

Terrorist Organizations and Hostilities against Cultural Archaeological Property (Iraq- Syria- Libya)



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Archaeological Property
(Iraq- Syria- Libya)**

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Introduction

Cultural heritage is the ways of living developed by society and passed down from generation to generation, which include places, things, customs, practices, expressions, and artistic values. They are preserved in the present for their survival for future generations. Cultural heritage has many types, the most important of which is the tangible or archaeological cultural heritage that every country has the duty to protect. The UNESCO also protects the world cultural heritage.

Archaeological cultural heritage includes artifacts, which include paintings, drawings, prints, mosaics, sculptures, historical monuments, buildings, and other archaeological sites. It also includes all human evidence and expressions, such as: photos, documents, books, manuscripts, and tools, whether individual or collective.

All cultural heritage around the world is protected by national laws and international treaties, where there is illegal trade in antiquities and cultural objects, looting of archaeological sites, destruction of historical buildings and monuments, which cause irreparable damage to the cultural heritage of a country. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has adopted international conventions related to the protection of cultural heritage, to promote understanding between cultures, while emphasizing the importance of international cooperation and at-risk areas must be monitored in order to raise awareness about conflicts and prevent disasters that cause damage.

The cultural heritage in the Arab area is currently exposed to many threats, violations and destructions due to the emergence of extremist terrorist groups that reject the existence of various antiquities and consider them against the Islamic religion. The destruction of cultural property affects the social and economic conditions of peoples, so a global system for the protection of cultural heritage and various archaeological properties must be established by UNESCO. To help protect the cultural heritage, several international agreements were signed to protect the cultural heritage.



First: International conventions for the protection of cultural heritage

Given the importance of cultural heritage as it constitutes the identity and history of countries, the international community and international organizations have been keen to conclude many agreements that contribute to strengthening the preservation of international cultural heritage, and these agreements date back to the first agreement of 1972 (Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage) that was concluded in Paris. The Convention defines cultural heritage as follows: *“Architectural works, sculptural and photographic works on buildings, elements or formations of a rich character, inscriptions, caves, and groups of monuments, all of which are of exceptional universal value from the point of view of history, art or science. complexes: groups of isolated or connected buildings which, by reason of their architecture, symmetry, or integration into a landscape, have an exceptional universal value from the point of view of history, art, or science; sites: works of man, or joint works of man and nature, as well as areas, including archaeological sites, which are of exceptional universal value from a historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.”*

Article (6) of the Convention stipulates that the states parties must undertake not to take any measures that would harm, directly or indirectly, the cultural heritage. The text of the article reads as follows: *“States Parties undertake to make their efforts, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention, to identify, protect, preserve and display the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2, if requested by the State in whose territory such heritage is located.”*

Article (8) of the Convention stipulates the necessity of establishing an intergovernmental committee for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of universal outstanding value. The text of the article reads as follows: *“There shall be established at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization an intergovernmental committee for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of exceptional universal value, known as the “World Heritage Committee.” The committee is composed of fifteen states parties to the Convention, elected by the states Parties to the Convention, in a general meeting during the regular sessions of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization The number of member states in the Committee becomes twenty-one, starting from the regular session of the General Conference following the entry into force of this Agreement with respect to at least 40 states.”*



1. The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property during Armed Conflict 1954

A major treaty for the protection of cultural heritage is the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague Convention). It deals with the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict and occupation from damage and destruction and from all forms of misappropriation. It is the only international instrument specifically designed to protect cultural heritage during armed conflict and occupation, and aims to ensure that cultural property, both movable and immovable, is preserved and respected. It is supplemented by two protocols - the first protocol adopted in 1954 and the second protocol adopted in 1999.

