

**Committee: United Nations
Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization (UNESCO)
Topic B: Protection of Cultural
Heritage in Conflict-Affected Areas**

Topic B: Protection of Cultural Heritage in Conflict-Affected Areas

MUNTCP

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Introduction

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was created in 1945; World Armed Conflict II drove its founding and the belief that peace and sustainability among countries must be achieved. The committee started when allied countries held multiple conferences in London from November 1st to November 16th to improve their educational system after the violent conflict, writing the official UNESCO constitution, ratified by 20 nations in 1946. Since then, UNESCO has worked on different projects to implement education, science, and culture worldwide. UNESCO has as governing bodies the General Conference and the Executive Board.

The General Conference is UNESCO's first organ. It is responsible for initiating, approving, and setting the budget. The Executive Board functions as a monitoring organ. It is in charge of ensuring that the project has been achieved, supervising it, and reviewing the quality of the implementations.

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UNESCO's primary function is to promote international collaboration and implement the World Heritage Convention. It is also responsible for distributing financial assistance and deciding which properties are added to the World Heritage List to protect them.

On the international stage, UNESCO also participates in initiatives, including the International Geoscience Programme, which addresses global issues such as climate change, sustainable education for all, cultural diversity, freedom of expression, educational programs, and the protection of monumental zones; this program is supported by 193 member states and 11 associate members.

Additionally, UNESCO collaborates with other UN organizations through the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, which aims to support and coordinate the initiatives of countries in need that follow the UN projects.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), collaborates to ensure universal access to quality education for children; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which focuses on education, gender equality, and the development of communities; the World Health Organization (WHO), promotes healthy school environments as well as has highlighted the importance of introducing

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topics related to health on education systems and providing these types of services; United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), collaborates on environmental education and raising awareness about preserving natural heritage; and The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), provides educational opportunities and supports refugees, ensuring quality education.

In addition to these collaborative efforts, it is crucial to recognize culture's significant role in building inclusive and diverse communities for sustainability and climate change. Culture is a complex concept that shapes people's perspective of the world. According to the official dictionary of Cambridge, culture is defined as "The way of life, especially the general customs, and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time". It influences every part of people's lives, such as language, ideas, beliefs, customs, tools, and more. According to UNESCO, a crucial part of the concept is cultural heritage: "It includes artifacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, and museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historical, artistic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific, and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile, and underwater), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural and natural heritage artifacts, sites, or monuments".

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Natural and cultural heritage are often intertwined due to the deep connection and spiritual bonds between natural environments and Indigenous cultures. A clear example is the Maasai, a traditional pastoralist community that has lived in parts of Kenya and Tanzania since the XVI century; they inhabit the Serengeti ecosystem. Aloyce Mollel, a member of the Maasai community, said, “To be Maasai is to live in this land”, and “The people, the animals, and the land are together. We will always be here.” emphasizing the importance of the protection of the cultural and natural heritage. (National Geographic, 2022).

The historical relevance of their heritage figures gives place to consider the respect and conservation they need to promote peace and diversity. Especially in the face of conflict, as it is often a victim of hostilities. When people act without respect and destroy any cultural heritage, they fuel hatred and more violence, and when people are involved in conflicts, that violence increases and has “led to the large-scale destruction of cultural heritage, weakening the foundations of communities, lasting peace and prospects of reconciliation.” (UNESCO n.d.)

Heritage destruction is a well-known strategy used to weaken cultures and repress individuals, also known as “culturicide”. This method erodes cultural identity by targeting and destroying historically and culturally significant sites, buildings, practices,

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and beliefs. This tactic has been used throughout history to oppress and control communities. For example, during World War II, “the erasure and theft of the cultural heritage of Jewish and Roma peoples across Nazi-occupied Europe was an outrage that further fueled the drive to dehumanize and delegitimize entire peoples” (University of Oxford, n.d.). By erasing these cultural symbols, oppressors seek to weaken a community’s sense of self and suppress its cultural individuality, effectively erasing its history and identity.

Conflict zones are areas where armed conflicts, cultural heritage destruction, or violent riots occur; these regions are characterized by instability, violence, and a breakdown of law and order. Most of the time, problems with protecting cultural heritage occur due to the region's vulnerability to different situations, which makes the protection of cultural heritage minimal and increases culturalicides.

Unfortunately, there are many causes of why culturicide happens; one of the leading causes is because of the armed conflicts between nations; during these conflicts, historical sites and natural areas often become strategic targets or suffer damage due to military operations. The occupation of territories, bombings, and armed conflicts can lead to the devastation of monuments, historic buildings, and nature reserves. In addition, the

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instability generated by conflicts prevents conservation and protection work, leaving these heritage sites vulnerable to looting and vandalism.

Natural disasters can also cause similar devastation. “Floods, earthquakes, fires, environmental stress, and other similar long-term climatic impacts often cause irreparable damage or destruction of heritage and real estate assets,” as well as urban sprawl. These natural phenomena, exacerbated by climate change, destroy physical structures and disrupt living heritage, such as traditional practices and community rituals, further endangering the cultural fabric of affected areas. Efforts to conserve and protect cultural heritage must consider both human and natural threats to ensure the survival of these invaluable resources for future generations.

Furthermore, negligence, lack of financial resources, inadequate conservation policies, and regular maintenance are critical reasons for cultural and natural heritage decline. Places of heritage like historical monuments, buildings, and protected natural reserves are unsafe to damage as these places need regular care and support to reduce structural impacts. Without proper care and protection, such places are impacted by nature's course; for instance, climate, growth of vegetation, and other natural occurrences can all affect them. In addition, without community and governmental support for heritage through education and awareness-raising, heritage protection is unlikely.

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Moreover, Urban expansion is a significant cause of cultural and natural heritage destruction. The growth of cities increases demand for land for residential, infrastructural, commercial, and other types of urban use. As the city expands, it destroys historical buildings and archaeological sites, as economic growth is prioritized over the protection of heritage sites. Urban expansion also divides and damages natural habitats, further endangering biodiversity and protected areas. Unplanned urbanization can contaminate air and water, hurting the conservation of cultural heritage sites and the quality of natural landscapes.

