ICOMOS Heritage Alert Template

*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

2-4 paragraphs outlining heritage significance and threats, (suitable for media statement)

The International Council on Monuments and Sites of Lebanon (ICOMOS-Lebanon), as representatives of the National Heritage Community, is very much concerned about the current condition of protection and preservation of the Promontory and the Commemorative steles of Nahr el-Kalb inscribed since 2005 as UNESCO – Memory of the World and also on the 2019 Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The site is today endangered by the construction of a complex of buildings of the *Ordre Libanais Maronite* (OLM) that will serve as the headquarters of a political party, the *Courant Patriotique Libre* (CPL). The implementation of these buildings will completely and irreversibly mutilate the Heritage Site by the excavations and the intrusion on his Historical Landscape.

The complex is foreseen to be implemented directly on the promontory at less than few meters from the Commemorative steles of Nahr el-Kalb impacting the direct visual context. This promontory, entrusted to the Maronite religious community since hundreds of years, is today flouted by a political decision, without any respect of a minimum buffer zone even not defined by authorities in charge. With this direct intrusion, the site of the Steles will lose all his chances to be listed to the World Heritage proving that the site is at risk and not protected.

We then strongly ask for an immediate halt of the construction project and an urgent reconsideration for a delocalization of the complex before it is too late. The non-respect of our Cultural Heritage by the institution in charge of the country is outrageous for the preservation of the History and Memory of our Country for future generations.
Four copyright free, high quality digital images
1-0 Identity of Building/Artefact/Object/Place

1-1 Current name and original name.
* Commemorative stela of Nahr el-Kalb, Mount Lebanon

1-2 Location: Zouk El Kharab, lot n° 98, Lebanon. The archaeological site of Nahr el Kalb is located 15 km north of Beirut.

1-3 Classification/ Type of place: Archaeological and Natural site

1-4 Current Heritage Protection Status: It has been classified by decrees: No 166 / L.R. of November 1933 and No 225 of September 28, 1934 on the National List of Historic Monuments.

Documentary Heritage submitted by Lebanon and recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2005.

• Year of submission: 2005
• Year of inscription: 2005
• Country: Lebanon

2-0 Statement of Significance and History

2-1 Statement of Significance:
The steles of Nahr el-Kalb, located on the rocky cliff along the Lycus or Dog River, sum up the entire history of Lebanon, from High Antiquity to the present, evoking clearly the successive advances of the Pharaonic, Assyro-Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Arab, French and British armies which braved all the obstacles surrounding this difficult and very steep crossing point to carve commemorative steles on the rocks. These reliefs, inscriptions and commemorative steles bear witness to various circumstances and different eras from ancient times to the present. The latter, located on the same promontory, are characterized by their diversity: temporal, execution (materials and techniques), inscriptions and iconographies, writings (hieroglyph, cuneiform, alphabetical), languages (Egyptian, Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Latin, Greek, Arabic, French, English and Turkish) and functional.

2-2 History of place:
The Cape of Nahr el Kalb has been considered since ancient times as a natural obstacle on the Lebanese coast, thus constituting a strategic point. Indeed, the difficulty of the passage will explain the presence of the first reliefs sculpted by the first conquerors in honour of their glory and in order to ensure their legitimacy of power. The repetition factor on this promontory continued until modern and contemporary times. These reliefs, beyond their historical context, provide data of values at the geomorphology, archaeology and epigraphy level. The archaeological site of Nahr el Kalb is a unique place which preserves epigraphic and iconographic witnesses engraved on the rocks of
the promontories flanking the river of Nahr el Kalb. It includes 22 steles, reliefs and commemorative inscriptions dating from the 2nd millennium BC (13th century BC) until the 2nd millennium AD (20th century). Lebanon being a crossroads of three continents and a meeting point between civilizations; the site of Nahr el Kalb, among others, brings together witnesses of certain significant events in the region from Prehistory to the present day.

2-3 Date of project/ Date of construction/ Finishing of work NA
2-4 Architect/Designers NA
2-5 Architect/Designers still living? Residence, country of birth, contact details NA
2-6 Original and current use of building/place
2-7 Changes, additions
2-8 Current condition and use: Cultural and Archaeological Site open to the public
2-9 Original design intent and use: Marked place by all crossing armies through centuries with steles

3-0 Description (history and technology)

3-1 Physical description: Natural rock promontory marked by engraved stela into the rock connected by steps and benches shaped directly into the rock

3-2 Construction system used: In situ reliefs sculpted in the natural rock

3-3 Physical context/setting: Natural rock promontory steeping almost 50 meters above the sea level and naturally delimited by the Dog river level that runs east/west.