The Hague Convention defines cultural heritage as:

- 1. Movable or immovable property of cultural heritage, such as architectural monuments, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings that, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books, etc. of objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scholarly collections, important book collections, archives or copies of the property identified above*
- 2. Buildings whose principal and actual purpose is to protect and display movable cultural property such as museums, major libraries and archives, and caches intended for the protection, in the event of armed conflict, of movable cultural property.*
- 3. Centers containing a large collection of cultural property to be known as "Memorial Building Centers".*

Protocol II (1999) reinforces many of the provisions of the Convention and its first protocol regarding the preservation and respect of cultural heritage and conduct during hostilities. It gives "enhanced protection" to cultural property. It recognizes properties of exceptional cultural and historical value, guarantees them the highest level of protection and prohibits their use for military purposes or as a shield for the protection of military sites. It also directly determines the penalties due in the event of serious violations against cultural property, and the circumstances under which individual criminal responsibility applies

The agreement also specified how cultural heritage should be dealt with in both peace and conflict situations. During peace, states parties should:



Take all preparatory measures to safeguard cultural property from the unforeseen effects of an armed conflict. States must take all of the following: preparing inventories, planning emergency measures to protect against fire or building collapse, preparing for the transfer of movable cultural property or providing protection for such property on site; and designation of the competent authorities responsible for the safeguarding of cultural property.

In the event of an armed conflict, the States Parties shall:

- Respect the cultural property located within its territory and the territory of each other by refraining from directing any hostile act directed against such property.
- Protection of cultural property located in the occupied territories to the maximum extent possible. Take the necessary measures to preserve it, including prohibiting and preventing all theft, pillage, illegal export, removal or transfer of cultural property as well as any misappropriation or acts of vandalism directed against cultural property.
- Refrain from directing any act of reprisals against cultural property.
- Take all necessary steps to prosecute and impose penal or disciplinary sanctions for persons who commit or order in violation of the Convention.

2- Geneva Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property 1949

The Convention includes two additional protocols for the protection of cultural property so that it is binding on states. Article (53) of Protocol I states that “the following acts are prohibited, without prejudice to the provisions of the Hague Convention relating to the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of May 14, 1954 and the provisions of other international instruments on the subject: (a) to commit any of the hostilities directed against historical monuments, works of art or places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples; (b) the use of such property in support of the war effort; (C) making such property the object of retaliatory attacks.”

This article does not refer to the prohibition of looting of cultural property. This is no surprise. In fact, the Additional Protocol complements the Geneva Conventions. However, Article (33) of the Fourth Geneva Convention already prohibits pillage. This provision applies to all civil property, including cultural property. Article (16) of Protocol II also prohibits the commission of any hostile act directed against cultural property and its use in support of the war effort.



3- The UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Measures to be Taken to Prohibit and Prevent the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property

The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property urges States Parties to take measures to prohibit and prevent illicit trafficking in cultural property. It provides a common framework for States Parties on the measures to be taken to prohibit and prevent the import, export and transfer of cultural property.

The Convention attaches pivotal importance to the issue of the return and restitution of cultural property, and its mission is not limited to preserving the identity of peoples and preserving their history, but also primarily bears the responsibility to protect and defend this identity, and to promote peaceful societies that ultimately ensure the strengthening and consolidation of the spirit of solidarity. In this sense, the 1970 agreement is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

Second: The Destruction of Cultural Property by Terrorist Groups

The Islamic State (ISIS) has stolen and destroyed cultural heritage since 2014 in Iraq, Syria and, to a lesser extent, Libya. In general; The organization focused on destroying various targets, such as places of worship and ancient historical sites, including archaeological ones. During the fall of Mosul from June 2014 to February 2015; ISIS looted and destroyed at least 28 historical and cultural buildings, while others were looted in order to sell them on the black market.

ISIS used a unit known locally as the “settlement battalions”, which is responsible for identifying targets for demolition, looting, and theft. Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UNESCO, described the activities of ISIS in this regard as “a form of cultural genocide” and the campaign “Unite for Heritage” was launched in order to protect heritage sites threatened by extremists.



ISIS justifies its destruction of cultural heritage sites through its Salafism. According to its followers, places are of great importance in monotheism and the abolition of polytheism. Beyond the ideological aspects of this destruction; there are other, more practical reasons, such as capturing the world's attention by destroying such sites, given the wide media coverage and international condemnation that follows. The destruction of the historical ruins of ISIS allows it to start over without leaving any previous culture or civilization, this is not to mention its desire to leave its mark throughout history.