Additionally, looting poses a severe threat to the integrity of cultural and natural heritage since it results in an irreplaceable deprivation of valuable elements of a community's history and culture. Looting can occur during periods of armed conflict, political unrest, or due to insufficient or lack of vigilance over archaeological sites and museums. According to The Museum Association, “profits from the illicit trade of antiquities range from \$225 million to \$3 billion annually.” It involves the theft and illicit trafficking of artifacts, historical pieces, monuments, sculptures, and artworks, resulting in the illegal sale of the item on the black market or to private collectors, making it difficult to recover and conserve those objects. This is because those involved in looting have no concern about the archaeological context and use destructive means to extract

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objects, effectively eradicating any scientific or contextual information that could have been provided and raising a block to cultural and historical understanding.

According to UNESCO, cultural and natural heritage is essential. “Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are irreplaceable life and inspiration sources.” The consequences of such destruction are severe, involving the loss of essential parts of cultural history central to people's identity and their attachment to places. This has both psychological and emotional impacts on affected communities since it destroys critical elements of people's identity, history, and social cohesion, generating feelings of loss and disorientation. The loss of cultural heritage can lead to collective trauma, erasing memories, traditions, and historical continuity essential to a community's identity and cohesion. This is a severe problem in conflict zones around the world, such as Ethiopia, Israel, Syria, Mali, Myanmar, and Ukraine, where deliberate attacks on cultural heritage are often used as an approach to war to undermine the morale and cultural fabric of the enemy.

The destruction of cultural heritage is a grave topic as it constitutes the loss of important pieces of cultural history, which are a central part of people and their attachment to places; this has psychological and emotional repercussions on the

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communities victims of this strategy. It is a prominent issue in conflict zones all over the world, such as Ethiopia, Israel, Syria, Mali, Myanmar, and Ukraine. On the other hand, natural disasters can cause the same destruction; “Floods, earthquakes, fires, environmental fatigue, and similar long-term climate effects often cause irreversible damage or destroy both movable and immovable heritage assets” as well as urban expansion (European Parliament Think Tank, 2007).

Human rights and the destruction of heritage are deeply interconnected. Heritage sites often act as living repositories of cultural identity, history, and collective memory. Their destruction constitutes a severe violation of several fundamental human rights. The right to culture is compromised, as these sites are essential to a community’s cultural expression and identity. At the same time, the right to education could be adversely affected. Heritage sites are significant educational resources that store knowledge and make sense of past events.

Their destruction would mean communities would lose access to this valuable source of information and history. The right to freedom of religion or belief may also be under threat, as many heritage sites are of particular religious or spiritual importance, and the destruction of the heritage sites would attack religious freedom and the freedom to practice a particular faith. Finally, there is a way the right to adequate housing and

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livelihoods could be compromised, as the destruction of heritage sites might lead to displacement and loss of livelihoods for people living in the area who depend on them for economic activities, such as tourism.

Heritage protection is a duty of the State since it should elaborate laws and formulate strategies for their specific heritage. A few things come with this responsibility.

First, a robust legal framework is essential. States need to enforce protective laws for tangible and intangible heritage sites. Such laws should also comply with international conventions to ensure that protection is more holistic. One such convention is the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

Countries that have a legal framework regarding the protection of cultural heritage

- All 196 parties who signed the Geneva Convention (1949)
- All 135 states that signed the Hague Convention
- All 124 members of The States Parties to the Rome Statute

A successful conservation system is not only bound by legal features; it's also important to establish national or regional strategies for the protection of heritage. Governments have to identify, list, and rank the sites and practices that should be

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safeguarded. This includes precautions against natural disasters, urban development, and even vandalism.

Another significant part is planning funds and resources for heritage protection. The states should allocate funding and support for restoration projects, maintenance requirements, benefits, and preventive measures. It is also essential for them to train and build the capacity of professionals engaged in heritage conservation. It is the responsibility of all governments to promote public awareness of the importance of these matters and to publish-oriented education. Working these themes into educational curricula and getting local communities is necessary to make everyone understand and value the heritage.

A significant effort was **The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property** in the Event of Armed (1954), commonly referred to as the **Hague Convention**; it was the first international treaty dedicated towards the protection of cultural heritage in times of conflict and peace, declaring it a priority and acknowledging the need for global security. “The 1954 Hague Convention aims to protect cultural property, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, archaeological sites, works of art, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological

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interest, as well as scientific collections of any kind regardless of their origin or ownership.” (UNESCO, n.d.).

The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict has implemented initiatives and efforts to preserve cultural heritage during armed conflicts. Among the necessary measures taken was the creation of the Blue Shield Emblem. This emblem signifies that the site is a specially protected zone that should not be targeted during an armed conflict. The Blue Shield Emblem is used to identify and preserve cultural properties, such as monuments, museums, and archives, during armed conflicts and to emphasize the importance of safeguarding such sites.

Additionally, the Convention encouraged countries to ratify national laws and process cultural property inventories. These inventory systems aim to document cultural properties, such as monuments and archives, so that they can be identified, listed, and protected. In addition to the inventory, one of the essential measures taken after the Convention was the creation of training programs that emphasized the importance of educating government officials, the military and the public about cultural heritage preservation, ensuring respect for cultural heritage during armed conflicts. The training program also aimed to ensure that military and government officials could recognize the importance of conserving cultural properties before disputes ensue.

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Following the adoption of the Convention, guidelines for emergency safeguarding measures were established to safeguard cultural properties from threats of loss, destruction, or damage from an armed conflict. Reacting to protect cultural properties, the guidelines provide protocols or a plan to protect against risks associated with an armed conflict. This plan is essential for protecting and maintaining cultural heritage, especially in a crisis. International cooperation and assistance were also emphasized. The Convention encouraged states to collaborate and provide support and resources to affected countries to protect cultural heritage and strengthen global efforts to safeguard cultural property during conflicts.

Furthermore, a system for reporting and monitoring was established to track the implementation of the Convention's provisions. Signatory states were required to report on their efforts to protect cultural property, and mechanisms were implemented to address violations. In 1999, two additional protocols were adopted to expand the scope of protection further, introducing enhanced protections for cultural property in occupied territories and during armed conflicts. These initiatives reflect the Convention's comprehensive approach to protecting cultural heritage during armed conflicts, emphasizing legal protection, international cooperation, and proactive measures to safeguard valuable cultural assets.

