EMERGENCY

RED LIST OF
IRAQI
CULTURAL OBJECTS
AT RISK

2015 Update

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RedList

قائمة حمراء

ICOM
Introduction

For decades the world has witnessed the ongoing disappearance of Iraq’s diverse cultural heritage. This looting and destruction impoverishes our knowledge and understanding of Iraq’s, and the region’s, history as well as its many and varied contributions to the world both on a scientific and cultural level.

Following the successful seizures made possible thanks to the 2003 Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk, the International Council of Museum’s (ICOM) first Emergency Red List, and in view of the persisting threat to the Republic of Iraq’s cultural heritage, ICOM concluded that an updated version of the List was necessary. This was effectively carried out with the generous support of the US Department of State.

The Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk presents the country’s cultural heritage currently threatened by destruction, theft, looting, smuggling and illicit trafficking.

Purpose

The fight against illicit trafficking in cultural goods requires the enhancement of legal instruments and the use of practical tools disseminating information, raising public awareness, and preventing illegal exportation.

The Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk illustrates the categories or types of cultural items that are most likely to be illegally traded. It aims to help art and heritage professionals and law enforcement officials identify Iraqi objects that are at risk and protected by the legislation in force. Museums, auction houses, art dealers and collectors are encouraged not to acquire such objects without having carefully and thoroughly researched their origin and all the relevant legal documentation.

Due to the great diversity of objects, styles and periods, the Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk is far from exhaustive. Any cultural good that could have originated from Iraq should be subjected to detailed scrutiny and precautionary measures.

The ICOM Red List series:

- Red List of African Archaeological Objects, 2000
- Red List of Latin American Cultural Objects at Risk, 2003
- Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk, 2003
- Red List of Afghanistan Antiquities at Risk, 2006
- Red List of Peruvian Antiquities at Risk, 2007
- Red List of Cambodian Antiquities at Risk, 2009
- Red List of Endangered Cultural Objects of Central America and Mexico, 2009
- Emergency Red List of Haitian Cultural Objects at Risk, 2010
- Red List of Chinese Cultural Objects at Risk, 2010
- Red List of Colombian Cultural Objects at Risk, 2010
- Emergency Red List of Egyptian Antiquities at Risk, 2011
- Red List of Dominican Cultural Objects at Risk, 2012
- Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk, 2013
- Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk, 2015
The cultural heritage of Iraq is protected by the following national legislation and international instruments and agreements:

**NATIONAL LEGISLATION**
- **Law No. 55 of 2002 on Antiquities and Heritage** (18 November 2002).
- **Constitution of the Republic of Iraq, Article 113** (15 October 2005).

**INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS**
- **UNESCO Convention of 16 November 1972 Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage** (accepted, 5 March 1974).
- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 661, Article 3a regarding the import of commodities and products originating from Iraq** (6 August 1990).

**OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**
- **League of Arab States:** 
- **Russian Federation:** 
  - **Decree No. 968 on the measures to implement the UN Security Council resolution 1483 of 22 May 2003** (18 August 2003).
- **Swiss Confederation:** 
  - **By-law of 7 August 1990 on the Economic measures regarding the Republic of Iraq, Articles 1a, 2a and 4c, as amended by RO 2003 1887 on 28 May 2003** (25 June 2003).
- **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:** 
- **United States of America:** 

Should you suspect that a cultural object originating from Iraq may be stolen, looted or illegally exported, please contact:

**State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH)**
- Relations department
- Iraq
- Tel.: +964 7 812 927 164 (mobile)
- E-mail: relations_sbah@yahoo.com

**International Council of Museums (ICOM)**
- 22, rue de Palestro - 75002 Paris - France
- Tel.: +33 1 47 34 05 00
- Fax: +33 1 43 06 78 62
- E-mail: illicit-traffic@icom.museum
IMPORTANT NOTE: A Red List is NOT a list of actual stolen objects. The cultural goods depicted are of inventoried objects within the collections of recognised institutions. They serve to illustrate the categories of cultural goods protected by legislation and most vulnerable to illicit traffic. ICOM wishes to thank all of the institutions and individuals who so generously provided the photographs presented in the 2015 Iraqi Emergency Red List.

The objects presented in the Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk cover the following periods:

- **Ancient Mesopotamia** (Hassuna, Samarra, Halaf, Obeid, Uruk, Early Dynastic, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian periods) > 10,000 – ca. 539 BC
- **Mesopotamian or Classical Antiquity** (Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, Roman and Sasanian Empires) > 539 BC – AD 632
- **Islamic era** (Rashidun, Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates) > AD 632 – 1258
- **Mongol era** > AD 1258 – 1354
- **Ottoman Iraq and Mamluk rule** > AD 1534 – 1831

### Writing

**Clay or stone tablets:** Circular, square, or rectangular, slightly pillow-shaped. Fragmentary sealed envelope. With cuneiform (wedge-shaped) writing. May have inscriptions and/or seal impressions on both sides and/or the borders. Size: 2–20 x 5–30 cm. [1–2–3]