Despite images and videos showing the extremism of ISIS through its destruction of archaeological sites and its use of antiquities looting to fund its activities, the United Nations has imposed a ban on the trade of antiquities looted from Syria since 2011. Despite that, the group was able to smuggle these artifacts from the Middle East to the so-called underground economy in Europe and North America. ISIS has taken an approach it called "cultural cleansing" to eliminate the historical legacy of Syria, Libya and Iraq.

1-Iraq

Since the Islamic State (ISIS) seized the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in June 2014, the centuries-old destruction of churches and Islamic and non-Islamic sites, and the looting of museums and libraries at the hands of ISIS militants have captured the attention of the entire world. With ISIS now in control of large parts of Iraq, the country's unique cultural heritage is more vulnerable than ever.

UNESCO, the UN organization responsible for the protection and maintenance of archaeological sites, described the attacks on Iraq's cultural heritage as a form of "cultural cleansing". The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on May 21, 2015 to protect Iraq's cultural heritage and diversity. However, this heritage, which includes traces of Babylonian, Assyrian and other civilizations, was already at risk before the expansion of ISIS.

The ISIS takeover of Mosul 2014-2015

After capturing Mosul in June 2014, ISIS began destroying Shiaah mosques, tombs and Sufi shrines, the heritage of Islamic sects that do not conform to ISIS'



strict interpretation of Islam. The Sheikh Jawad Mosque in TalAfar, a large Shiite-dominated city about 56 kilometers from Mosul, was fitted with explosives and leveled to the ground. According to Human Rights Watch, seven Shiite places of worship in TalAfar and other places of worship in Shiite villages on the border with Mosul were destroyed. ISIS gangs have also expelled the residents of Shiite Turkmen villages.

ISIS's campaign of destruction was not limited to Shiah sites. The shrine of the Prophet Yunus was blown up in Mosul, which is revered by Sunni Muslims, which was confirmed by both local sources and ISIS videos. ISIS also demolished the tomb of the Prophet Gerges, a legendary prophet of the first century, and his mosque; Other tombs and shrines were also demolished in the same way. At the end of February 2015, ISIS destroyed the Al-Khidr Mosque, which was built in 1133 and named after a beloved Sufi Islamic figure. This is part of the campaign to rid the area of all Sufi shrines.

ISIS has also targeted several Christian heritage sites, destroying a number of Christian sites, including the Church of the Virgin Mary north of Mosul and the 7th-century Green Church in Tikrit, one of the oldest churches in the Middle East.

ISIS was not satisfied with that. At the beginning of 2015, ISIS used heavy machinery to destroy and raze the Iraqi city of great archaeological value, "Nimrud". After a video was released on February 26, 2015, it showed ISIS elements storming the Mosul Museum and smashing the statues with heavy hammers. After this video, officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Tourism reported that ISIS razed the ruins of the Assyrian city of Nimrud, and a Kurdish official stated that ISIS attacked the ancient city of Khorsabad, which dates back to 700 BC. The city of Nimrud was a candidate for inclusion on the list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization "UNESCO". A world heritage site, dating back to the 13th century BC, it was known as "Kalho".

Mosul Museum; It is the second most important museum after the National Museum in Baghdad. In February 2015, the extremist organization published a video tape showing its elements destroying monuments and statues, some of them from Nimrud and others from the ancient city of Hatra, which dates back to the Roman era and is listed on the World Heritage List.



On July 24, 2015, the shrine of the Prophet Yunis, one of the most prominent landmarks in the city of Mosul, was blown up. In addition to the “forty shrine”, which is located in the city of Tikrit, which contains the remains of 40 soldiers from the army of Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, was destroyed during the Islamic conquest of Mesopotamia in the year 638 AH. Before them was the Mosul Library as in February 2015, they burned thousands of rare books and manuscripts in the Mosul Library, and it was not clear the extent of the damage to the library building. The UNESCO" organization burning books as a new stage in the “cultural war” that ISIS is carrying out.