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Every State participant of the convention committed to implementing a set of rules to preserve cultural heritage:

- Preventive measures such as emergency measures in case of fire or building collapse, preparing inventories, and preparing safekeeping of cultural property.
- Encouraging initiatives to ensure respect for cultural property in their state or others. Including refraining from violent or non-respectful behaviors toward such property, as well as exposing it to deterioration in the event of armed conflict
- Using the International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection to register cultural property of high importance and get special protection. The IRCPSP is “a special register maintained by the Director-General of UNESCO of cultural property granted 'Special Protection” (UNESCO, N.D.)
- Marking essential monuments and buildings with a unique emblem of the convention.
- Creating a shelter for cultural property in need of protection
- Establishing units within the military with the unique purpose of protecting cultural property

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- Setting sanctions for violations of the Convention. Not explicitly outlined in the Convention; however, humanitarian law breaches can lead to diplomatic condemnation, economic sanctions, or international prosecution.
- Promoting the Convention with the public and target groups to expand its reach.

Many countries already established legal frameworks protecting cultural property, frequently consistent with the Hague Convention. On the other hand, Italy has an extensive framework for cultural heritage protection, including measures for preventing illicit traffic of art properties during conflict. French heritage laws reinforce specific rules and adhere to the Hague Convention Postal Enforcement. Germany has also implemented laws to protect cultural property and acceded to international treaties. American cultural preservation law has been backed by congressional legislation and international agreements (the United States is a signatory to The Hague Convention).

The International Register of Cultural Properties under Special Protection is an instrument aimed at providing additional protection to cultural properties in which registered properties are protected more rigorously during armed conflicts. Protection includes safeguarding the property against pillage, destruction, and other damage done

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during hostilities. The register has a preservation function, which ensures cultural property is preserved.

This Registry records the existence of fragile properties that are registered as endangered from being lost and other forms of theft or damage. However, certain countries have registered their cultural properties in the International Register for Special Protection to protect them against looting during conflicts. These are the Netherlands, which has listed an important number of heritage sites and key archaeological spots, permitting further protection for them. In the register, Cyprus has included significant cultural and religious monuments, such as ancient churches and monasteries, to save these sites crucial to its tradition. Pakistan has also documented archaeological sites and historical monuments that accompany the rich cultural history of the land, ensuring these assets will not be destroyed or stolen in times of war.

To safeguard heritage in conflict zones, **Belgium, Belarus, and China** are committed to protecting cultural heritage in conflict zones through international collaboration. Belgium supports UNESCO and other organizations in protecting cultural property affected by armed conflicts. Belarus actively participates in discussions and initiatives on cultural heritage preservation during military activities and could contribute to peacekeeping efforts that include cultural protection. China invests significantly in

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global cultural heritage protection, adhering to UNESCO conventions and engaging in debates on preserving heritage in conflict situations.

Egypt plays a vital role in protecting ancient sites amid conflict in the **Middle East and North Africa**, reflecting its long-standing tradition of supporting cultural heritage. **Germany, France, and Greece** also contribute substantially to global preservation efforts. Germany provides financial support, expertise, and staff to UNESCO, supports the maintenance of peace operations, and combats illegal trafficking of cultural property. France is proactive in cultural diplomacy, supporting initiatives to protect historical sites in the Middle East and Africa. Greece, dedicated to preserving its artistic legacy, supports UNESCO's projects and aids in preserving historic sites affected by armed conflicts in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions. According to Groizard & Santana-Gallego (2018) “the disappearance of those sites classified as “in danger” by UNESCO would cause a minimum loss of around 12% of their tourism, with Libya and Syria being the most affected countries.” **Iran** similarly advocates for protecting cultural assets in crisis areas and participates in UNESCO's efforts.

Historical Background

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The conflict of protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones has existed since ancient history, with the beginning of conquests and armed conflicts to gain authority or influence over the citizens; for example, the IV century b.C, the conquests of Alejandro Magno which involved destruction and looting of a significant amount of patrimonial sites of the ancient world. Rome fell in the V century a.C, where there was a significant destruction of cultural monuments because of the combats near monumental areas,

The destruction of patrimonial sites because of armed conflicts continued with the burning of libraries, which was a hazardous act because of political reasons, ideological purposes, and religious movements. Libraries that were establishments intended to conserve knowledge and pass it along were attacked and burned. Political rulers and spiritual movements destroyed information to the extreme for them to ignore the texts or ideas conflicting with their profit motive.

Julius Cesar was a Roman emperor between 46 and 44 BC. He was assassinated by political rivals in 44 BC, but during his reign, he conquered around 750,000 km², which nowadays would include France, Belgium, and Switzerland, among others; he was a distinguished leader historically, and during his period in power, a lot of dramatic events occurred one of those dramatic events was the burning of the Library of Alexandria, it happened when the greek surrounded him by land and sea, for him to scape Cesar started

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a fire in the harbor of the city, which quickly spread across the city causing the Library of Alexandria to burn down.

The reconstruction of historic libraries after destruction was often a multifaceted process that took many years, depending on the circumstances. In the case of many ancient libraries - for instance, in Alexandria a restored library was never again established to the same shape as its predecessor. However, part of this knowledge was regained through copying and transmitting texts to other libraries. By the Renaissance, efforts had already been made to find and gather the lost ancient writings. Libraries and learning centers that rose in various parts of the world, such as the Library of Baghdad, were active through most of the Islamic Age and played a significant role in knowledge preservation or expansion during Europe's dark ages. The many efforts associated with this helped preserve a part of knowledge from the burned libraries, but only some of what was lost and will never fully recover.

Moreover, in the Middle Ages, all over from V to XV centuries, there were multiple damages to catholic sites and monuments during **The Crusades:**

During this period, The Crusades were a series of military attempts influenced by religious reasons such as the Christian expansion, recuperation of Christian sites,

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Christian unification, and Spiritual redemption, which led to lootings and conquered in multiple regions of the Middle East that affected the cultural heritage. The first Crusade was from 1096 until 1099, which was asked by Pope Urban II, intending to recover Jerusalem and other spiritual zones that were under the influence of Musulmans; during this attempt, the Christian people looted the cities and caused extensive damage and destruction to Jewish and Muslim sites,

The second attempt was from 1147 until 1149, which was less damaging than the first one but also caused damage to the heritage; this expedition was because of the fall of the county of Edessa to the Muslims. The third attempt is considered the rudest combat of the Crusades according to the World History Encyclopedia webpage; this confront is also known as the Crusade of the Kings since it featured people like Ricardo Corazon de León, Felipe II of France, and Federico I Barbarroja led it. During this period, the historical sites, cities, and religious zones in Tierra Santa were near destruction because of the combats between the Crusades and Muslims.

