



RedList
قائمة حمراء
ICOM



EMERGENCY

RED LIST OF
IRAQI
CULTURAL OBJECTS
AT RISK

2015 Update



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Press release

Paris, Monday 1 June, 2015

The *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk*, a tool created by ICOM to fight illicit trafficking

In response to the violent events that have rocked Iraq in recent months, bringing about the destruction of world cultural heritage, today, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) is presenting the press with its *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk*, an updated and enriched version of ICOM's very first emergency Red List on Iraq published in 2003.

The threat to cultural objects posed by the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, as demonstrated by the recent intentional acts of destruction, call for an immediate response from the international museum community. The *Emergency Red List for Syria*, published in September 2013, and the one now being published for Iraq are concrete tools intended to prevent looted objects from being subject to illicit trafficking.

The *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk* was officially presented to the press on Monday, 1 June, 2015 at the musée du Louvre, in the presence of Fleur Pellerin, French Minister of Culture and Communication; Jean-Luc Martinez, President-Director of the museum; Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General; Hans-Martin Hinz, ICOM President; and Richard Stengel, U.S. Department of State Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. International experts who contributed to ICOM's efforts to draw up the Red List were also in attendance.

The *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk* highlights the types of objects which, in demand by the art and antiquities market and protected by legislation, are vulnerable to theft or looting. Individuals and institutions liable to acquire objects originating from Syria or Iraq are requested to demonstrate extreme prudence as regards the provenance and legal documentation of said objects. This practical tool has already proven successful over the years, enabling law enforcement agencies to seize thousands of objects.

"The conservation of cultural heritage is central to ICOM's thinking and action across its global network."

*Prof. Dr Hans-Martin Hinz,
ICOM President*

Beyond the production of the important prevention tools that the Red Lists represent, and its daily cooperation with customs and police forces around the world, ICOM continues to innovate and develop new measures for monitoring emergency situations, with the help of its Disaster Relief Task Force for museums, and for fighting the illegal market for cultural objects, notably through the creation of an International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods in 2013.

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Department of State*



*U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Washington, D.C.*

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For all information related to ICOM, to its actions against illicit trafficking of cultural objects and to its Red Lists, please contact ICOM's Department of Communications: icom.presse@icom.museum / Tel: +33 (0)1 47 34 05 00



The fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods is one of ICOM's priorities. ICOM's actions in the field include a wide range of initiatives and tools.

Why an Iraqi Red List?

For a number of years, Iraq – and the entire region in general – has witnessed the deliberate destruction of objects that make up an integral part of its culture and centuries-old history. These repeated provocations are a conscious attack against the very idea of the museum and a clear repudiation of the way the modern world treats and values ancient societies. These indescribable acts violate both national and international laws, including the recently adopted United Nations Resolution 2199. This resolution condemns the destruction of cultural heritage, including religious sites and objects, and asks all UN Member States to take appropriate steps to prevent the trade in cultural property illegally removed from Iraq and Syria. It should also be noted that under Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, intentionally directing acts against historic monuments and buildings dedicated to art is considered a war crime.

Concerned by the repeated and systematic destruction of cultural heritage, ICOM is calling for collective responsibility to protect all cultural goods. For over 10 years, ICOM has been dedicated to helping museum professionals prepare for and intervene in the event of an emergency and to protecting Iraqi cultural objects threatened by illicit trafficking. To that end, it has completely revised and updated its first emergency Red List, the *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk*, published in 2003 in response to the looting of the Iraqi National Museum in Baghdad.

The current situation in Iraq has highlighted the ever more pressing need for a new Iraqi Red List. In December 2012, for example, the French Central Office for the Fight Against Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods (OCBC) specifically stated that the *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk* (2003 version) helped in the recovery and restitution of 13 Iraqi archaeological objects from the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia. These objects, cones and tablets with cuneiform writing, were identified through an auction website.



Faced with the growing need for copies of the list and aware of the fact that the market can change depending on the sites that are looted (such as the Mosul Museum), ICOM decided to update its Iraqi Red List.

The new *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Cultural Objects at Risk* contains all-new object photographs. Some of these images are of objects that were seized by the Iraqi authorities or artefacts that have been returned to Iraq. Some other images on the Red List come from museum collections.