**Manuscripts, books and documents:** Codices, Qur’ans and scientific texts. Paper or parchment, with Aramaic and/or Arabic inscriptions. Often with illuminations. [4]

1. Clay tablet with cuneiform writing, Uruk, ca. 3200 BC, 5.7 x 4.3 cm. © Vorderasiatisches Museum – SMB, Berlin / Olaf M. Teßmer
2. Clay tablet with seal impression depicting two goats in front of a building, Ashur, 12th – 11th c. BC, 6.5 x 6.7 cm. © Vorderasiatisches Museum – SMB, Berlin / Olaf M. Teßmer
3. Clay cylinder in cuneiform writing with the name of Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, Babylon, 7th c. BC, Ø 17.6 cm. © Vorderasiatisches Museum – SMB, Berlin / Olaf M. Teßmer
4. Paper folio with ink, gold and opaque watercolours from a Materia Medica of Dioscorides showing a physician preparing an elixir, possibly from Baghdad, AD 1224, 33.2 x 24.8 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

### Stamps and seals

**Stone, terracotta, shell, bone.** Engraved or carved, pierced through its centre or at the top. With geometric or figurative motifs (humans, animals, deities, buildings) in mythological, religious and/or daily life scenes.

**Stamp seals and signet rings:** Stamp seals may be ellipsoidal or animal-, gable- or pyramid-shaped. Rings have a flat top with motifs in relief. Size: pictures 1.5–3 cm, seals 2–4 cm. [5–6]

**Cylinder seals:** May have cuneiform inscriptions. Size: 2–7 x Ø 1–3 cm. [7]

5. Banded calcite ram-shaped stamp seal, Tell Agrab, Uruk Period (ca. 4000 – 3100 BC). © Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
6. Ellipsoid carnelian stamp decorated with a scorpion, Sasanian period (AD 224 – 677), 2.4 x 1.9 x 1.3 cm. © Musée du Louvre, dist. RMN-Grand Palais, Paris / Raphaël Chipault
7. Lapis lazuli cylinder seal, Babylon, 14th c. BC, 5 x Ø 1.6 cm. © Vorderasiatisches Museum – SMB, Berlin / Olaf M. Teßmer
**Architectural elements**

**Foundation elements** > Metal (bronze, silver, gold, alloys) figurines: Men carrying baskets or vases on their heads, lower body may be peg-shaped; animals; deities with horns and/or crowns. May have inscriptions. Height: 10-20 cm. [8]

**Clay cones:** With flattened base, may have cuneiform inscriptions. Average height: 15 cm. [9]

**Architectural fragments > Pre-Islamic:** Figurative or geometric motifs. Friezes with gold and/or mosaic inlays, coloured tiles and glazed bricks. Sumerian cone mosaics (stone, terracotta) with exposed coloured ends. Classical Antiquity mural paintings with religious, military or daily life scenes; figures may have their names written beside them. [10]

**Islamic:** Glazed tiles. Painted or carved, stuccoed or gilded bricks, stones and wooden beams and panels. With floral or geometric motifs, arabesques or stars, and/or Arabic inscriptions. [11]

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**Figural sculpture**

**Plaques and inlays:** Bone, stone, ivory, shell. May be gilded or inlaid with semi-precious stones, and/or have engraved Phoenician letters on the back. Length: 8-20 cm. [12]

**Reliefs >** Carved or moulded figurative (kings and their entourage, animals, mythical creatures, deities with horned headdresses), floral or geometric motifs. Landscapes or religious, military or daily life scenes (feasts, hunts, sieges, construction).

**Terracotta:** Small plaques. Figures depicted with their heads and chests facing forward and legs sideways.

**Stone (alabaster, marble):**

- **Plaques:** Pierced in the centre. Scenes depicted in horizontal rows. Min. height: 20 cm. [13]

- **Slabs and steles:** Fragments. May have cuneiform inscriptions. Size of the full pieces: 1-2 x 2-3 m. [14–15]

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8. Bronze foundation element figurine bearing a cuneiform inscription with the name of the Sumerian king Shulgi, Uruk, end of the 3rd millennium BC, 24.7 cm. © Vorderasiatisches Museum – SMB, Berlin / Olaf M. Teßmer


10. Red, black and white painted mosaic terracotta cones mosaic (and detail), Uruk, end of the 4th millennium BC, 8-10 x Ø 1.5-3 cm (for a single cone). © Vorderasiatisches Museum – SMB, Berlin / Olaf M. Teßmer

11. Carved teak doors, 9th c. AD, 221 x 104.8 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

12. Ivory plaque with ram-headed sphinx in Phoenician style, Neo-Assyrian period (ca. 9th – 8th c. BC), 7.8 x 8 x 0.8 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

13. Stone relief plaque illustrating a banquet scene, its preparations and frolicking, Khafajah, Early Dynastic II – III A (ca. 2700 – 2600 BC), 20.4 x 20 x 4.2 cm. © Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago


