

Jordan files complaint over Dead Sea Scrolls: Allegedly stolen during Six-Day War

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Jordan says the ancient manuscripts, which had been on loan from the Israel Antiquities Authority, were stolen from a museum in East Jerusalem that Israel seized from Jordan during the Six-Day War of 1967.

Some of the earliest copies of biblical and religious writings ever found, the 2,000-year-old scrolls were discovered primarily by a Bedouin shepherd in 1947 in caves overlooking the Dead Sea.

Seventeen of the approximately 900 scrolls had been on display in Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum since June at the hugely popular "Words that Changed the World" exhibition, which closed on January 3.

On January 11, after Canada declined to seize the scrolls, Jordan announced that it had complained to UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

"The government has legal documents that prove Jordan owns the scrolls," Rafea Harahsheh of Jordan's antiquities department said in a statement. Jordan made its latest formal claim to the scrolls in mid-December, citing the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Toronto's *Globe and Mail* newspaper quoted a spokesperson for Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade as saying that it would be inappropriate for Canada to intervene.

“Differences regarding ownership of the Dead Sea Scrolls should be addressed by Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority,” the spokesperson stated.

Palestinians also claim the scrolls as part of their heritage; in 2009 they had asked Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to cancel the exhibition, declaring the documents had been stolen from Palestinian territory.

Both Jordanian and Palestinian officials said they did not expect Canada to determine who owned the scrolls but wanted them kept safe until their ownership was resolved.

The scrolls were scheduled to be part of an exhibition at the Milwaukee Public Museum, starting on January 22. -ENI/RNS

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