New objects added to the list include tools and weapons as well as statues and bas-reliefs. The category descriptions have also been revised to make them as specific, complete and clear as possible.



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 sold or illegally exported.

What is a Red List?

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 sold or illegally exported. They therefore contribute to the protection of cultural heritage in the countries concerned. These tools are transmitted to police and customs officials worldwide through INTERPOL and the World Customs Organisation. They are also distributed to museums, auction houses and art dealers.

To find out more about the Red Lists:

<http://icom.museum/programmes/fighting-illicit-traffic/red-list/>

When are Red Lists published? At whose request?

There are two different situations in which Red Lists are prepared and published:

- “Emergency” Red Lists: When a situation suddenly occurs, putting a country’s movable cultural heritage in danger. At that time, and after an in-depth analysis of illicit trafficking in the country, ICOM may decide to produce a Red List. That was the case for Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Haiti.
- “Traditional” Red Lists: Produced upon formal request by a national institution (ministry or museum), with proof that the country’s heritage is in danger. In this case, ICOM examines the illicit trafficking situation in the country or region to determine the need for a specific tool for protecting cultural objects.

How are the objects on the Red Lists identified?

For each Red List, in order to understand the types of objects that are most in demand, we survey the illicit art market, review reports of thefts and looting, and communicate with our colleagues on the ground.

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, etc.), who all provide knowledge and experience in the field.

Why are Red Lists produced in multiple languages?

Every Red List is always published in the language(s) of the country of origin of the objects we are trying to protect (the “source countries”), but also into the languages of the places where these objects transit and where they will end up being traded and sold (“market countries”). This explains why the Syrian Red List, already available in Arabic, French, English and German, also needs to be made available in Turkish, because Turkish customs agents and police have been intercepting a large number of objects transiting through the border.

The Iraqi Red List is already available in English, French and Arabic. A German version is in preparation, and a Turkish version is forthcoming.

How do Red Lists help fight illicit trafficking?

ICOM’s tool has already proven successful. After the first *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.

There have been numerous other examples: in 2011, the National Museum of Afghanistan indicated that 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 local law enforcement officials at Heathrow Airport between 2007 and 2009. These officials systematically used the Afghanistan Red List for help in identifying any objects that seemed suspicious.

More recently, in 2012, French authorities stated that ICOM's *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk* (2003 version) helped in the recovery and restitution of 13 Iraqi archaeological objects from the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia, dated from 2350 BC to 1700 BC. The seized objects, some cones and clay tablets, were identified by official investigators through an auction website. The seized objects were returned during a ceremony held in Paris, in the presence of his Excellency the Ambassador of Iraq and official representatives from the French police, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and ICOM.





Seized objects presented during the restitution ceremony on 3 December 2012 at the Iraqi Embassy in Paris, and the *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk (2003 version)*.

Red Lists also help countries to put good practices in place. In 2008, the Emergency Iraqi Red List helped to identify the illicit sale of a tablet with cuneiform writing on eBay. An expert who recognised the object informed the relevant Swiss authorities, and eBay was able to intervene just before the sale was made.

This incident resulted in the adoption of new measures restricting the illicit trade of cultural goods on the Internet. The British Museum and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, for example, have signed a cooperation agreement with eBay to improve monitoring of antiquities sold on the site and quickly contact sellers and police to report illegal sales.

eBay is also working with other countries, such as Switzerland, which has signed a declaration of intent, and Italy, whose Carabinieri are cooperating with the site.



The number of published Red Lists has greatly increased in the past few years, reflecting ICOM's commitment towards preventing illicit traffic in cultural goods. ICOM has received requests for the drafting of Red Lists from several countries and regions and is currently preparing new publications.

- *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*
- *Red List of West African Cultural Objects at Risk, with an "emergency" section highlighting cultural heritage in Mali (in preparation)*
- *Emergency Red List of Libyan Cultural Objects at Risk (in preparation)*



ICOM's fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods

The fight against illicit traffic in cultural goods is one of ICOM's priorities. ICOM's actions in the field include a wide range of initiatives and tools.

Promotion of professional ethics and protection of collections

A successful international partnership

Museums must be active players in the fight against illicit traffic and should adopt strict rules in terms of the acquisition and transfer of collections, according to the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*.

