



**Emergency  
Red List of  
Cultural  
Objects at  
Risk  
Yemen**

**Press Kit  
January 2018**

“Because illicit traffic in cultural goods is a global phenomenon, we need to offer a global response.”

Suay Aksoy

President

International Council of Museums (ICOM)

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“Preventing looting and trafficking today ensures access to history and culture for future generations.”

France Desmarais

Director of Programmes and Partnerships

International Council of Museums (ICOM)

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## An Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk for Yemen

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The armed conflict in Yemen has caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The war has also inflicted heavy damage on the country's infrastructure and on its cultural heritage. A considerable number of sites and museums have been looted and cultural objects from Yemen are today at risk of being illegally trafficked. As a response to that risk, ICOM is publishing, with the generous support of the U.S. Department of State, an *Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk for Yemen*.

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### IMPORTANT NOTE

A Red List is NOT a list of actual stolen objects.

The cultural goods depicted are inventoried objects within the collections of recognised institutions. They serve to illustrate the categories of cultural goods most vulnerable to illicit traffic.

ICOM wishes to thank all of the institutions and individuals who provided the photographs presented in this Red List.

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## What is a *Red List*?

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The *Red Lists* classify the endangered categories of archaeological objects or works of art in the most vulnerable areas of the world, in order to prevent them from being illegally sold or exported. They therefore contribute to the protection of cultural heritage in the concerned countries. These tools are used by police and customs officials worldwide, including INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization. *Red Lists* are also distributed to museums, auction houses and art dealers.

### How are the objects on the *Red Lists* selected?

The types of objects shown on a *Red List* must meet three criteria:

- They must come from a site or region that has been a victim of theft and looting,
- Be protected by legislation,
- Be in demand on the art and antiquities market.

For each *Red List*, illicit trafficking is studied in order to understand the types of objects that are most in demand among buyers. Actions are undertaken to review reports of thefts and looting, communicate with colleagues on the ground and survey the illicit art market. The final selection of categories and sub-categories is made in conjunction with a group of national and international experts (including historians, art historians, archaeologists, curators, etc.), who all provide knowledge and experience in the field.

All the illustrations in the *Red Lists* are only representative of the categories and sub-categories that are at risk of being illegally trafficked. The illustrations are images of objects from museum collections or archaeological missions and its aim is to help identify the types of objects at risk.

### How do *Red Lists* help fight illicit trafficking?

After the *Red List of African Archaeological Objects* was published in 2000, a large number of looted cultural objects were returned to African countries, including 600 statues which were returned to Niger in 2006 after being identified by international authorities. Important pieces from Mali were also identified thanks to ICOM's first *Red List* and returned to the National Museum in Bamako.

There have been similar examples in other regions; in 2011, the National Museum of Afghanistan indicated that nearly 8,000 stolen objects had been returned thanks to the *Red List of Afghanistan Antiquities at Risk* (2006), including 1,500 pieces that were confiscated by law enforcement officials of the United Kingdom between 2007 and 2009. These officials systematically used the *Red List of Afghanistan Antiquities at Risk* for help in identifying 3.4 tons of objects that were returned to their country of origin.

In 2012, French authorities announced that ICOM's *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk* (2003 version) helped in the identification, recovery and restitution of 13 Iraqi archaeological objects from the ancient civilisation of Mesopotamia, dated from 2350 BC to 1700 BC. The cones and clay tablets were identified by official investigators through online sales and then returned to Iraq.

In 2016, Germany reformed its cultural property protection law. This new law protects German cultural property as well as the cultural property of State Parties to the UNESCO 1970 Convention, especially the war-torn countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen. One of the main features of this Law is the reinforcement of the due diligence requirements and the introduction of the ICOM *Red Lists* as an officially recognised tool for that matter. The cultural property indicated in the ICOM *Red Lists* “is now subject to strict due diligence requirements<sup>1</sup>” according to German law.