The terrorist group also demolished the statue of Abu Tammam in June 2015. It is a huge statue of the Abbasid poet Abu Tammam, which is located in the Al-Toub neighborhood in the city of Mosul. Also, the Green Church in the beginning of October of 2015 was destroyed, which is about 1,300 years old, bears witness to the massacre of Christians at the hands of the Mongols during the year 1258 AD, and is located in the city of Tikrit, the largest city in Salah Governorate. ISIS justifies the destruction of statues and other artifacts as pagan, and therefore forbidden. The ideology of ISIS, which is linked to the Wahhabi school of Islam, rejects any form of polytheism and idolatry.

An official in the Iraqi state claimed that ISIS uses the destruction of sites as a cover for looting artifacts, as large-sized pieces are destroyed in preparation for their transportation, while those that can be sold are removed. Moreover, ISIS's record of looting in Syria corroborates these allegations. According to some followers of this case, ISIS' interest in destroying these archaeological sites has nothing to do with faith but is purely financial, pointing, it is said, to the involvement of archaeologists and experienced contractors.

2-Syria 2013-2016

The events in Syria, starting in 2011, led to a humanitarian catastrophe, as well as the destruction of the Syrian cultural heritage. Since the Islamic State organization "ISIS" took over Syrian lands, the destruction of the Syrian cultural heritage has begun, especially the Syrian city of Palmyra, which includes the largest number of Syrian archaeological sites. Several Syrian cities have also



been exposed to the destruction of many heritage places, such as the city of Aleppo and Raqqa.

Aleppo city

ISIS occupied it from July 2012 to December 2016. The city of Aleppo includes many heritage sites, including the Great Mosque, which was built in the twelfth century, Christian churches in the sixteenth century, or Ottoman mosques and palaces, whose architectural history dates back to the Greek and Roman era. Rebels invaded the city for the first time in 2012, and the largest Syrian battles took place in 2012, and the battles there continued until December 22, 2016.

According to a satellite map made by The United Nations Satellite Center (UNOSAT), 35,722 buildings were damaged in Aleppo as of September 2016, according to UNESCO. The history of the historic old city has been destroyed. The Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, said that the destruction of one of the largest and most powerful cities in the world is a tragedy for all Syrians and for all of humanity.

Raqqa city

In 2015, the New York Times published an interactive map showing the destruction by ISIS fighters of three historical shrines of Islamic figures in the "Ammar Ibn Yasir" mosque, a Shiite pilgrimage site, and the damage was reported to the historic old city, which was the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate between 796 and 809, specifically in the area around the Raqqa Museum, which was dedicated to preserving cultural heritage.

Palmyra City

ISIS occupied it in May 2015 to March 2016, and again in December 2016 to March 2017, ISIS occupied Palmyra twice, and the Syrian and Russian forces recently reclaimed the city in March 2017. During its first occupation in 2015, militants destroyed the "Lion Al-Lat", a 2,000-year-old statue that once guarded an ancient temple dedicated to pre-Islamic deities, the BBC reported. The Lion was guarding the Palmyra Museum, and the artifacts inside the museum were moved to other places in the country for safekeeping. In the same summer, ISIS bombed the temples of Bel and Balchamin, which are located near ancient and medieval tombs.



The Archaeological Museum of Greco-Roman Antiquities in Palmyra, Syria, has lost about 3,500 pieces while it was under the control of ISIS fighters, said Mohamad Mahamoud, Director General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria.

In October, ISIS destroyed the Monumental Arch of Palmyra in the city. Other damages include the Sultaniya Mosque and the Folklore Museum, which were destroyed by ISIS-planted bombs. More recently, during the second ISIS occupation of the city, the group destroyed the remains of the ancient Roman Tetrapoleon and part of a nearby Roman theater, sometime between December 2016 and February 2017.

It was not only in Syria that ISIS destroyed archaeological areas, as the organization took advantage of the chaos they caused in Syria and looted and smuggled antiquities, as ISIS is considered the richest terrorist organization because of its smuggling of the country's antiquities that it can enter and destroy.

