EMERGENCY

RED LIST OF SYRIAN CULTURAL OBJECTS AT RISK

RedList قائمة حمراء

ICOM

© 2013, ICOM, all rights reserved. — Graphic design: TAM TAM TEAM. Cover: Ivory statue of “The Tambourine Player”, Ugarit, Late bronze Age (1550 - 1200 BC). 5 cm. © Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, Damascus.
The cultural heritage of Syria is protected by the following national and international laws:

### NATIONAL LEGISLATION

- **Decree-Law No. 84 of the Civil Code regarding archaeological objects covered by specific laws** (18 May 1949).
- **Legislative Decree No. 148 of the Penal Code regarding the destructions of historical monuments** (22 May 1949).
- **Legislative Decree No. 222 on the Antiquities regime in Syria** (26 October 1963), as amended by the **Antiquities Law** (5 April 1999).
- The above Legislative Decree encompasses previous national legislation regarding the protection of cultural heritage:
  - Legislative Decree No. 295 (2 December 1969).
  - Legislative Decree No. 296 (2 December 1969).
  - Legislative Decree No. 333 (23 December 1969).
  - **Law No. 107 (23 August 2011).**
  - **Law No. 38 on Customs** (6 July 2006).

### INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

- **UNESCO Convention of 16 November 1972 Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage** (accepted, 13 August 1975).

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

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Introduction
Syria has, over many millennia, been home to diverse cultures and ancient kingdoms, including prehistoric tribes, Islamic societies, European crusaders, Persian merchants and the Abbasid and Ottoman Empires. Syrians have diligently preserved and protected the material remains of these past cultures, supported by the development of national legislation.

Events shaking the Arab region have triggered a wave of concern regarding cultural heritage in Syria. The threat of long-lasting damage to Syrian cultural heritage sites is especially worrisome. Objects from these sites are highly coveted in the international art and antiquities markets and therefore subject to theft, looting, and illicit trafficking.

Syria’s diverse cultural heritage is reflected in the plurality of its national character. The ongoing destruction of sites and disappearance of cultural objects impoverishes our knowledge and understanding of Syrian cultural heritage and its many and varied contributions to world heritage.

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

Following reports of widespread damage and looting at cultural heritage sites in Syria, ICOM decided to publish the Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk with the aim to help art and heritage professionals and law enforcement officials identify Syrian objects that are protected by national and international legislations. In order to facilitate identification, the Emergency Red List illustrates the categories or types of cultural items that are most likely to be illegally bought and sold.

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 Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk is far from exhaustive. Any cultural good that could have originated from Syria should be subjected to detailed scrutiny and precautionary measures.
**Writing**

Cuneiform, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, Latin and Arabic inscriptions.

**Ceramic (clay, terracotta) and bronze tablets:** May be square-shaped, rectangular or with rounded corners (circular). Sometimes impressed with a cylinder seal. Average size: 3-30 x 3-30 cm. [1–2]

**Stone and bronze plaques and steles:** Square-shaped.

**Paper and parchment manuscripts, scrolls and books:**

With Greek, Syriac or Arabic writing. May be decorated with ornamental figures and gold colouring.

1. Clay cuneiform tablet with rounded corners, Mari, 1900 - 64 BC, 7.1 x 7 cm. © Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, Damascus

2. Square bronze tablet, Mari, 21st century BC, 11 x 11 cm. © Mari archaeological mission

**Figural sculpture**

Sculpted animal and human figures.

**Sculpture in the round > Ceramic (clay, terracotta) votive figurines:** Female figurines with emphasized sexual features, sometimes painted or with one or more beak-like heads and jewellery. Figures standing, sitting, riding horses or playing musical instruments. Greek and Roman examples may have distinct drapery folds. Height: 10-20 cm. [3–4]

**Stone (gypsum, basalt, alabaster), wood and metal (gold, silver) statues:**

Women with hats or elaborate headdresses. Men are typically bald and/or bearded. Clothing may be plain, layered or wavy. Long skirts or dresses with one shoulder bare. May have eyes inlaid with lapis lazuli and/or inscriptions on the back. Height: 10-120 cm. [5–6]

**Bronze male figurines:** May be covered with appliqués (gold, silver). Usually standing or striding with one arm raised and wearing a short skirt. Height: 8-20 cm. [7]
Alabaster and bone ‘Eye Idols’: Abstract depictions of humans with flat trapezoidal bodies and oversized eyes. May have carved lines depicting clothing. Height: 3-6 cm. [8]

Sculpture in high and low relief > Limestone funerary reliefs: One or more busts facing the viewer. Women with elaborate headdresses and jewellery. Often with ancient Aramaic or Greek inscriptions next to the head. Average dimensions: 50 x 40 x 15 cm. [9]

Clay and stone (gypsum, marble) votive reliefs: Figures facing forward, standing, sitting or riding (horses, camels), usually with bare feet, helmets and weapons. Often with an inscription in ancient Aramaic or Greek on the base or next to the head. Average dimensions: 20-50 x 30-70 x 15 cm. [10]

Ivory reliefs: Plaques decorated with figures, animals, plants or geometric motifs sometimes perforated. Some depicting a “Woman at the window”. Average dimensions: 10 x 10 cm. [11]