After the third Crusade, the 4th—9th Crusades were irrelevant and destined to recuperate Jerusalem and the Middle East lands. Fortunately, these attempts had much less impact than the first three, even though these combats contributed to monetary, political, and social instability, as well as massive destruction of the cultural heritage.

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As a consequence of the multiple combats, there was a large amount of damage all around the zones, affecting cultural heritage sites. There was significant harm in the Mosques, which were fundamental for the Muslim religious practices and had great historical and arquitectonic value; these monuments were affected because of bomb attacks, confrontations, and lootings, reducing not only cultural heritage but also affecting spiritual identity. Most mosques were converted into churches and started as a common practice in territories under Crusader control. For example, “The Great Mosque of Antioch” was transformed into a cathedral. In some instances, when Muslim leaders negotiated the surrender of cities, they included clauses in treaties that protected religious buildings; in this way, not all mosques were destroyed or desecrated.

As well as the demolition of many Churches that faced severe risks and damages. These buildings represented the Christian symbol, and their demolition affected citizens because of their significant value and the region's history. Despite the multiple damages, the Crusaders built many new churches and cathedrals in the Holy Land and other conquered territories. Notable examples are the “Church of the Holy Sepulchre” in Jerusalem, which was extensively rebuilt and expanded with the construction of various cathedrals in cities like Acre and Antioch. Most of the churches were fortified and used

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as defensive structures; the main purpose of this was particularly evident in towns like Jerusalem, where churches served both religious and military functions.

Besides the church damages and results, there were also demolishments and attacks on religious monuments such as domes, statues, and temples. These monuments have significant meanings for the communities they represent and are part of their cultural heritage. The destruction of these pieces reduced the zone's artistic and historical value and could have an emotional impact on the people who considered them sacred.

Furthermore, during the Crusades, many Christian relics were transferred to European regions. These pieces were considered very valuable and sacred to several communities, and their transfer to European lands deprived the areas of origin of their cultural treasures. This also altered how these relics were venerated and used in their places of origin, affecting the integrity of local religious traditions.

These multiple armed conflicts were also impacted since they brought cultural and intellectual exchange between the East and the West. The European churches and monasteries benefited from the introduction of new ideas, texts, and technologies brought back by the Crusaders. Efforts significantly reshaped the Christian churches by enhancing papal authority, altering economic practices, and exacerbating interfaith

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tensions. These developments influenced medieval society and set the stage for future religious conflicts and transformations within Christianity.

Historic buildings, religious monuments, and sacred objects embody the cultural heritage of one or more communities. The churches, mosques, or other landmark sites they have raised represent stories of the past and traditions that form part of their communities' identity.

Transferring the relics and sacred objects in times of war has a follow-up impact because it changes them from their original environment, which leads to a loss of sense for the community that claims to have an original place. The loss of cultural heritage also involves the feelings and emotions of people who derive their identity from what has been destroyed. The loss of these sites also damages learning for generations and local economies. Preserving cultural heritage is important to continue our history and make future generations experience its culture.

Besides the multiple monuments that were demolished, the Dome of the Rock was severely affected; this dome in Jerusalem has had to navigate changes, conflicts, and differences throughout its existence that have placed it at increased damage and risk from time to time. The structure of this building was completed in 693 AD under The Umayyad

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Caliph Abd al-Malik. During the building's first few centuries, it remained intact and undamaged. This, however, was damaged in the 8th century by earthquakes during a period of natural disasters and political instability.

In June 1099, when the Crusaders captured Jerusalem at the end of their invasion during the First Crusade, the Dome of Rock fell into Christian hands. They converted it into a Christian Church and mutilated the building in doing so. Some of its original mosaics and decorations were destroyed in the damage. After Saladin recaptured Jerusalem in 1187, the Dome was re-established as an Islamic sanctuary.

Similarly, the Mongol conquests of the 13th and 14th centuries led by Genghis Khan followed this destruction throughout Asia, expanding to Europe. These campaigns were first launched in the 13th century and spread all the East zones from Central Asia to rule the entire territories of Eastern Europe and parts of the Middle East. Although they were quick and were developed as military operations, the invasions also resulted in millions of life losses with a lot of structural and heritage damage.

In the 13th century, Baghdad was not only the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate but also one of the most important political and cultural centers in the Islamic world. The city stood on an important trade road connecting the Middle East with Asia and Europe

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that allowed goods to pass from one place to another since it had easy access to the Tigris River that grew into a lively hub of cultural and religious activity boasting ethnic origins such as Arabian, Persians, Turkish, and others. Moreover, Baghdad has long been a center of knowledge and learning, such as the House of Wisdom; it was a globally recognized library with a large amount of knowledge and cultural value in its books. Regarding that, it was a center for learning, where translations made from one culture and text were saved from another.

This recognized place was founded in the 8th century AD by Caliph Harun al-Rashid located in the capital city of Baghdad; the institute boasted an extensive library of manuscripts on all subject areas, a translation department that turned Greek and Persian works into Arabic for original study at the center, a group worked in mathematics, astronomy medicine, and other sciences, as well several scientific employees. House of Wisdom was a center for intellectual study, which included research and translation.

On February 10, 1258, Baghdad fell to Mongol forces led by Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, after a month-long siege. This invasion marked a devastating event in the city's history. The Mongols sacked and burned Baghdad, causing massive destruction and killing much of its population. Among the destroyed buildings were:

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Palaces such as the Caliph's Palace, one of the most significant buildings to be destroyed and severely burned down, were located near the round city center. This palace was where the Caliphs (kings) and some people lived. The palace was also a symbol of political and religious influence in Abbasid. The upper halls and gardens of the Caliphate Palace were like the government building of Caliphs, so with this destruction, many political losses occurred in Abbasid. Also, because the Palaces of Abbasid's Caliph was considered Shias' holy place, they frequently prayed or celebrated their religious events. So, their loss was widespread among all Islamic governments and Muslims at that time since it had political and spiritual aspects.

