interests.
- It Rejoined Much Later In 2003, Under The Administration Of George W. Bush To "Emphasize A Message Of International Cooperation" As The US Launched Its War On Iraq.



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