3-4 Social and cultural context and value: The stela of Nahr el Kalb offers not only great archaeological testimony of Lebanon History but again underline the importance of the geography and the topography in the study of the course of History. Therefore, this site is also exceptional from the natural and cultural point of view and its landscape is to preserve as authentically as possible. As for the social political modern value the promontory of Nahr el Kalb played again a strategically role during the 1975-1990 civil war.

3-5 Materials/fabric/form/function: NA

3-6 Aesthetic value: The inscriptions and reliefs, despite the advanced erosion, provide a great understanding of historical expressions and epigraphic testimonies. The aesthetic value is expressed thru the diversity of the techniques applied in carving the stelae and thru the sculpted representations retracing not only the historical facts but also the evolution of art through the years.
4-0 Source of Alert

4-1 Proposer(s) of Heritage Alert, contact details
ICOMOS LEBANON
lkomos.lb@gmail.com
Executive Board / Mrs Yasmine Makaroun +961 3 623559
President ICOMOS Lebanon / Mrs Jeanine Abdul Massih +961 3 305544

4-2 Groups supporting Heritage Alert and/or nomination, with contact details:
- Fondation Nationale du Patrimoine, Mrs Rima Shehade +961 3 377511,
  beet-shedeh@cyberia.net.lb
- Terre-Liban, Mr Paul Abi Rached +961 3 327 975, info@terreliban.org
- Lebanon Eco Movement, +961 5 923 060,
  info@lebanonecomovement.org
  Legal action of the Lebanon Eco Movement represented by the NGO
  President: M. Paul Abi Rached.
  On Thursday March 19, 2020, A complaint was applied before the court
  of appeal in Baabda against whom is involved according to the ongoing
  investigations in the destruction of the promontory of Nahr el-Kalb and
  threatened it inscription as a World Heritage Site.

4-3 Groups potentially against Heritage Alert Action:
The beneficiary of the project (CPL, OLM)

4-4 Local, Regional, International significance citations about the place
1933-34 Inscription of the Stela as National Heritage decrees: No 166/ L.R.
November 1933 and No 225, September 28, 1934 on the National List of
Historical Monuments.
1996 Unesco Tentative List Lebanon
1998 Protection of the river sides by the Ministry of Environment (Decree n° 97
2/7/1998)
2005 Unesco Memory of the world,
2019 Unesco Tentative List Lebanon

4-5 Letters of support for Heritage Alert action, newspaper articles, etc.
Attached PDF
4.5.1 Official letters sent to the Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre
along with the Statement of ICOMOS Lebanon
4.5.2 Newspaper article (till 17/3/2020)
4.5.3 National News Agency Lebanon (till 17/3/2020)
4.5.1.1. ICOMOS Lebanon Statement

ICOMOS Lebanon - Statement of Concern

on
National Heritage Site / UNESCO – Memory of the World
Commemorative steles of Nahr el-Kalb, Mount Lebanon

21/02/2020

Statement of Concern on the destruction of Cultural Heritage

The International Council on Monuments and Sites of Lebanon (ICOMOS-Lebanon), as representatives of the national heritage community, is very much concerned about the current condition of protection and preservation of the Promontory and the Commemorative steles of Nahr el-Kalb inscribed since 2005 as UNESCO – Memory of the World and also on the 2019 Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The site is today endangered by the construction of a complex of buildings that will serve as the headquarters of a political party, the CPL (Courant Patriotique Libanais). The implementation of these buildings will completely and irreversibly mutilate the Heritage Site by the excavations and the intrusion on his Historical Landscape.

The complex is foreseen to be implemented directly on the promontory at less than few meters from the Commemorative steles of Nahr el-Kalb impacting the direct visual context. This promontory, entrusted to the Lebanese Maronite Order since hundreds of years, is today flouted by a political decision, without any respect of a minimum buffer zone even not defined by authorities in charge. With this direct intrusion, the site of the steles will lose all its chances to be listed to the World Heritage proving that the site is at risk and not protected.

We then strongly ask for an immediate halt of the construction project and an urgent reconsideration for the delocalization of the complex before it is too late. The non respect of our cultural heritage by our own government and the Lebanese Maronite Order is outrageous for the preservation of the History and Memory of our Country for the future generations.