With more than 17 ICOM *Red Lists* concerning 40 countries, it is easy to imagine how many illicitly trafficked objects could be seized should the *Lists* be used consistently by law enforcement officials at the world’s largest ports of entry, or how many illegal transactions can be prevented if each country would use the *Red Lists* in their cultural heritage protection mechanism.

New *Lists* are currently being developed, namely for Southeast Europe.



1-Alabaster funerary statue, Yemen, 1st c. AD, 45.5 x 13.3 x 10.3 cm.© RMN - Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Hervé Lewandowski

2-Calcite alabaster corner block, Yemen (Wadi Bayhan), early 1st c. AD, 12.7 x 11.9 x 7.9 cm. © Freer and Sackler, The Smithsonian Institution

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<sup>1</sup> Key aspects of the new Act on the Protection of Cultural Property in Germany. Page 11  
[https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/\\_Anlagen/BKM/2016/2016-09-23-kulturgutschutz-informationen-englisch.pdf?blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/_Anlagen/BKM/2016/2016-09-23-kulturgutschutz-informationen-englisch.pdf?blob=publicationFile&v=2)

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## Why an Emergency *Red List* for Yemen?

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The cultural heritage of Yemen is protected by national legislation. Article 29 in the Chapter 6 of the law on antiquities N. 21/1994 forbids the commerce or the free disposal of movable archaeological objects. According to the article 33 and 34 of the same section, it is forbidden to export movable archaeological objects—unless a temporary permission is given by the authorities. Yemeni authorities will ask for the retrieval and the repatriation of illegally exported objects. Nevertheless, the conflict is endangering the country's cultural objects that are now at risk of being illegally trafficked. The need for a tool to help protect the cultural heritage of Yemen was more than urgent.

In an effort to help protect endangered Yemeni art and antiquities for future generations, ICOM is publishing the *Emergency Red List of Cultural Heritage at Risk - Yemen*, with the support of the U.S. Department of State and with the collaboration of national and international experts.

The *Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk- Yemen* is not a list of stolen objects. It is a list of type and categories of artefacts that, despite being protected by national and international legislation, are on demand on the art market and are at risk of being looted, stolen or illegally exported. Individuals and institutions wishing to acquire cultural objects from Yemen are urged not to acquire objects presented on this *List* without having thoroughly researched its origin and all the legal documentation. In the event of any doubt as to the legality of the transaction, buyers should abstain from acquiring the object.

The *Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk - Yemen* will also help law enforcement such as customs officials and INTERPOL to identify the objects from Yemen that are protected by national and international legislation in order to prevent any illegal transfer leading to illegal transactions.

This *Red List* is aimed to be used as a prevention tool to curb the phenomenon of trafficking in cultural heritage of Yemen. The pieces presented to illustrate the categories of objects at risk are part of museum collections.

The *Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk - Yemen* is published on paper and online. This *List* and all the previous *Red Lists* published by ICOM are available at the following link:

<http://icom.museum/resources/red-lists-database/>



Limestone libation table, Yemen (Marib), 10 x 123.5 x 69 cm.

© General Organization of Antiquities and Museums (GOAM); CASIS Project, University of Pisa

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## 17 Red Lists published since 2000

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Seven of these *Red Lists* were classified as "Emergency" *Red Lists* because they concern countries whose movable heritage had suddenly been placed at risk, either due to a natural disaster (as in the case of the earthquake in Haiti in 2010) or armed conflict (Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Mali and Yemen):

- *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 Cultural Objects 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*
- *Emergency Red List of Libyan Cultural Objects at Risk, 2015*
- *Red List of West African Cultural Objects at Risk, with a Mali "Emergency" section, 2016*
- *Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk – Yemen, 2018*

In preparation:

- Southeast Europe



Bronze dagger, Yemen (Sirwah), 2nd half 1st millennium BC, 34.7 x 3.7 cm  
© I. Wagner/Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI)

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## ICOM's fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods

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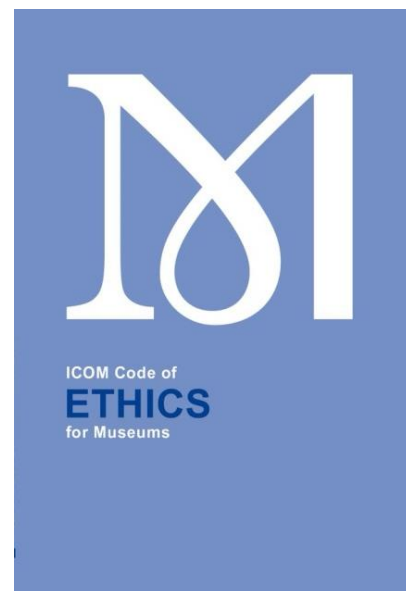
For decades, the fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods has been a top priority for ICOM, which sees protecting cultural heritage as one of its main international public service missions. ICOM plays an active role by training museum professionals to prepare for and take action in emergency situations, and by developing practical tools to protect cultural objects threatened by illicit traffic.

Through the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*, museums have adopted strict rules for the acquisition and transfer of collections, limiting their risk of acquiring illegally obtained artefacts. ICOM also offers professionals tools to facilitate inventories of collections, such as *ObjectID*; and publishes international guidelines for heritage protection and preservation.

Thanks to its international network of professionals and its experience, ICOM has been recognised for decades as one of the main players in the fight against illicit traffic in cultural property.

The collaboration between ICOM and its partners includes the sharing of information

and expertise, the organisation of awareness-raising campaigns, the development of training programmes for museum professionals and law enforcement and customs authorities, and the dissemination of ICOM publications on the protection of cultural heritage.



*ICOM also plays a vital role in the fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods through the World Customs Organization's ARCHEO programme. Through the programme, customs officials who suspect a work of art was obtained illegally can ask ICOM for advice on the artifacts. The success of this initiative is due in part to ICOM's programme to fight illicit trafficking and its network of more than 37,000 professionals.*

*ICOM is the only non-police body, along with UNESCO, that can suggest stolen works of art for the INTERPOL database, and it is the only NGO recognised by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as an expert on the illicit traffic in cultural goods. This important recognition of our work and involvement comes with the responsibility to act in a professional and ethical manner.*



## The International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods

The International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods is the result of ICOM's longstanding commitment to protecting cultural property. It is a permanent international cooperative platform between law enforcement agencies, research institutions and other external expert stakeholders.

In 2015, under the leadership of France Desmarais, ICOM's Director of Programmes, the Observatory released its first publication, *Countering Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods – The Global Challenge of Protecting the World's Heritage*, which is

available for free online (to download: [goo.gl/h2ZjFf](http://goo.gl/h2ZjFf)). The publication features a collection of authors from the academic and museum worlds analysing different aspects of the illegal trade in cultural goods and proposes solutions to hinder traffic.

In addition to its production of the *Red Lists* and its daily cooperation with customs and law enforcement agencies around the world, ICOM also monitors emergency situations through its Disaster Risk Management Committee (DRMC) to help salvage cultural heritage in danger.

**BSERVATORY**  
**ILICITTRAFFIC**

ICOM International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods

Welcome  
to **ICOM International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods**, a collaborative platform designed to provide information and resources to all concerned parties.

**Observatory**  
**Partners**  
**ICOM**

**On illicit traffic**

Everyday, somewhere in the world, an object is either stolen or looted in order to be illegally sold on the market. Illicit trafficking in works of art and cultural property has become a serious issue over the

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The illicit traffic in cultural goods is not a new practice; however, conflicts in the Middle East (Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Yemen) and Africa (Libya, Mali) have made the

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## The International Council of Museums (ICOM)

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The International Council of Museums (ICOM), created in 1946, is a worldwide organisation of museums and museum professionals. ICOM is committed to promoting and protecting natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible. With more than 37,000 members in 141 countries, ICOM is active in numerous fields relating to museums and cultural heritage.

