



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE BLUE SHIELD

President: Ross Shimmon
IFLA, P O Box 95312, 2509 CH, The Hague, Netherlands

Secretary: Christiane Logie
Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Boulevard de l'Empereur 4, 1000 BRUXELLES, Belgique

Heritage professionals call for emergency protection to save Iraq's treasures

The International Committee of the Blue Shield representing NGOs in the fields of archives (ICA), libraries (IFLA), monuments & sites (ICOMOS), and museums (ICOM) urges all parties concerned to do everything in their power to protect Iraq's cultural heritage and to prevent further losses.

Aghast at reports of widespread looting of archives, libraries and museums and the destruction of precious artefacts and documents, the Committee's president, Ross Shimmon said:
"The destruction of so many priceless and unique records of the past represents an irreplaceable loss, not only to Iraq, but to the memory of the world."

The Blue Shield Committee welcomes UNESCO's initiative in calling an emergency meeting of experts on 17th April in Paris to discuss what can be done. We look forward to participating in that meeting and stand ready to help in any appropriate way, with the involvement and cooperation of Iraqi heritage professionals.

We also welcome the statements issued by the Director General of UNESCO, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura: "Libraries and Archives must be protected as essential parts of the rich heritage of Iraq" and "The Director-General of UNESCO calls for all measures to be taken to ensure the protection and surveillance of Iraqi cultural heritage and effectively fight against illicit trafficking"
We trust that the international community will support his efforts to safeguard the remaining cultural property and to ensure the restitution and restoration of the looted and damaged artefacts and documents.

Meanwhile, we call upon the coalition forces and other parties concerned to do everything they can to protect cultural institutions, their collections and the heritage professionals charged with their care. We also welcome initiatives by religious and other local authorities to urge the return of looted items and to provide temporary safe havens for them. We also call upon all those concerned to join the fight against the trafficking of looted heritage.

Adopted by the International Committee of the Blue Shield, 16th April 2003.

Further information:

The UNESCO director General's statements are available at:

"Libraries and Archives must be protected as essential parts of the rich heritage of Iraq"

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php@URL_ID=11290&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

and "The Director-General of UNESCO calls for all measures to be taken to ensure the protection and surveillance of Iraqi cultural heritage and effectively fight against illicit trafficking"

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php@URL_ID=11238&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The International Committee of the Blue Shield works to protect cultural property in the event of natural and human disasters. It comprises representatives of the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International federation of Library associations and Institutions (IFLA).



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ICBS is formed by four non-governmental organisations:

ICA - The International Council on Archives
ICOM - the International Council of Museums
ICOMOS - the International Council on Monuments and Sites
IFLA - the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

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In addition National Committees have been formed in some countries:

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The Netherlands Blue Shield

Chair: [Ms Marie-Christine van der Sman](#)
Secretary: [Ms Ingeborg Verheil](#)

United Kingdom and Ireland Blue Shield Organisation (UKIRB)

<http://www.bl.uk/blueshield/>