Note:
The steles of Nahr el-Kalb, the Lycaon or Dog River, sum up the entire history of Lebanon, from the Bronze Age (3300 BC) to the present, evoking clearly the successive advances of the Phoenician, Assyrian-Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Arab, French and British armies which braved all the obstacles surrounding this difficult and very steep crossing point to carve commemorative steles on the rocks. Memory of the World – UNESCO (Register in 2005)
4.5.1.2 Letter Yasmine Makaroun Bou Assaf

Direction Générale pour la Communication et l’information, UNESCO

A l’attention de la Directrice du Centre du Patrimoine mondial,

Mme Mechtild Rossler

Permettez nous de vous soumettre une requête urgente concernant une situation à risque au Liban :


En 2003, une action de mise en valeur, à l’initiative de la Fondation Nationale du Patrimoine, avait amorcé un projet de présentation du site au public, perpétuant ainsi la tradition de préservation entamée à l’ère ottomane et à la période mandataire.

Avec stupéfaction, nous avons découverts il y a quelques semaines, que des travaux d’excavations pour la construction du siège d’un parti politique, le CPL (Courant Patriotique Libe) ont été exécutés et se sont même étendus à proximité des stèles. Le contexte immédiat du site des stèles et en particulier le profil du promontoire rocheux a été mis à mal par les excavatrices, défigurant irémédiablement le paysage environnant sans parler de l’impact futur des constructions (voir photo ci-jointe).
Avec toute la communauté scientifique qui œuvre pour la protection du patrimoine, nous nous posons certaines questions :

-Comment les autorités dites « compétentes » peuvent proposer un site sur la liste temporaire du Patrimoine mondial en 2019 et valider en 2017 un permis de construction dans le périmètre immédiat du site ?

-Comment aucune étude d’impact patrimoniale (HIA) n’a été requise avant l’approbation de ce dossier de permis ?

- Et surtout comment aucune zone de tampon n’a-t-elle pas été mise en place depuis 2003 si le processus d’expropriation semblait quasi impossible ?

Aujourd’hui face à un danger imminent qui pourrait défigurer le site des stèles à tout jamais, nous sollicitons votre soutien pour faire pression auprès du Ministère de la Culture du Liban pour stopper ce projet le temps qu’une véritable étude d’impact soit réalisée.

Il est vraiment désolant de constater que nous devons souvent réagir pour enrayer des risques immédiats au lieu d’être proactifs, faute de préparation, de coordination et surtout de formation adéquate des équipes décisionnelles.

Dans l’espoir que vous donnerez suite à cette demande comme un ultime recours face à une situation des plus critiques.

Beyrouth le, 26/02/2020

Dr Yasmine Makaroun

Architecte-Archéologue

Directrice du Centre de Restauration et de Conservation (Faculté des Beaux-Arts et d’Architecture) Université Libanaise

Ymakanrou@gmail.com
4.5.1.3. Letter Nidal al Achkar (Theatre al Madina Beirut)

Beirut 27/02/2020

Nidal Al Achkar a woman of Arab theatre

I am Nidal Al Achkar actress, director and founder of Al Madina theatre a landmark in the cultural life of Beirut. We have tried with other artists to renovate the cultural scene in Lebanon since the seventies. Our work with other activists and artists no doubt changed the artistic scene.

We would like to express our deepest distress about the condition of the commemorative steles in Naher Al Kalb.

The construction and the buildings around would cause great harm to this historical sight.

We object and condemn this abominable project and hope it would discontinued as soon as possible.

Nidal Al Achkar
Founder, Chairperson and executive director of Al Madina theatre
4.5.1.4. Letter American University of Beirut

Friday, March 06, 2020,
American University of Beirut
Bliss Street
P.O.Box: 11-0236
Beirut – Lebanon
Tel: 00961 1 350000
Email: communications@aub.edu.lb

To: The Assistant Director-General at UNESCO
   Mr. Moez Chakchouk

Re: Statement of Concerns over the Nahr al-Kalb site in the wake of the recent construction plans

Dear Mr. Chakchouk,

We, a group of nature activists and professors at the American University of Beirut, are writing to express our grave concerns regarding the recently initiated construction plans for the establishment of the headquarters of the political party, Courant Patriotique Liban Nahr al Kalb. As proposed, the projects violates basic principles of heritage preservation and threatens the ecological and historical integrity of the site.

