



An urgent and firm response against the destruction of cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq

The irreparable destruction of cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq requires a powerful and firm response from the International Community. It is not sufficient anymore to solely verbally condemn these systematic crimes against humanity.

We call for an immediate international action based on four proposals:

1. Set up a Task Force at UNESCO with the aim of establishing the so-called “protected cultural areas”, as suggested by Italy (21 April 2015) to the Executive Board of UNESCO.

This proposal is in accordance to article 19 of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), articles 9 and 17 of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), as well as the resolution 2199/2015 of the Security Council of the United Nations and resolution 196 ex/29 (2015) of the Executive Board of UNESCO.

The relevant Commissions of the Italian Parliament have unanimously reaffirmed these principles on the 5th of August 2015. Italy should propose during the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations that all UN Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement missions include a cultural component whose operating functions are established by the UN Security Council and defined by UNESCO.

2. The Task Force should consist of scholars and technical experts and should include security forces designated by each State. Italy must immediately put in place the necessary national contingent.

We can mobilize the scientific and technological capacities of our country in cultural heritage conservation together with the exceptional investigative and effective contribution of the Carabinieri to the protection of Cultural heritage.



**INCONTRO
DI CIVILTÀ**
PER LA SALVEZZA E IL RECUPERO
DEL PATRIMONIO CULTURALE

3. The Task Force should be assigned with the following responsibilities:

- a) To update and monitor the state of conservation of damaged and endangered historic and archaeological sites and monuments.
- b) To constantly monitor the illicit traffic of stolen antiquities from these regions; to inform the International Community and to clarify who is responsible and involved in illicit trafficking according to the legal instruments in force at the international level; to document and to promote the recovery of stolen antiquities, and to make them accessible, at least partially, to the public in scientific, educational and exhibition contexts to the highest standard.
- c) To identify various “protected cultural areas”, where cultural property of exceptional value could be protected and safeguarded under the mandate of the Security Council of the UN and with the coordination of UNESCO.

4. UNESCO should be given the necessary resources by its Member States and especially from the European Union, in order to:

- a) Coordinate programmes of cooperation for the training of technical staff, conservators and custodians, in collaboration with ICCROM and other relevant international organizations. These should include specific activities of prevention and first aid interventions. Such programmes can be promoted on a bilateral and multilateral basis, with the participation of countries from the Mediterranean and the Middle East.
- b) Plan pilot projects for the reconstruction and restoration of damaged cultural heritage. The technical and scientific feasibility of such projects should be rigorously evaluated to allow for their implementation following the end of ongoing conflicts. Pending the implementation of such reconstructions, virtual reconstructions should be promoted, as exempla to the people affected by conflicts and the whole of humanity, to raise awareness of what has been destroyed.
- c) Introduce educational programmes for heritage and culture in all programmes developed for hosting and managing refugees, in accordance to the proposal put forward by ICCROM. This initiative can mitigate the risk of identity loss that refugees have to fight against with the passing of time.