

By Ali Sawafta

RAMALLAH West Bank Fri Jun 20, 2014 4:13pm EDT

- RAMALLAH West Bank (Reuters) - A Palestinian village joined UNESCO's world heritage sites list on Friday after an emergency nomination meant to try to block [Israel](#) from building a barrier across its ancient farmland.

The [United Nations](#) Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation said the village was recognised urgently in view of " [construction](#) of a separation wall that may isolate farmers from fields they have cultivated for centuries".

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee, meeting in Qatar, added the farmed valleys at the village in the occupied West Bank near Jerusalem feature picturesque stone terraces that risk "irreversible damage" were the barrier to be constructed.

[Israel](#) says its barrier of razor wire fences and concrete walls has been built across the West Bank for security reasons. Some of the work begun in 2003 has yet to be completed.

Palestinians argue the barrier deprives them of land where they want to establish an independent state.

The emergency application was an example of the Palestinian leadership's strategy to join U.N. agencies and sign U.N. treaties to boost its claim to statehood.

The UNESCO statement did not mention Israel, saying only that "the landscape had become vulnerable under the impact of socio-cultural and geo-political transformations."

Palestinian village wins UNESCO listing against Israel barrier plan

Written by Joan Russow
Friday, 20 June 2014 17:37 -

In 2012, Israel's high court urged that the barrier in the Battir area be re-routed, a rare incident of support from an Israeli government agency for a Palestinian challenge.

In the vote in Doha on Friday, 11 members of the committee supported listing Battir, three opposed the proposal and seven abstained.

Rula Ma'ayah, the Palestinian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, praised the decision, telling Reuters it guaranteed the village international protection against "allowing the Israeli occupation authorities to damage it".

The birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem is another Palestinian site inscribed on UNESCO's list. The old city walls of Jerusalem are also a world heritage site.

Israel has annexed east Jerusalem as part of its capital in a move never recognised internationally, while Palestinians want it to be the capital of a future state.

(Additional reporting by Nidal Al-Mughrabi; Editing by Tom Heneghan)