As one of the oldest historical sites in the region, Nahr al Kalb was inscribed in UNESCO's Heritage Tentative List in 1972 as well as on the 'Memory of the World' list in 2005. Nineteen steles summarize the world's history spanning from 1276 to 2000 and evoke the successive imprints of the Pharaonic, Assyro-Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Arab, French and British armies. The carved rocks are located in a site that was classified by the Lebanese Ministry of Environment as a protected area due to its biological and/or ecological significance that extends into the valleys, mountain summits, and river beds.

We have ample evidence that the planned construction and the use of heavy machinery, which has been already deployed to the site, present a high risk of crumbling to the stele carved in soft chalky limestone. We urge you to intervene, demand the immediate halt of the works, and cancel the project, in order to institute in Nahr el Kalb a protective, shared open public space and save this important historical site from human invasion now and in the future.

The efforts that the UNESCO World Heritage Department do to protect the world's cultural and natural heritage for future generations bring hope to many people all around the world. We thank you for your attention in this matter and stand ready to support you in the protection of the important historical and ecological site of Nahr al Kalb. We look forward to learning whether you can intervene on this issue and what the next steps can be on your end.

Sincerely,
Heritage Alert
Nahr El Kalb Commemorative Steles, Mount Lebanon

Najat Aoun Saliba
2019 Laureate of the L’Oreal-UNESCO International Award for Women in Science
Voted among the BBC 100 Women 2019
Director of the Nature Conservation Center, NCC
PEER J Academic Editor Lebanese Science Journal
Associate Editor Professor of Chemistry
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
American University of Beirut

Mona Fawaz
Professor in Urban Studies and Planning
Coordinator of the Graduate Programs in Urban Planning and Design
Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture
American University of Beirut

Mona Harb
Professor in Professor of Urban Studies and Politics
Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture
American University of Beirut

Rami Zurayk, Professor
Professor at Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management Department
Member of the Steering Committee of the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the Committee of World Food Security (CFS)
Commissioner on the EAT-Lancet commission on sustainable diets from sustainable food systems
Advisory board member for the Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems and Community Development
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences
American University of Beirut

Lina Choueiri
Associate Provost
Professor of English
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
American University of Beirut

Salma Talhouk, Professor, American University of Beirut
Professor at the Department of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management
Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences
Member, AUB Nature Conservation Center
Founding Chairperson, AUBotanic
American University of Beirut

Habib Debs
Architect and Urbanist, URBI
Beirut, Lebanon

Nadine Panayot
Professor and Chair of the Archaeology Research Department
University of Balamand

Antoine Attallah
Architect & urban designer
Save Beirut Heritage
ICOMOS Lebanon
Arab Centre for Architecture

Abir Saksouk-Sasso
Architect and Urbanist
Mme Mechtild Rossler,
Directrice du Centre du Patrimoine Mondial de l’UNESCO,

Chère Madame,

Nous nous adressons à vous du Liban, pays suffisamment meurtri à travers les siècles par les multiples invasions et guerres et où un Site Historique d’une valeur exceptionnelle se trouve menacé.


La Fondation Nationale du Patrimoine a voulu en 2002-2003 projeter la lumière sur ce trésor national ; elle a restauré les 22 stèles et réhabilité les routes et leur signalisation. Or, à l’heure actuelle, des travaux d’excavation ont commencé sur le terrain qui le surplombe pour édifier un centre immense à quelques mètres des stèles et qui risque de provoquer l’effondrement de ce promontoire qui donne sur la mer.

Aussi vous saurions-nous gré d’intervenir, dans les plus brefs délais, pour appuyer les efforts des ONG concernées et de la société civile qui luttent pour sauvegarder ce site et sauver notre mémoire collective.

Veuillez croire, Chère Madame, à l’assurance de ma haute estime et de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

Mouna Harooui
Présidente
Fondation Nationale du Patrimoine
Kouyoumjian (Ancien Ministre des affaires sociales) 17 Février 2020: Arrêter le crime contre le patrimoine national, archéologique et environnemental à Nahr el Kalb

Kouyoumjian (Ancien Ministre des affaires sociales) 19 Février 2020 : Nahr el Kalb

Mourtada Abbass (Ministre de la Culture et l’Agriculture) 19 Février 2020: Mourtada demande au comité technique consultatif de la Direction Générale des Antiquités d’inspecter le site patrimonial de Nahr el Kalb
Chehayeb (Parlementaire) 19 Février 2020 : *La protection des site naturel ne peut se faire en transgressant les lois*