Furthermore, famous Mosques, including Khalifa Mosque, were burned down too. Before this action, Khalifa Mosque was one of the most significant mosques in the Islamic world, and many prayers took place there every day. Additionally, students learned Islamic teachings and other religious sciences there. Moreover, after some years, when Kurds dominated a part of Baghdad, they repaired Mansur Mosque, which was destroyed by a hidden dynasty, even though the building will not have the same historical value it had before the attempts.

Additionally, multiple churches in some Christian-dominated neighborhoods were demolished, such as the St. George Church 9th and the Holly St George Church II,

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the most crucial church in Baghdad. Some of these religious sites were burned entirely down but after three days, rain came, and a waterfall flowed to Thawra, so they were rescued from the complete fire and could be almost wholly restored some of the religious pieces were translated to nearby regions for their protection,

Famous hospitals were also affected, and Khalifa Hospital was one of them. The Khalifa Hospital was well known because of its advanced medical treatments and the good care for the harmed people there; this center was the most important in the city since it had a library with critical medical texts and highly specialized doctors. The loss of this hospital not only represented the destruction of a valuable building but also the loss of medical knowledge that was crucial for the public health of Baghdad.

It is essential to mention one of the most considerable losses historically, the House of Wisdom, the oldest and largest library of the time. It was a place for reading and interpreting scientific texts. It contained many hand-written valuable manuscripts on parchment paper; it was not only books and documents of all scientific branches that were archived but also an important research and translation section. It was where all ancient texts, including Persian texts, had been written on parchment paper and translated into Arabic. This loss represented centuries of knowledge drawn upon works by notable classical authors that are now lost forever.

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The multiple destructions and damages to the cultural heritage of Baghdad were not only physical, but the fall of Baghdad had a significant cultural and educational impact that has shaped today's everyday life. Rebuilding efforts began but the amount of destruction and loss of knowledge was big. House of Wisdom and other knowledge centers were restored to their original state. The Mongols also destroyed the city of Baghdad, and it took many years to recover from what marked the Islamic culture in general. The fall of these homes of information and livelihoods drastically affected the city's global role.

In 1648, Prague hosted the **Thirty Year War**, an event that would be considered very important in the context of the cultural heritage; it was nearly three decades of armed conflict that was waged since 1618 throughout Europe and involved consequences for the Holy Roman Empire. The war was closing to its end as negotiations about the Peace of Westphalia. Nevertheless, what happened in Prague reflected the brutality and devastation it caused.

In 1648, Swedish troops commanded by General Lennart Torstenson tried to gain influence in Prague and started devising multiple strategies to maximize their authority. This ensured they achieved the maximum domination possible after the various negotiations of the Thirty Years' Armed Conflict.

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During the attacks, Prague was highly damaged. The city, a political, cultural, and economic metropolis of Europe, saw its buildings destroyed and treasures looted. The Swedes destroyed, robbed, and occupied churches, monasteries, and castles, as well as private homes in the whole town. Objects of art were stolen; the libraries of colleges and monasteries were plundered or set on fire. The consequences of this destructive attack were added to many other negative factors influencing Prague in that period.

Rudolf II, who reigned as Holy Roman Emperor from 1576 to 1612, is principally celebrated for his sponsorship of the arts and science. His palace in Prague was a focal point of cultural and scientific activities, and he gathered many fine art and curiosities. However, there were conflicts during his reign, and how much support he gave to protecting cultural heritage is not completely clear.

Rudolf II would not have concerned himself with the explicit protection of cultural heritage. As much as he loved art and culture, the conflicts in his time resulted in disaster and losses; in 1618, the Thirty Years' War saw a wave of looting and destruction come to Habsburg lands, including Prague. It was, in particular, the lack of clearly defined instructions for the protection of cultural heritage during times of war that caused such a devastating loss of culture. Some cities and regions were affected by the consequences of military events, including churches, libraries, and palaces.

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The Thirty Years' Armed Conflict shows how military conflicts can impact cultural heritage. The destruction in the city during the Swedish siege in 1648 provides evidence for the negative results of war on infrastructure and artistic property. Rudolf II was an enthusiastic protector of artists and created a great collection of art objects, but his monarchy did not prevent destruction and robbery during the conflict.

The First World War, also known as the Big War, was a military armed conflict at a global level that took part in history from the 28th of July of 1914 until the 11th of November of 1918, lasting around four years. This conflict involved most of the major world power nations at that time. This conflict was divided into two main alliances: the Allies, led by France, the United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States of America, and the Central Powers, led by Germany, Austria, Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria. Furthermore, this armed conflict was characterized by the extreme demolishing of buildings because of the new technologies implemented during the combats, such as tanks, aviation bombs, and atomic weapons.

One of the main aspects during this First World conflict was the destruction of cultural and heritage goods such as artworks, historic monuments, libraries, and other cultural symbols, which suffered irreparable damages, highlighting the vulnerability of cultural heritage during armed conflicts. For example, the Notre Dame de Reims

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Cathedral, unfortunately, was the victim of bomb attacks on September 19th of 1914, only a few months after the conflict started; this hazardous act of destruction was converted into a symbol that meant to threaten the cultural heritage of European zones. The German forces bombed the cathedral because they considered the site a vital monument of France's history and identity since, in this place, the French royals used to be coronated; when destroying this crucial site, Germans searched to undermine French people and culture to demonstrate their domination, as well as it not only had a military purpose but it also aimed to be a psychological harm for citizens, since the destruction of such important monument would affect the morale of French citizens.

The restoration of the Reims Cathedral started in 1919, immediately after the conflict; this restoration was prolonged since it had several damages to its infrastructure, demonstrating the importance of preservation and reconstruction of cultural heritage. The zone was reopened several years later, in 1938, even though the restoration continued for many more years. Another clear example of the cultural devastation was the destruction of the Louvain Library, which was also attacked by the German forces on August 25th, 1915; this damage was because of a series of combats between Germans and Belgians in Belgian territory; this event was also known as The Belgium Violation; the destruction of the library was a devastating blow to the academic communities and for the ones that

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used that culture and knowledge. Germans burnt the library, leading to a fire that lasted around three days and destroyed almost everything from the library; some of the pieces completely disappeared, but some books and documents were saved by citizens who risked their lives for the protection of its cultural heritage. This was an apparent attempt at the cultural heritage of Belgium and the entire Europe; after the unfortunate event, there were international efforts to help the total recovery of the site. It wasn't until 1928 that the library reopened, with some crucial items and articles missing.

