

# ICOMOS

international council on monuments and sites

## **ICOMOS Statement on the situation in Tigray (Ethiopia)**

5 March 2021

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is deeply disturbed by the growing number of accounts relating to the unspeakable suffering inflicted on the civilian population in Ethiopia's Tigray region – including mass killings.

There are also mounting reports that Tigray's rich and significant heritage is falling victim to the fighting. ICOMOS is alarmed by news of intentional "cultural cleansing", destruction of sites, and looting of manuscripts and artefacts in view of their likely illicit trafficking. The ancient city of Aksum, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1980, has reportedly suffered damage and plundering, as have Debre Damo monastery and al-Nejashi mosque, among others.

ICOMOS notes that both Ethiopia and Eritrea have ratified both the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention. States that adhere to these international instruments acknowledge that damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to all humankind's cultural heritage, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world. States Parties to the 1954 Convention and its Protocols commit to safeguard and respect all cultural property located in areas where armed conflict is taking place and avoid using or targeting cultural property as part of their military operations.

ICOMOS urges Ethiopia and Eritrea's governments to take immediate and determined steps to prevent any further damage to the cultural sites of Tigray, to proactively strive to safeguard and respect all cultural property and affected local communities within the area where fighting is taking place, and to ensure that looted objects are restituted to their communities.

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### **About ICOMOS**

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a unique non-governmental, not-for-profit international organisation committed to furthering the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of the world's cultural heritage.

ICOMOS is dedicated to the development of common doctrines, the evolution and dissemination of knowledge, the creation of improved conservation techniques, and the promotion of cultural heritage significance. It has built a solid philosophical, doctrinal and managerial framework for the sustainable conservation of heritage around the world.

As an official advisory body to the World Heritage Committee for the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, ICOMOS evaluates nominations and advises on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS is a founding member of the Blue Shield, together with ICOM (International Council on Museums), ICA (International Council on Archives) and IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions).

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