Association Terre-Liban 22 Février 2020: *Arrêter les travaux sur le promontoire de Nahr el-Kalb*
23 Février 2020: Rassemblement devant le site archéologique de Nahr el-Kalb en protestation contre les travaux de creusement pour la construction du siège du CPL

Kouyoumjian 23 Février 2020: Sommes nous obligés de construire sur un promontoire vieux de milliers d’années
Lebanon Eco Movement 24 Février 2020: *Le mouvement écologique a déposé une plainte contre les infractions commises sur la colline de Nar el-Kalb*

20 Février 2020: *Manifestation devant le ministère de l’environnement pour sauver le promontoire de Nahr el Kalb - Réponse de Berj Hadjian (Directeur Générale de l’environnement): Nous allons discuter votre demande d’arrêt des travaux avec le ministre et les diverses autorités concernées*
Chehayeb (Parlementaire) 10 mars 2020 : Protéger les réserves naturelles du Liban

Kouyoumjian (Ancien Ministre des affaires sociales) 10 mars 2020: Le réserves naturelles sont des trésors et un héritage don de Dieu
4-6  **Publications that describe the work/place, bibliography, etc.**
- Anne Marie Afeiche-Maïla, 2009, *Le site de Nahr el-Kalb*, Baal Hors-Série V, Ministère de la Culture, Beyrouth

4-7  **Time constraints for advocacy (immediate action/delayed action):**
immediate action

5-0  **Recommended action**

5-1  **Heritage Alert**: international/national distribution via ICOMOS

5-2  **Letter (s) to?** (Provide names and full contact details)
5.2.1 Letter to Ministry of Culture-Lebanon

Heritage Alert
Nahr El Kalb Commemorative Steles, Mount Lebanon

ICOMOS

Letter to Ministry of Culture - Lebanon

[Arabic text]

[English translation]

With regard to the letter of the Minister for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, the letter of the Governor of Bekaa and the letter of the Governor of Nabatieh, regarding the conservation of the steles of Nahr El Kalb, we wish to submit the following:

1. The steles are of great historical and cultural significance and should be preserved.
2. The site should be declared a heritage site.
3. A committee should be formed to oversee the conservation and restoration of the steles.

We request the Ministry of Culture to take the necessary steps to implement these recommendations.

ICOMOS Lebanon
International Council of Monuments and Sites

[Signature]

[Certificate number and date]
5.2.2 Letter to Ministry of Environment-Lebanon

Heritage Alert
Nahr El Kalb Commemorative Steles, Mount Lebanon

ICOMOS

Letter to Ministry of Environment-Lebanon

5.2.2

The heritage alert issued by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee regarding the commemorative steles at Nahr El Kalb, Mount Lebanon, is addressed to the Ministry of Environment-Lebanon. The letter highlights the significance of the heritage site and the need for protection.

The steles are a crucial part of the cultural heritage of Lebanon, representing a unique historical and architectural achievement.

The letter emphasizes the importance of preserving these steles to ensure their future as a vital part of Lebanon's cultural identity. The Ministry of Environment-Lebanon is encouraged to take immediate action to protect and conserve the site.

The heritage alert serves as a reminder of the need for ongoing efforts to safeguard Lebanon's cultural heritage against potential threats. Collaboration between the Ministry and relevant stakeholders is essential to ensure the long-term preservation of this significant site.

ICOMOS

[End of letter]
5-3 ICOMOS National or Scientific Committee, or international Website upload?
Website upload ICOMOS Lebanon Social Media and Mail, ICOMOS International, ICOMOS-IFLA (Comité international des paysages culturels) CIIC (Comité international des itinéraires culturels)

5-4 Affiliated organisation distribution? Unesco, Patrimoine Mondial.

5-5 Other actions recommended? Legalisation of the protection of the site by Lebanese authorities, Site Management and maintenance, lighting, visitor centre/road access.

6-0 Desired outcome

6-1 To improve legal protection: To register the entire promontory as a non-edificandi status, and to define a protection buffer zone

6-2 To stop construction works that will alter the Cultural Landscape and Natural Heritage

6-3 To stop construction permits that would result in irrevocable loss in the natural context

6-4 Imposing minimum maintenance to stop further decay pending conservation/restoration work

6-5 Modifying the project NA

6-6 Stopping demolition NA

6-7 Other, please specify