Cultural heritage was also severely affected by the battles of World War I. One of the longest battles of the conflict was the Battle of Verdun, fought between French and German forces. Verdun became a symbol of the French resistance and the tenacity of the soldiers who fought there. The battle took place from February 21 to December 18, 1916. French and German forces engaged in fierce fighting for almost a year, which left deep scars on the landscape and the collective memory of both countries.

The fighting was near the village of Verdun, in North-East France. The city of Verdun was a critical, fortified city for the French. It was valuable because of where it sat on the German checklist and the stretch of waterway: available French defenses backed by the whole interior countryside. One of the critical forts at Verdun was Fort Douaumont; captured by German forces almost immediately after the start of the battle

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on 25 February 1916, the fort changed hands between the two sides, leaving the site in ruins and with massive damage.

Due to its structural fortification, Fort Dormond was extremely crucial. This fortress was a strategic location in the Verdun area, and having control of it meant a great advantage, so both sides invested in holding that land. The fight for Fort Douaumont reflected the nature of many battlefields, and the possession of Fort Douaumont meant that the Germans could menace French defenses elsewhere in Verdun and other regions on either side of it.

After 20 years, **The Second World War** started, which was a devastating event that took place from 1939 until 1945. It was one of the most hazardous conflicts in history since it involved most of the world's nations. The United Kingdom of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the Republic of China, and the United States led the first alliance. Conversely, the second group was led by Germany, Japan, and Italy. The conflict started with an invasion of Poland from Germany part on September 1st, 1939, which led Great Britain and France to break diplomatic ties and declare a conflict with Germany. Along the conflicts, a large number of combats, invasions, and bomb attacks happened, causing millions of losses and the massive destruction of the cultural heritage from different regions all around the world.

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The Nazi forces did a planned and careful looting plan of cultural things in the lands they took over. This act of stealing was not just a result of the disasters that armed conflicts caused but a precise aim of the top parts of Nazi rule. When they invaded places like Poland, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, German troops took away valuable works of art, old writings, unique books, and other cultural stuff. Cultural items were grabbed from museums, galleries, libraries, and personal collections, especially those of Jewish people.

Unfortunately, these forces robbed many historically essential museums, for example, the Louvre Museum in France, and even though many works of art were evacuated before the Nazi invasion, the Germans established a base of operations in the museum and continued to search for and confiscate valuable works of art throughout France. They also caused harm to the National Museum in Warsaw, Poland, as the Nazis stole many pieces of art, including significant works by Polish and European artists. After going through several areas, they went on to take from the famous Rothschild family collection in France, seizing their huge art set, which had paintings, sculptures, furniture, and other things of old and cultural worth. Lastly, they also took a big part of Amsterdam's culture by stealing the Museum of Modern Art found in the Netherlands, taking many modern art pieces that they thought "degenerated".

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In this context, the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) was a Nazi organization created specifically to manage the looting of cultural property in Europe. Founded in 1940 and led by Alfred Rosenberg, a senior Nazi and one of the party's main ideologists, the ERR operated throughout Nazi-occupied territories. Its agents had the job of finding, taking, and moving the most precious items to Germany. This group worked hand in hand with other Nazi groups like Gestapo and SS to do its work. The ERR wanted to take art pieces, papers, books, and religious things to remove captured countries from their culture, beliefs, history, and cultural identity.

The aim of the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg was twofold. First, they wanted to add as many art pieces and cultural things as possible to the Third Reich. This meant not only adding to the private collections of Nazi leaders like Adolf Hitler and Hermann Göring but also improving Germany's cultural reputation. Second, the ERR had a job of wiping out or taking away any cultural heritage that they thought was against Nazi beliefs. This had pieces by new artists, and by taking and wrecking cultural stuff, the Nazis tried to change European past and culture on their terms, removing any sign of cultural and thinking variety that did not fit with their beliefs.

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Moreover, Adolf Hitler issued clear and direct orders for the looting of cultural property. Hitler, who had ambitions to create a gigantic art museum in his hometown of Linz, Austria, saw the confiscation of artworks as a way to achieve this dream; he ordered his generals and ERR units to confiscate all valuable artworks from occupied countries and ship them to Germany. The orders were carried out with meticulous and brutal precision by Nazi soldiers breaking into museums and private homes to carry out Hitler's purpose while also establishing a cultural dominance over undermined Nazi countries.

Many works were restored to their pre-war owners or the governments of the looted countries. The work of the "Monuments Men" was crucial to preserving and restoring Europe's cultural heritage in that it saved countless works of art from destruction. After the defeat of Germany in 1945, the retrieval of Nazi-looted objects began; Allied Armies, aware of the massive looting carried out by the Nazis, created special units including art historians, conservators, and army officers known as the "Monuments Men". They were tasked with looking for, documenting, and returning stolen cultural objects. During this process, the Allies discovered vast stores of art in salt mines, castles, and other secret locations where the Nazis had stored the looted objects. The work of the "Monuments Men" was crucial in saving countless works of art from destruction so that Europe's cultural heritage could be preserved and restituted.

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Even though there was a massive effort to identify and recover these assets, many cultural objects that appeared during the Holocaust period are still missing today. Some cultural objects were destroyed or lost through the displacement and detachment caused by the conflict. In contrast, others have been found in private collections, auctions, or art markets without a history. Museums, governments, and organizations worldwide are involved in locating and returning the assets to their original owners. Currently, these losses still represent an enormous theft of cultural property and a loss of cultural identity and history for the nations involved.

There are several reasons why the Monuments Men's work remains relevant today. One reason is that having engaged in saving cultural heritage, the Monuments Men set a historical precedent for the care and conservation of artistic and architectural heritage during times of conflict, which influenced policy and the establishment of organizations like the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Moreover, the Monuments Men's story reminds us to protect cultural heritage because of its artistic and historical value and its ability to encapsulate people's identity and memory.

Officially known as the "**Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict**," the 1954 Hague Convention is a crucial international treaty in international humanitarian law. This Convention was drafted on May 14, 1954,

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due to the extensive damage that cultural property suffered during World War II. The conflict caused a great loss of historical, artistic, and archaeological properties that underscored the necessity for mechanisms to safeguard cultural property during a conflict. The purpose of this convention is to shield cultural property and prevent looting, not only during armed conflicts but also to stop the damage and theft of cultural items in times of peace.