15. Alabaster relief of the profile of King Ashurnasirpal II, Northwest Palace (Nimrud), Neo-Assyrian Empire (911 – 609 BC), ca. 61 x 61 cm. © Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
Sculpture in the round > Clay figurines (6000 BC – 4th c. AD): Human- or animal-shaped. Women with arms curved under their breasts; pregnant; broad, flat hips; large and incised pubic triangles. Figures with elongated skulls, serpent faces and coffee bean-shaped eyes. May be partly coloured. Height: 8-15 cm. [16–17]

Models and toys shaped as buildings, furniture, chariots, boats, etc. Height: 5-20 cm. [18]

Stone (gypsum, limestone, marble) votive statues (3000 BC – AD 632):

Ancient Mesopotamia: Figures with skirts or dresses with one shoulder bare; hands clasped at the chest or waist, or holding cups or branches. Inlaid or painted eyes, eyebrows and hair. Bearded and bald or long-haired men; women with headdresses or with their hair in heavy coils, braids or chignons. Height: 15-60 cm. [19]

Classical Antiquity: Figures wearing trousers or long robes (caftans) and jewellery. May have inscribed bases.

Vessels and containers

Ceramics > Jars, plates and pilgrim flasks: Squat, flat, rounded, elongated, animal-shaped, etc., with handles or lugs. May be plain, polychrome, and/or have figurative (humans, animals, buildings), floral and/or geometric motifs. Coloured Islamic era jugs and bottles with stamped, moulded or incised motifs. [20]

Bowls: With Aramaic inscriptions in black ink. May include geometric motifs. [21]

Glazed ware: May have Arabic inscriptions, polychrome lustre and/or blue or gold painting. Motifs are painted, stamped and/or moulded. [22–23]

Glass: Jars, miniature bottles, etc. May be coloured and iridescent and/or have moulded or relief motifs (animal, floral, geometric, arabesques) and Arabic inscriptions. [24–25]
Metal (copper, bronze, silver, gold, alloys): Pitchers, bowls, etc., plain or with rosettes, geometric motifs and/or inlaid precious stones. Mortars with spikes or teardrop-shaped bosses. [26–27]

Stone (agate, alabaster, calcite, chalcedony, lapis lazuli, limestone, marble, steatite): Jars and vases. May have floral and/or geometric motifs, inlaid or carved in relief. [28]


27. Decorative brass box with silver inlay. Mosul, second quarter of the 13th c. AD, 11 x Ø 10.4 cm and 423 g. © Museum für Islamische Kunst – SMB, Berlin


Accessories and instruments

Jewellery: Metal (copper, bronze, silver, gold), shell, gemstones (carnelian, lapis lazuli, rock crystal, turquoise), glass, ivory, hardwood, ceramics, faience. Necklaces, earrings, threaded beads, etc.; hammered, gilded, cast, carved or granulated. Animal and floral motifs. May be inlaid. [29–30–31–32]

Tools and weapons: Ivory, stone and metal (copper, bronze, iron, steel) needles, axes, knives, arrows, armour, etc. Plain or with carved images (humans, animals, hybrids and/or deities). Armour and weapons of the Islamic period can be decorated with arabesques and inscriptions. [33]


32. Gold earring with pearls, garnets and glass. 8th c. AD, 9 x 2.5 cm and 8.2-8.4 g. © Museum für Islamische Kunst – SMB, Berlin


Coins

400 BC – AD 1258

Pre-Islamic: Achaemenid Empire gold darics and silver sigloi, Seleucid copper coins, Parthian and Sasanian era silver drachmas. Plain or with astrological signs and/or images of royals, archers, deities and/or fire altars, often off-centre. May have inscriptions. Mint locations are abbreviated to 2-3 letters. [34]

Islamic: Mostly Abbasid Caliphate gold dinars. With 2-3 lines in Arabic surrounded by inscriptions, or with an image on one side and writing on the other. Mint locations written in Arabic. Average size: Ø 19 mm. [35]


The International Council of Museums (ICOM), created in 1946 and representing museums and museum professionals worldwide, is committed to the promotion and protection of natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible. With 35,000 members in 137 countries, ICOM, with its unique network, is active in a wide range of museum- and heritage-related disciplines.

Maintaining formal relations with UNESCO and having a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), ICOM works in collaboration with organisations such as WIPO, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) to carry out its international public service missions, specifically regarding mediation, the fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods and the protection of heritage in case of natural disasters or armed conflict. In particular, ICOM is one of the four founding bodies of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS). Through its numerous programmes, ICOM has the ability to mobilise expert networks in the field of cultural heritage from all over the world.

In 2013, ICOM created the first International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods, once more formally placing the fight against this trend at the heart of its mission.

The Red Lists have been designed to fight the illicit traffic of cultural objects. ICOM is grateful for the unwavering commitment of the experts and institutions who generously contributed to the success of this project.

http://icom.museum

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