



Statement of the *International Association for Assyriology* concerning the cultural heritage of Syria and Iraq

The International Association for Assyriology declares its grave concern about the ongoing and worsening situation in Syria and Iraq. Beyond the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Iraq since 1990 and in Syria since 2011, the cultural heritage of these two countries is in great danger. Irremediable damage is being caused to the legacy of ancient Mesopotamia, the cradle of human civilization. Museums have been plundered, and archaeological sites have been heavily damaged or destroyed.

In Iraq, sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List or submitted on the Tentative List are in danger or already much devastated: Assur (Qal'at Sherqat), Hatra, Samarra, Nineveh, Ur, Nimrud, Babylon, the Marshlands, etc. It is also the case with other important archaeological sites not recorded by UNESCO, such as Sippar, Larsa, Uruk, and many others. The Iraq Museum in Baghdad has been looted (2003).

In Syria as well, sites inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List or submitted on the Tentative List have suffered serious damage: Aleppo's citadel, Bosra, the old city of Damascus, Palmyra, Ebla, Dura-Europos, Mari, Ugarit, Tell Sheikh Hamad, Apamea, Krak des Chevaliers, Hama, Homs. The museums of Raqqa, Hama, Deir ez-Zor and Idlib have been plundered.

The ancient civilisations of Syria and Iraq play a vital role in their modern identities. The devastation wrought in these countries strikes a heavy blow against the cultural life of the region, and against a significant part of mankind's shared cultural heritage. Furthermore, the damage to monuments and museums threatens an important source of future tourist income that could help communities rebuild towards a brighter future.

The *International Association for Assyriology*, which gathers scholars from around the world working in Cuneiform Studies and Near Eastern Archaeology, makes a public appeal for the preservation and the protection of sites, monuments and museums of Syria and Iraq.

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