

## **Laudatio for the Honorary Mention, Khaled Al Asaad, and all those who have stood up for heritage**

Today is the day that we celebrate the great achievements of our field by congratulating Mr. Grellan Rourke for his accomplishments and his award.

It is also the day that we would like to remember those that have faced adversity and have given up their lives to protect heritage worldwide.

ICCROM Council this year has decided to have an exceptional posthumous recognition for Mr. Khaled al Asaad with an Honorary Mention to commemorate his dedication and courage. This is to convey the message worldwide that we will not forget Mr Al Asaad, and all those women and men who have perished for the causes of protecting heritage.

Mr. Al Asaad was born in 1934 and dedicated his professional career to the protection and research of archaeological sites and antiquities in Syria since 1961. He was the center of coordinating the archaeological excavations and research on Palmyra, and promoting its history and values to a global audience.

He dedicated more than 50 years to the protection and conservation of Palmyra, which became a World Heritage site in 1980 during the period he was serving as head of the department of antiquities of Palmyra.

On 18 August 2015 he died defending Palmyra's treasures and legacy against violent military extremists. He devoted his life and passion for the protection of heritage, which we should not forget.

Even in the worst disasters, we see people, committed to defending their heritage at the risk of their own lives. We pay tribute to their lives and the values that they have upheld, through this symbolic recognition for Khaled Al Asaad.

The power of heritage can be the basis for bringing peace, stability and social cohesion, which is precisely why violent extremists target cultural heritage for destruction. Heritage is the basis for identifying our own self, by understanding how we are connected to the past, how we have relations with others, and how we have lived in diversity. This is why ICCROM puts forward as its motto, "conserving culture, promoting diversity."

We go about our individual jobs, protecting heritage in one way or another in different capacities. On a daily basis, our work may seem small, sometimes it may seem repetitive. But our activities go beyond conserving the physical remains that we see. Through our collective work that accumulate over the years, we are protecting the evidences of history, of how people have lived, and what we have built up as our collective memory and thoughts. Through protecting heritage, we learn the lessons of life and the world. We acquire the resilience that we need as society to pull through difficult times. Heritage is what brings us together.



The Constitution of UNESCO quotes “that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.” Protecting heritage is precisely our action that we must take, for constructing the defences of peace.

The honorary mention today for Khaled al Asaad is a reminder for us to think about those who have dedicated their lives for heritage protection up to the point of sacrificing their lives. It is to commemorate their actions and hold up the values that they have believed in.

It is our job to remember their sacrifice and carry on the act of protecting heritage, for our common good, for our common future.

I would now like to turn the attention of the General Assembly to the screen, as Mr Al Asaad’s son Waleed Al Asaad, has honoured us with a short video message in commemoration of his father.

I would now like to ask the General Assembly to rise and observe a minute of silence for all those who have sacrificed their lives for the protection of heritage.

Thank you.

For the video, please refer to the ICCROM Official Channel on YouTube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hO26simdDLE>