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## **CULTURAL HERITAGE AGENCIES RESPOND TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS**

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Girona, Spain – UK based Archaeologist, Silvia Perini and Heritage consultant, Dr. Emma Cunliffe, in association with Heritage for Peace, have compiled a list which provides details about cultural heritage organisations and the actions they are taking towards the preservation and protection of Syria's tangible cultural heritage. The authors' goal is to encourage better information sharing and greater cooperation. The document entitled, "*Towards a protection of the Syrian cultural heritage: A summary of the international responses (March 2011 – March 2014)*" can be downloaded at: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Towards-a-protection-of-the-Syrian-cultural-heritage.pdf>

The report finds that as of March, 2014, there are at least thirty-eight (38) organisations or groups; their details obtained from the internet, who are working in various ways to safeguard and protect Syria's cultural heritage. The groups are listed in alphabetical order with a profile and summary. It is not surprising that thirty-six percent (36%) have been formed directly in response to the Syrian crisis. It is encouraging to see that Syrian nationals have formed six (6) organisations with volunteer members who communicate via Facebook. These include: *the Division of Antiquities of the Free Council of Aleppo*; *Documenting the Injured Archaeological Sites of Homs*; *Eyes on Heritage*; *Rescue the Old City of Aleppo*; and *The Syrian Association for Preserving Heritage and Ancient Landmarks*. The work of the [Syrian Directorate of Antiquities and Museums](#) (DGAM) is also highlighted. By comparison, seventy-six percent (76%) of organisations have international memberships and collaborations with many volunteers. The report found that sixty percent (60%) of the organisations engage in online discussions, whereas only 5% undertook further action to launch electronic databases to assist in combating illicit traffic in cultural objects, for example. The work of these organisations includes: discussion and sharing updates online, publications, interviews, statements, press releases, petitions, lectures, conferences, workshops, training, exhibitions, electronic databases, urban restoration projects, control measures, awards, new draft laws and employment. Measures taken inside Syria include; confiscating illegal exports (antiquities), regional cooperation, emptying museums, storing artefacts in safe and secure places, increasing numbers of guards and patrols, launching a national awareness campaign, involvement of local communities in protecting sites, new draft laws and workshops on illicit trafficking. The authors' acknowledge this list is provisional, and that other groups and organisations certainly exist. However, it is their hope that by publishing this list, individuals or groups wishing to share information may do so, and therefore cooperate together towards the protection and preservation of Syrian cultural heritage.

Heritage for Peace aims to do all we can to enhance the peace process by entering into dialogue with the governments and all persons of any religion or ethnicity who matter the most in protecting and preserving irreplaceable cultural heritage. Heritage for Peace consists of leading Syrian and international experts who are academics, scholars, heritage professionals and independent advisors. For more information on Heritage for Peace and our activities, visit us online at: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/>.

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