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## Jerusalem is still occupied

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Israel's control over Jerusalem is one of the most contentious aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since its takeover of east Jerusalem in 1967, the Israeli government has invested incredible sums of money and resources into entrenching their control over the area. It has created new Israeli neighbourhoods around the basin of the old city in an effort to cut Jerusalem off from the West Bank. At the centre of this takeover is Al Aqsa compound.

Last week Unesco, the United Nations cultural organisation, waded deep into the politics of Jerusalem. The world body adopted two resolutions put forward by Arab countries including Egypt, Lebanon and Algeria that refer to "Occupied Jerusalem" and lay out the need to "safeguard the Palestinian cultural heritage and the distinctive character of east Jerusalem's Old City". The resolutions specifically note that the status quo on Al Aqsa Mosque – the third holiest site in Islam – must be preserved as a place of Muslim worship.

Israel slammed the decision and boycotted Unesco by suspending all cooperation with it. Recently, Unesco has taken an increasingly progressive position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After Mahmoud Abbas forced a vote on Palestinian statehood at the United Nations General Assembly, Unesco was one of the first UN bodies to recognise Palestine and open offices in Ramallah.

Now Unesco has drawn attention to Israel's continued entrenchment of control in Jerusalem. While Israel might be upset, Unesco's new resolutions are in line with internationally recognised peace agreements that see Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and Palestine.

At a time when international boycotts against Israel for its occupation of Palestinian land are gaining steam, Tel Aviv's decision to boycott Unesco sets a precedent. Israel is demonstrating that boycotts have a use as a tool of non-violent reaction, something that should encourage BDS supporters. Angry rhetoric about Israel's deepening occupation appears to be transforming into action.