As such, the States Parties are also required, when there is no conflict, to take appropriate measures to protect their cultural heritage in the event of an armed conflict. States Parties must establish emergency plans and review and improve the national legislation protecting cultural heritage and providing training in the protection of cultural property. According to UNESCO's official webpage, "Protection of cultural property in time of Peace", it is meant the implementation of a plan of action that articulates strategies for the evacuation of cultural property and the construction of adequate shelters to put such property in safety and shelter in the event of armed conflict. The States Parties must update their legislation consistent with the international cultural protection measures stipulated in the Convention.

States Parties must respect cultural property in the event of armed conflict. Cultural property must not be the object of pillage, destruction, or any other deliberate

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act of deterioration. States Parties must put into place mechanisms and procedures that will ensure that the army and, where applicable, other entities fighting or acting in the event of armed conflict are acting with the protection of cultural property in mind. This may also include drafting instructions and guidelines, integrating them into the military training manuals, and coordinating with international organizations to have their protection levels remain consistent with those established by international agreements.

Moreover, to successfully protect cultural property, the states must work with an inventory of their cultural property. The Registration enables the state to inventory the objects of particular importance to it to establish a mechanism for the protection of cultural property that is thoroughly set up and facilitated in the case of an emergency. States Parties must create a list of important cultural property identifying monuments, historic buildings, works of art, and archaeology. It is also essential that the Inventory of Precious Cultural Property be accessible to the authorities and that it is, if necessary, updated to accompany the property or add new objects.

In its turn, the unique symbol of the Convention, a blue square with a white rectangle on the diagonal, is applied to identify cultural property that should be protected in the event of armed conflict. These important cultural properties, such as towers, monuments, and other cultural property, should be marked with the aforementioned

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symbol to demonstrate their significance and avoid being damaged innocently or violently. The accurate use of this sign helps armed parties and others involved in the conflict to identify and safeguard these properties during hostilities.

Furthermore, as it is essential to ensure that cultural property is a priority during armed conflicts, states need to establish military units that specialize in protecting cultural property. It is necessary that these units be comprised of personnel trained in the protection of cultural heritage and that they have access to resources to fulfill their mission. The units' functions are to oversee the protection of cultural property, coordinate with their counterparts in other sectors, and ensure that the Convention's provisions are met.

For the Convention to be effective, the States must establish a system of sanctions that penalizes those who infringe its provisions. The sanctions constitute a deterrent against the destruction or looting of cultural property. States need to elaborate a legal framework that identifies each infraction and the corresponding penalty, which could be imprisonment, financial penalties, or administrative sanctions. This system should be implemented and operated effectively to ensure that infractions are investigated and sanctioned.

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Lastly, to emphasize the importance of the protection of cultural heritage, the help of the general public is also needed, as well as government measures and the commitment of the armed forces. The States must organize public awareness and educational programs to explain to people the importance of protecting cultural properties and sites. This could involve the organization of events, educational material resources, and the integration of the protection of heritage properties in school programs. Promoting the Convention for the general public supports a more respectful culture and protection of cultural heritage in the long run, and they are necessary for cultural heritage conservation.

In 1972, UNESCO adopted the **1972 Recommendation concerning the Protection at the National Level of Cultural and Natural Heritage**, a crucial document establishing clauses for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. This document not only highlights the importance of protecting heritage but also gives a framework that regions may implement effectively since the objective of the convention is to ensure future generations have the opportunity to use these monuments.

According to the official webpage of UNESCO, the 1972 recommendation defines cultural heritage as monuments, buildings, and sites with historic, esthetic, scientific, ethnological, or anthropological value. These include movable and immovable property that has an exceptional value from the point of view of history, art, or science.

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On the other hand, natural heritage refers to natural monuments consisting of physical and biological formations, geological and physiographic formations, and areas that are the habitat of endangered animal and plant species. These areas have an exceptional universal value from an aesthetic or scientific point of view. This definition establishes a clear basis for States to identify and catalog their cultural and natural resources, thus ensuring their protection and conservation.

The recommendation calls on States to take several essential measures to protect cultural and natural heritage. Among the measures to be taken by states is implementing and reinforcing appropriate national laws to protect heritage. In addition, the importance of establishing and maintaining institutions responsible for managing, protecting, and conserving heritage is highlighted. These institutions must be well-equipped and trained to carry out their work effectively. Creating and updating detailed inventories and registers of cultural and natural assets is also recommended, which is crucial for informed and strategic management. Another fundamental measure is to promote the training of professionals in the field of heritage and public education on its importance. Finally, the need to implement appropriate conservation and restoration techniques and to participate in international cooperation efforts to protect shared heritage is emphasized.

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The Recommendation provides several tools to countries to facilitate the protection of their cultural and natural heritage. These tools include technical guidelines on conservation and restoration techniques, which are essential to maintaining the integrity and authenticity of heritage assets. In addition, it offers a legal framework that States can adopt and adapt to their national legislation, thus providing a solid legal basis for heritage protection. It also promotes the creation of educational programs to raise public awareness of the importance of heritage, which is crucial to generating broad and sustained support in society. Another essential tool is the creation of cooperation networks between countries, which allows for sharing of knowledge, resources, and experiences.

Lastly, it is recommended that countries seek to obtain and provide technical and financial support for conservation and restoration projects to guarantee that the resources necessary to protect antiquities effectively are available.

Furthermore, this Recommendation contains various tools to help countries conserve their natural and cultural heritage. Among these tools are technical standards intended to help preserve and protect heritage assets. These standards provide common methods and practices that can be applied by the States for appropriate and professional conservation.

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In contrast, **The Lebanese Civil War** was an armed conflict that took place from 1975 to 1990. It involved several ethnic, political, and international factions that deeply affected Lebanon and its cultural heritage. During the conflict, there were a lot of destroyed landmarks, cultural properties, and buildings, such as:

Beirut, during the Lebanese Civil War between 1975 and 1990, stood to lose many of its landmarks. The central market district was hit hardest by the battles and happened to be at the core of the city's commercial capital. The market was where merchants and locals transported fresh fruit, vegetables, clothes, and other essential supplies. It was a lively marketplace with many shops and stalls. This area was destroyed and had a significant impact on the local economy. There was also a tremendous negative impact on the daily lives of the city inhabitants, who could no longer access the market where they bought items needed for everyday life.

