

Preamble

These resolutions emerge from the Inter-Congress of the World Archaeological Congress “Overcoming Structural Violence,” which was held in Ramallah, Palestine, 8-13 August, 2009. The WAC Executive has acted, and is acting, on these recommendations.

Resolution 1

We recognize that the past is a powerful resource for groups in the present. Connections to the past have been used to establish identities and to legitimize claims to land, monuments, and objects. Rival claims have too often led to violence, both physical and structural, in the present. We cannot carry out archaeological and cultural heritage research without recognizing its political implications.

We call on all people, archaeologists and non-archaeologists alike, to use the power of the past in support of equality, justice, and a fulfilling life for all as well as to counter exploitation and oppression.

We call on those in positions of power to refrain from imposing their interpretations of the past. In particular, we call on all governments and professional groups to propose laws, regulations and ethical codes of conduct that would prohibit support, whether with financial or other means, for archaeological excavations that result in the displacement of people from their homes.

We support the rights of oppressed groups in the present to criticize abuses of the past by others and to be assured of a public forum in which to put forth their own interpretations of the past. Any attempt to overcome structural violence must provide opportunities for all interested parties to debate interpretations of the past on an equal footing as long as their aims support equality, justice and an end to oppression.

Resolution 2

We call upon all Palestinians, both individuals and institutions, that have a stake in the field of cultural heritage to coordinate their efforts, cooperate between themselves and their local communities, and ensure the protection and preservation of the endangered cultural heritage of their country. We are deeply concerned about the ongoing destruction and damage of major archaeological sites, specifically Tell Jenin, Tell et-Tell, and Tell es-Sultan, by construction activities and illicit digging.

We acknowledge that an end to the occupation of Palestinian territory is essential to effectively countering the structural violence inherent in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Recalling the

provisions of the International Conventions for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and their related Protocols we express our deep concern over the harm suffered by Palestinian civilians and cultural heritage sites during the Israeli military attacks on the Gaza Strip in December 2008 and January 2009. Furthermore, we note the destruction of infrastructure, and a significant deterioration of basic services, and damage to schools and universities that this military attack caused. We call upon all concerned parties to respect and protect cultural heritage sites during military actions.

We express deep concern regarding the Israeli authorities' excavations in and around the Old City of Jerusalem, a protected site on the World Heritage List, contrary to the provisions of the Second Protocol of the Hague Convention on Cultural Property. We also express again our deep concern with the destruction wrought upon cultural heritage and civilians by the building of the Israeli Separation Wall.

We also condemn the damage caused by the Israeli military to the cultural heritage of Nablus, Hebron, Bethlehem, and other heritage sites listed on the "Inventory of Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine" prepared by the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in 2005.

We call upon WAC's Executive to take all necessary measures with the concerned parties to preserve and protect Palestinian heritage sites in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, and to assist the concerned Palestinian institutions in developing capacity in the protection, preservation and management of heritage sites and cultural property, including support for:

- a. Awareness raising initiatives for local communities (publication and distribution of information material, consultative workshops).

- b. Institutional capacity building and sharing of knowledge (training courses on information management, site management and risk preparedness).

- c. Logistical and training support to the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

- d. Education programs at Palestinian educational institutions.

- e. Assist the Palestinian Authority in assembling a database of cultural property removed from the occupied Palestinian territory.

Resolution 3

Noting that since Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 millions of artifacts have been taken from Museums, excavated and removed from Palestinian territory by Israeli authorities we call upon Israel to repatriate all of those objects to the Palestinian Department of Antiquities without further delay. This includes all sensitive materials including the Dead Sea Scrolls

We express concern that in June 2009, the Royal Ontario Museum, in collaboration with the Israel Antiquities Authority, illegally imported into Canada and put on display Palestinian artifacts, including the portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in violation of international customary law and UNESCO conventions and protocols. And we thus call on the WAC Executive and the President to take the following action:

- a. Issue a letter to the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) calling on the ROM to respect its ethical and legal obligations by ensuring any exhibit of Palestinian artifacts removed from the Palestinian territories are displayed with the explicit approval of the Palestinian National Authority.

- b. Issue a letter to Canada's Minister of Heritage calling on Canada to honor its international legal commitments under UNESCO conventions and related protocols by taking custody of the Scrolls and holding on to them in trust until the conflict between the Palestinian Authority and Israel is resolved.

- c. Issue a letter to the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) calling on the IAA to stop its practice of exporting and exhibiting Palestinian cultural property without explicit approval from the Palestinian Authority.

Resolution 4

WAC encourages the establishment of a professional organization for Palestinian archaeologists that would serve as a forum for communication. The organization should comprise government officials, academics and students, as well as heritage professionals from Palestinian non-governmental organizations. It should serve as a platform for archaeologists, historians and art historians, architects and engineers to share their ideas, expertise and scholarship about the preservation, protection and management of archaeological and cultural heritage. The participants of the Ramallah WAC Inter-Congress call on the Palestinian Authority to reactivate the Palestinian Archaeological Council. This Council should function as an open forum for communication and sharing ideas and comprises of representatives of governmental, academic, and non-governmental institutions.

Resolution 5

The departments of archaeology at Palestinians universities lack adequate teaching personnel to train the next generation of Palestinian archaeologists and cultural heritage professionals. We call upon WAC to launch a program to support foreign visiting teachers to interested Palestinian archaeology departments. During the Ramallah Inter-Congress, it also became apparent that there is a need for library resources in the West Bank and Gaza. For the purpose of this discussion, electronic reference refers to PDF files, e-books, links to valuable reference material and possibly image files. Once again, the most important thing here is to have specific needs addressed by the faculty and students of universities in the Occupied Territories. We propose establishing a central location on the web, from which each university in the Occupied Territories could access the various resources. An electronic repository eliminates some of the problems that are inherent in hard copy references. For example, universities in Gaza could simply log on and access files without having to wait for those files to be delivered from the West Bank. Also, if there is one book or one article that is particularly useful a number of people could use it at the same time.

Resolution 6

WAC is an association that encourages dialogue and cooperation between archaeologists and cultural heritage specialists from around the world. WAC emphasizes the promotion of mutual understanding not only of archaeologists but of all peoples. The Ramallah Inter-Congress participants encourage all archaeologists around the world to take an active role in the WAC and its activities.

Resolution 7

Ramallah Inter-Congress participants would have liked to visit archaeological sites together and we deplore the fact that most Palestinian attendants were not permitted to visit East Jerusalem. We object to all border restrictions that prevent the free movement of particular ethnic, political, social and religious populations, including scholars and students. We equally object to all archaeology that is done on the backs of subaltern people, who are often forced out of their homes and other spaces for the sake of researching the past. An archaeology that impinges in this way on the daily lives of communities is unethical.

Further Information:

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