

Dead Sea Scrolls Canadian display disputed

by UPI

TORONTO -- Top Palestinian authorities are challenging plans by a Toronto museum to exhibit the 2,000-year-old Dead Sea Scrolls this summer.

In a letter to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and directors of the Royal Ontario Museum, Hamdan Taha, director general of the archaeological department in the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities said the exhibit was a violation of international law and called on Canada to cancel the show, the Toronto Star reported from Jerusalem.

The Palestinians claim the six-month exhibit to begin in June violates at least four international conventions or protocols on the treatment of cultural goods that were illegally obtained, the report said.

"The exhibition would entail exhibiting or displaying artifacts removed from the Palestinian territories" by Israel, Taha wrote.

The parchment and papyrus scrolls were discovered from 1947-56 in caves on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. They were stored in East Jerusalem, which was annexed by Israel in 1967.

Pnina Shor, head of the artifacts treatment and conservation department at the Israel Antiquities Authority, told the Star the complaint was unfounded.

"We are the custodians of the Dead Sea Scrolls," Shor said. "As such, we have a right to exhibit them and to conserve them."

There was no immediate response from the prime minister's office, the report said.

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