3-Libya

Some archaeological areas and museums have been subjected to deliberate looting by some armed criminal and terrorist organizations. Some Libyan archaeological sites have witnessed large-scale looting since the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime and the rise of armed militias, such as the rocky Acacus Mountains, the ancient city of Cyrene, and the city of Shahat near the city of Al-Bayda, And the great city of Leptis Magna, which has Roman antiquities classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, and not only small artifacts, but the looting included the seizure of an ancient statue of Omar Mukhtar, and the statue of the nymph and gazelle in the capital, Tripoli.

The jihadist groups destroyed archaeological paintings and pictures in the archaeological area of Akakos in southern Libya in early 2015, in addition to the destruction of the ancient Libyan city of Shahat, the Greek antiquities there, such as the Akropolis Castle, the Temple of Zeus, the portico of Hercules, and other Greek archaeological sites in the city.



ISIS also destroyed many shrines, including the shrines in Zliten, east of Tripoli and in the capital itself, the historical Zuweila shrines in the south, shrines in Derna, and Sufi shrines and sites in the cities of Surman and Sabratha, west of the capital.

The Libyan Antiquities Authority documented several thefts, including the theft of some pottery from the Sultan Museum near the city of Sirte and the theft of a number of potteries from the Sousse Museum, in addition to the theft of two mosaic panels in Shahat and the Benghazi treasure.

A gang has hijacked the "Benghazi Treasure", a group of gold, silver and bronze coins, some dating back to prehistoric times, and numbering about 7,700 pieces, after the gang excavated the ceiling of an underground treasury in the National Commercial Bank in Benghazi, in late 2011.

Archaeologists in Libya have confirmed that many archaeological sites have been bulldozed since 2011 and turned into dwellings, including sites inside the city of Shahat. The rock carvings in the Acacus Mountains in the heart of the desert were subjected to acts of vandalism with paint, while indiscriminate bombings targeted an Ottoman palace in Benghazi.

The Libyan archaeologist "Fadl Al-Hassi" added that "an Islamic palace built by Al-Mu'izz Lidin Allah Al-Fatimi in the Al-Aziyat area west of the city of Tobruk on the Libyan-Egyptian border was vandalized, to be turned into an animal pen."

Third: ISIS and the antiquities trade

ISIS appears in many videos while demolishing and destroying various statues in Iraq that represent Iraqi cultural heritage, claiming that the destruction of these monuments are considered to them idols. The second goal of destroying these monuments is to eliminate the symbols of Shiite and Sufi Islam, which It is considered perverted in the eyes of the organization. But ISIS' claim that the demolition of the Assyrian and Babylonian statues is due to the existence of their worship so far has raised many doubts, as these worships are considered ancient worships, which made the international community and scholars search for the main reason behind the destruction of antiquities for



him, which is Trading in antiquities and excavating them for the purpose of selling them on the black market.

In April of 2016, Vitaly Churkin, the Russian ambassador to the UN, sent a letter to the Security Council in which he asserted, based on Russian intelligence, that ISIS makes annual profits ranging between 150 and 200 million dollars annually, as a result of selling antiquities it loots from 4,500 An archaeological site (of which 9 are included in the UNESCO Lists of Human Heritage) between Syria and Iraq.

The Russian ambassador confirmed at the time that the smuggling of antiquities carried out by ISIS is strictly legal and institutional, and is not arbitrary or improvised. He told the international news agency (Reuters), *"The smuggling of antiquities is carried out by the Antiquities Department of ISIS, which is affiliated with an institution parallel to the Ministry of Natural Resources. Only those who have a permit stamped with the extremist organization's seal are allowed to excavate and transport them."*

the selling of antiquities by (ISIS) are not limited to traditional methods, but extend to cyberspace. A large group of Syrian and Iraqi antiquities have been spotted being publicly sold on popular online auction sites and stores such as eBay. The social networking site (Facebook) witnessed the launch of a number of pages through which ISIS fighters sell antiquities they steal from the areas they control militarily.