ICOM's International Committees contribute to this mission by training their personnel to protect heritage, offering tools to facilitate inventories of collections and publishing international guidelines for security.

Thanks to its international network of professionals and its experience, ICOM has been recognised for decades by many national and international organisations 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 experiences, 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 in illicit traffic to these professionals.

Through the World Customs Organisation's ARCHEO programme, customs officials who suspect a work of art was obtained illegally can send a message to ICOM, which will examine the object and allow a country's customs officials to decide to hold – or not – the item if a more in-depth investigation is necessary. The success of this initiative is due in part to ICOM General Secretariat's programme to fight illicit trafficking and its available network of 35,000 professionals.

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

***Establishment of
an International
Observatory on
Illicit Traffic in
Cultural Goods***

The International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods was originally a three-year project created in January 2013 on the initiative of ICOM and with financial support from the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Home Affairs. The Observatory is the result of ICOM's long-standing commitment to fighting illicit traffic of cultural goods.

The Observatory is a long-term international cooperative platform between law enforcement agencies, research institutions and other external expert stakeholders. Its public website has an information databank with over 6,000 resources from glossary to good practices on the subject. ICOM is also publishing the first global report on the state of trafficking in the world. The Observatory is an innovative tool that will contribute, in a more efficient way, to understanding and fighting the illegal trade in cultural property at both national and international levels.

<http://obs-traffic.museum>

IMPORTANT:

ICOM wishes to underline that national authorities are the only bodies authorised to deliver permits for the export or import of cultural goods. Neither ICOM nor its international partners issue such certificates or permissions, though police and customs officials regularly intercept fake documents bearing the name and logo of ICOM.

Should you be confronted with such a situation, please contact us at:

illicit-traffic@icom.museum

The International Council of Museums (ICOM)

***ICOM is an
international
museum network
working with
35,000 museum
professionals in
136 countries.***

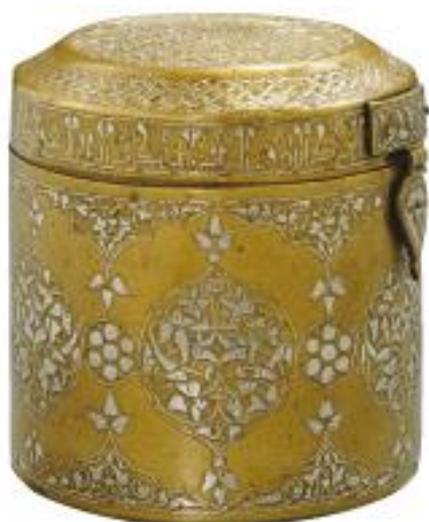
The International Council of Museums (ICOM), created in 1946, is the world organisation of museums and museum professionals. ICOM is committed to promoting and protecting natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible. With more than 35,000 members in 136 countries, the ICOM network is made up of museum professionals from a wide range of museum- and heritage-related disciplines.

ICOM's commitment to culture and knowledge promotion 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 museum community. The organisation's International and National Committees hold annual conferences and symposiums worldwide that revolve around pre-defined themes with a view to fostering exchange among museum professionals of all nationalities. In addition, ICOM organises International Museum Day each year, a worldwide event held around 18 May, to increase public awareness of the role of museums in developing society.

ICOM promotes standards of excellence in the museum field, in particular through its *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*, a standard-setting tool for museums, which includes basic principles for museum governance, the acquisition and disposal of collections, and rules for professional conduct.

In order to carry out its international public service missions, ICOM partners with entities such as the World Intellectual Property Organization, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organisation, and maintains its long-standing collaboration with UNESCO. These missions include fighting illicit traffic in cultural goods and promoting risk management and emergency preparedness to protect world cultural heritage in the event of natural or man-made disasters.

The UNESCO-ICOM Museum Information Centre, created in 1946, gathers the most comprehensive collection of ICOM publications including *ICOM News*, *ICOM Red Lists*, publications by ICOM's Committees and conference proceedings.



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- **Qaees Hussein Rashed Al Magases**, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Iraq
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- **Matthew Saba**, Mellon Curatorial Fellow, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, US
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- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA
- The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago, USA
- The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Baghdad, Iraq
- Museum für Islamische Kunst, State Museums of Berlin, Germany
- The British Museum, London, UK



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