

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 26, 2011 6:04 AM
To: H.
Subject: Fw: Palestinians seek UNESCO vote despite US opposition (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Wednesday, October 26, 2011 05:40 AM
To: NEWS-IO; NEWS-NEA; NEWS-Mahogany
Cc: SES-O
Subject: Palestinians seek UNESCO vote despite US opposition (Reuters)

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Oct 26 (Reuters) - The Palestinians will seek a vote on their bid for full membership of UNESCO on Oct. 30, Foreign Minister Riyal al-Malki said on Wednesday, despite what he called U.S. threats to pull funding from the U.N. cultural agency.

The initiative is part of a Palestinian push, opposed by the United States, for recognition as a state in the U.N. system -- a move the Palestinians hope will strengthen their standing vis-à-vis Israel.

UNESCO is the first U.N. agency the Palestinians have sought to join as a full member since applying for full membership of the United Nations on Sept. 23. The bid for a full U.N. seat, which can be granted only by the Security Council, is destined to fail because of opposition by Washington, which has a veto in the forum.

But UNESCO is one agency the Palestinians can join as a full member regardless of their wider U.N. status.

Malki said a Palestinian representative would address UNESCO's General Conference on Sunday and the Palestinians were aiming for a vote the same day.

"We are trying with all effort, through our ambassador in UNESCO, to have a vote on our request for membership of UNESCO at the time that we give the speech," he said in an interview with Voice of Palestine radio broadcast on Wednesday.

"We hope that we will succeed in this effort despite our recognition of great pressure which the United States of America is leading inside UNESCO," Malki said.

He said there were "great threats ... that if Palestine's membership of UNESCO is approved, the United States will stop its assistance to that organisation".

NewsTickers alert senior Department officials to breaking news. This item appears as it did in its original publication and does not contain analysis or commentary by Department sources.