Vessels

Ceramics (pottery, clay, terracotta), metal (bronze, copper), stone and glass. Plain, or with incised or relief decorations (human, vegetal, animal, geometric). Ceramics may be glazed, burnished, varnished, painted (red, brown, black) and/or inscribed. [12–13–14–15–16]
Amphorae from the Hellenistic era may have rectangular or circular stamps with Greek writings, flowers, animals or objects. Roman glass vessels may have multicoloured patterns. Roman, Parthian and Umayyad ceramics have a green glaze. Later Islamic era vessels have multicoloured glazes with floral decorations. [17–18]

17. Glass bulbous long-necked bottle, Northern Syria, 2nd - 3rd century AD, 13.6 cm. © Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, Damascus

18. Glazed polychrome ceramic vase, Mamluk period (AD 1249 - 1323), 33.5 x Ø 26.5 cm. © Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, Damascus

**Architectural elements**

**Mosaics:** From floors and walls, stone, ceramic and glass cubes; presenting humans, buildings, landscapes. [19]

19. Limestone cube mosaic of a shrine with animals and vegetal motifs (whole scene and a detail), At Tamani‘ah, second half of the 5th century AD, 85 x 85 cm total piece, individual cubes 0.8-1 cm. © Maarat al-Nu‘man Museum

**Fragments and ornaments:** Stone (basalt, limestone, marble). Moulded or plain column bases. Cornices ornamented with triglyphs (vertical channels) and metopes (flat rectangular spaces). Carved capitals, lintels and waterspouts, often with sculpted vegetation. Wooden panels with sculpted vegetation and Islamic writings. Basalt doors with Christian motifs. Wall paintings, glass and glazed ceramic tiles, stucco decorations, small terracotta plaques, clay and stone reliefs. [20–21–22–23]

20. White limestone Corinthian capital with two rows of acanthi leaves, Harem, Byzantine period (5th - 6th centuries AD), 61 x 14 x inf. Ø 47 cm. © Idlib Museum

21. White limestone lintel, Byzantine period (5th - 6th centuries AD), 253 x 69 x 66 cm. © Idlib Museum

22. Ceramic tile, Turiz Compound (Damascus), Islamic era (15th century AD), 18.5 x 2 cm. © Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, Damascus


**Models:** Terracotta reproductions of buildings, mostly from the 3rd - 2nd millennium BC.

**Foundation deposits:** Inscribed terracotta cones and terracotta, metal and stone tablets.

**Accessories and instruments**

**Inlays:** Ivory, mother-of-pearl, shell and limestone. Alone or embedded into reliefs, plaques, furniture and wooden panels from boxes. May depict humans, animals or hybrids. Max. length: 15 cm. [24]

**Weapons and tools:** Stone blades and grinding stones. Bronze or iron swords, daggers, pierced axes, spear and arrow heads (may be inscribed), armour, craft and farming tools. [25]
**Foundation deposits:** Vessels have multicoloured glazes with floral decorations. [17–18] Parthian and Umayyad ceramics have a green glaze. Later Islamic era Roman glass vessels may have multicoloured patterns. Roman, stamps with Greek writings, flowers, animals or objects. Amphorae from the Hellenistic era may have rectangular or arrow heads (may be inscribed), armour, craft and farming tools. [25]

**Weapons and tools:** Wooden panels from boxes. May depict humans, animals or hybrids. Max. length: 15 cm. [24]

**Inlays:**


**Mosaics:** Architectural elements

**Various instruments:** Clay, wood, bone, stone, sculpted shells, ivory and metal (copper, zinc, lead, tin, alloys) objects for daily use. Astrolabes and other Islamic era instruments. [29]

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**Stamps and cylinder seals**

**Stone or ceramic (terracotta, glazed ceramic) stamp seals:** Animal or geometric shape, one or more flat sides engraved with human, animal or geometric designs. May be perforated. Max. dimensions: 5 x 5 cm. [30]

**Coloured cylinder seals (stone, ivory, terracotta, glazed ceramic):** Pierced cylinders, carved with inscriptions and a variety of different motifs (human, animal, hybrids). Average height: 3 cm. [31]

**Tessera and coins**

**Terracotta tessera:** Small square tokens with human figures, animals or objects and sometimes Aramaic inscriptions. Length: 2-3 cm.

**Metal (gold, silver, bronze) coins:**

- **Graeco-Hellenistic:** With portraits of kings and queens (obverse), gods standing or sitting, surrounded by Greek inscriptions, animals and objects (reverse). [32]
- **Roman:** With the emperor’s portrait (obverse) and a variety of motifs with Latin inscriptions, often the letters “SC” (reverse). [33]
- **Byzantine:** With the emperor’s portrait (obverse), but with letters and/or Christian symbols (reverse).
- **Islamic:** With Arabic inscriptions on both sides.

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30. Red limestone stamp and seal impression, Hassek province (Tell Brak), Late Chalcolithic (ca. 3800 - 3500 BC), 6.75 x 5.5 x 10 cm. © Tell Brak project 31. Hematite cylinder seal and impression, Ugarit, ca. 2000 - 1190 BC, 3 x 2 cm. © Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, Damascus

32. Silver tetradrachm with Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII, Ras Ibn Hani (Latakia), 40 - 31 BC. © Ras Ibn Hani mission / F. Bernel 33. Bronze Antoninianus coin with a radiated bust of Emperor Gallienus, Sura (Raqqa), AD 261 - 268, Ø 2.2 cm. © Sura Mission / Ali Othman
The International Council of Museums (ICOM), created in 1946 and representing museums and museum professionals, is committed to the promotion and protection of natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible. With 30,000 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 public service missions.

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

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