ICOM maintains formal relations with UNESCO and has a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as an expert in the fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods. ICOM also works in collaboration with organisations such as INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) to carry out some of its international public service missions.

The protection of heritage in the case of natural disasters or armed conflict is also at the core of ICOM's work, carried out by its Disaster Risk Management Committee (DRMC) and through its strong involvement in the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS). ICOM has the ability to rapidly mobilise expert networks in the field of cultural heritage from all over the world thanks to its numerous programmes.

ICOM's commitment to culture and knowledge sharing is reinforced by its 30

International Committees, which are dedicated to a wide range of museum specialities and conduct advanced research in their respective fields for the benefit of the international museum community.

In addition, ICOM organises International Museum Day each year, a worldwide event held on and around 18 May, to increase public awareness of the role of museums in the development of society.



The *Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk - Yemen* is the result a scientific collaboration between ICOM and a number of experts from all over the world.

ICOM wishes to thank all of the experts and institutions that contributed research to the *Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk - Yemen* and provided the images of the objects shown in the *Red List*:

Bibliothèque nationale de France, France  
Carolina Center for Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States  
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Freer and Sackler, The Smithsonian Institution, United States  
General Organization of Antiquities and Museums (GOAM), Yemen  
Imam Zaid bin Ali Cultural Foundation, Yemen  
Musée du Louvre, France  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, United States  
The Trustees of the British Museum, United Kingdom  
The Walters Art Museum, United States

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## Images available for PRESS

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Alabaster, stucco and bitumen head, Yemen (Wadi Bayhan), 1st c. BC-mid-1st c. AD, 30.2 x 18.2 x 17.3 cm. © Freer and Sackler, The Smithsonian Institution. Courtesy of ICOM Red List



Bronze incense burner, Southwestern Arabia, ca. mid-1st millennium BC, 27.7 x 23.7 x 23.2 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Courtesy of ICOM Red List



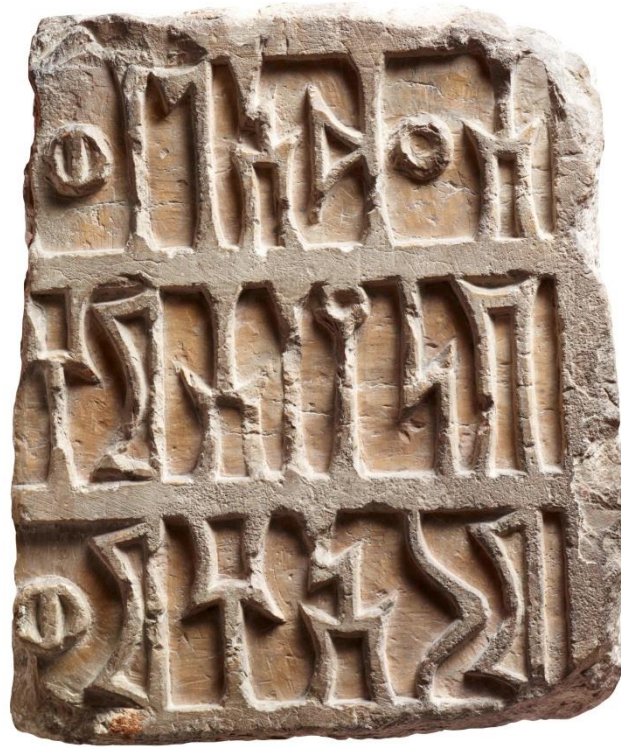
Sandstone sculpture, Southwestern Arabia, 3rd-2nd millennium BC, 27 x 13.9 x 10.9 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Courtesy of ICOM Red List



Illuminated Arabic manuscript, Yemen, 27 x 16 cm. © Dar al-Mahtutat, Sanaa. Courtesy of ICOM Red List



Brass astrolabe, Yemen, AD 1291, 19.4 x Ø 15.6 cm. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Courtesy of ICOM Red List



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council  
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