Fourth: International Efforts to Protect Cultural Heritage

1-International initiative to combat terrorist destruction of cultural property, illicit trafficking and organized crime

On September 27, 2015, the Foreign Ministers of Italy and Jordan, in the presence of officials from UNESCO, INTERPOL, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as ministers from several United Nations Member States, launched an initiative titled "Protecting Cultural Heritage- A Human Duty". This campaign aims mainly to follow up on the resolutions and decisions taken by the Security Council, the General Assembly of the United Nations and



other international bodies. Reaffirming her outsized political commitment, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova emphasized that *“culture is a direct target in this conflict and we must include it at the center of peace efforts. The initiative aims to strengthen the World Alliance for Heritage Protection that was launched during the meeting of the World Heritage Committee held in Bonn (Germany) from June 28 to July 8, 2015. To educate the public and urge action to confront this danger.”*

2- Security Council Resolution 2347 Concerning the Protection of Cultural Heritage 2017

The Iraqi efforts made by the Iraqi Minister of Culture to protect and restore Iraq’s cultural heritage led the UN Security Council to adopt, in 2017, a resolution on the issue of destruction, looting and illegal smuggling of cultural heritage during armed conflicts, warning that attacks on archaeological sites could amount to war crimes. Resolution 2347, unanimously approved and drafted by France and Italy by the 15 members of the Council, condemns the destruction of cultural heritage, religious sites and artifacts, as well as "the looting and smuggling of cultural property from archaeological sites, museums, archives and other sites during armed conflicts, in particular, by terrorist groups."

For the first time in the history of the international organization, the resolution classifies deliberate attacks on cultural heritage sites as war crimes, and in this context grants international peacekeeping missions the powers to assist governments in ensuring the safety of cultural monuments of historical or religious value. Until the adoption of this resolution, the peacekeeping forces operating in Mali alone had exceptionally such powers. The document expands the measures previously taken to prevent the demolition of world heritage during armed conflicts, and contains a number of practical recommendations for United Nations Member States in this regard, including taking “preventive measures” to protect their heritage before conflicts erupt over their lands, in particular, through the establishment of “Safe Zones”. It also recommends strict control of the export and import of archaeological materials through the issuance of mandatory certificates in accordance with international standards.



It suggests that countries establish specialized bodies to combat the smuggling of materials of cultural value

3- The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICCROM is an intergovernmental organization that works at the service of Member States to promote the preservation and rehabilitation of all types of cultural heritage in every region of the world. As part of the international efforts to restore the heritage destroyed at the hands of terrorist groups. ICCROM has launched a program to restore cultural heritage in the city of Mosul, Iraq.

ICCROM has embarked on a comprehensive program to build the capacity of young Mosul architects, engineers and craftsmen to contribute to the restoration of the cultural heritage of Mosul, Iraq. This program is being implemented through an international partnership agreement with the UNESCO within the framework of the "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" initiative, with financial support from the government of the United Arab Emirates and the European Union.

Capacity building activities started during the last year 2021 and will continue throughout 2022, as the training course modules, theoretical and applied, were organized over two tracks with the aim of directly developing local skills and restoring the urban heritage of the old city of Mosul, but also to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the people of Mosul.

The first track relates to the training of young professionals in the field of construction (architects, civil engineers, etc.) while the activities of the second track are related to the training of local craftsmen working in the field of construction such as masons, stone and metal carvers, woodworkers, etc. It will be worked out with professional trainees under Track One. The ICCROM is very excited about this unique program that will help the State of Iraq, a highly capable Member State, to meet the formidable challenge of restoring cultural heritage after the devastating conflict it witnessed.



Conclusion

Despite international agreements and efforts to protect and preserve cultural heritage, this did not prevent terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq and Libya from destroying cultural heritage and demolishing many historical places. In it they are destroying many valuable monuments. In Syria, ISIS has destroyed the Syrian city of Palmyra, which contains the largest number of Syrian cultural heritage. To correct the extent of the destruction in Iraq and Syria, UNESCO launched an initiative to restore the destroyed monuments in Iraq and Syria. Many countries have contributed to the restoration of antiquities in Syria and Iraq, such as France and the United States of America. The role of the United States was not limited to helping in the restoration of antiquities, but the United States was keen to return the antiquities smuggled by ISIS to Iraq.