The Central District, also known as Downtown Beirut, was the site of several commercial structures such as government buildings, banks, shops, and hotels. It symbolized a prosperous era in Beirut. However, this area experienced terrible urban combat during the armed conflict period that caused it to become a battleground between different factions. The urban fight turned the Central District into an area full of destroyed buildings. The loss of this area caused great harm to the administration and economy of

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the city, as there was evidence during the civil war to document the extreme damage to several key places. For example, the Phoenicia Hotel and Cinema Rivoli were two demolished buildings.

The Grand Serail, a significant historical and architectural building that also held administrative functions, was another traditional structure targeted during this period. Constructed during the 19th century for the Ottoman era, the Grand Serail was the official venue for the Lebanese government and a physical representation of state authority. It had no function after its destruction by fighting and bombing, seriously affecting both the structure of the building itself and the functioning of the government. The reconstruction of the building in the time that followed the war was also a sign of the physical rebuilding of the country, a condition in which the government was allowed to regain its footing and establish itself in its traditional seat of governance, continuing its legislative proceedings.

The Sursock Museum, a crucial place of Lebanese architecture and a vital cultural site, was another location ravaged by the conflict. Located in a 19th-century mansion in the Ashrafieh neighborhood, the museum features a renowned modern and contemporary art collection, including works by Lebanese and international artists. During the war, the museum was subject to looting and structural damage. A significant portion of the

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artworks were transferred to a safe location. Following the conflict, the museum was meticulously renovated and reopened to the public, reviving its position as a fundamental cultural institution within Beirut.

The Roman Baths, which represented Lebanon's history and antiques, were victims of aerial bombardment, another tragic direct consequence of the conflict. These baths were a valuable historical and tourist destination for travelers who are fascinated by the history of Beirut and the Levant. The bombing raids' devastation left these baths in ruins, depriving the city of a valuable way to represent its history. Despite post-war reconstruction, the Roman Baths never regained their prior stature and were left in ruin.

The bomb-damaged structures of the Sursock Museum and Roman Baths, left in ruin, are the physical evidence of the Lebanese Civil War and the efforts that followed the conflict. Each site has its unique story of loss, depth of destruction, loss, renewal, persistence of conflict in the city, and its tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Current Relevance

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The problem of cultural heritage and preservation is relevant because these attacks are against internal relationships' identity, memory, dignity, and future. Trying to weaken those in conflict

The effects of war are inevitable on landmarks, including museums, monuments, and architectural sites of towns. Associations like CICR and UNESCO worry about the well-being of cultures in case of armed conflict. They have to set standards to respect the patrimony of the culture, plus lead attacks against cultural property and military purposes. They demand that they cannot destroy cultural goods.

These armed conflicts have no legal protection or international law, such as the 1954 convention. And the additional protocol of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The ICRC tries to get states in conflict to adhere to and apply the law internally. In 2000, the protection of goods and cultural heritage against the devastating effects of conflicts was a topic of growing interest due to the destruction during the fighting in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the persecution in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq since the beginning of 2000 to the most recent extremes of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The ICRC, through director Yves Daccord declared, "the protection of goods and cultural heritage against the devastating effects of the war is unfortunately a humanitarian imperative, today perhaps more than ever"

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Current cases

- Cyrene, Libya 2011

In 2011, considerable damage in Libya happened when violent extremists launched explosives, looted museums, and destroyed essential monuments, as well as accidental damage to the cultural heritage because of the combats when the armed conflict started because of the political instability and the desire to gain power over the country.

The Cyrene lootings took place through illicit excavations; the robbers made destructive methods to take away the pieces, causing damage to the archaeological sites that are irreparable. The lack of security and resources facilitated these acts and placed the sites vulnerable. These lootings occur because of the high demand for these types of artifacts on the black market, as well as the insufficient protection of these monuments; additionally, in some cases, the looting finances the criminal activities through the sale of pieces and the combination of both factors creates an environment in which the looting converted in persistent activity.

Unfortunately, some countries keep multiple relics inside their museums or collections, such as Italy, which has been a crucial nation in the repatriation of objects In

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2018, the Italian authorities recuperated some pieces that helped to the return of valuable objects from Libya, among all these pieces they found sculptures and statues that were robbed illegally and that were supposed to be sold on the black market, even though, Italy has worked with Libia to return their property and cultural heritage; furthermore, Germany has a significant place about the retirement of artifacts that were looted, as in 2019 the Berlin Museum returned Libia a series of archeologic pieces that were identified as stolen from Cyrene, the German authorities established diplomatic ties after this success and had implemented strict frameworks for the buy and sell of artworks and valuable artifacts.

The United States of America has also attracted collectors and auction houses who have acquired looted artifacts. In 2020, the U.S. The Department of Justice and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) returned to Libya several pieces that had been confiscated at auctions and from private collections; this repatriation process has involved extensive investigations to verify the provenance of the artifacts and ensure their return to their country of origin. Moreover, the United Kingdom has been a place where valuable monuments were placed that had arrived in museums and private collections until 2021; after receiving a formal application from Libya and documented evidence proportionate by specialists in archaeology, the objects were turned back to their

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property. The authorities have worked with UNESCO to approach the illicit commerce of artifacts and improve the acquisition practices.

Even though the multiple efforts helped in a significant way, unfortunately, there were some consequences that the looting left, such as the loss of cultural heritage since not everything has been returned, the impact on national identity and culture, the issues with conservation and maintenance, and the black market that keeps active with the missing pieces. That is why approaching the lootings and destructions is vital to preserving the cultural heritage and maintaining the integrity of the protected sites. Protecting these places benefits the countries with the comprehension of history.

Because of this armed conflict, some Libyan properties have been restored and conserved by international organizations and local authorities. For instance, the United Nations International Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Council of Museums (ICM), and Blue Shield International have been the protected sites' main conservators.

However, challenges remain because of the illegal looting of some areas that have not yet been restored and conserved. For instance, the archaeological sites, the National Museum of Tripoli, cultural sites in Fezzan, and some tombstones have not been

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preserved, also representing the irreparable loss of sites that will not be the same as they were.

These multiple situations not only impacted Libya but also destroyed the Islamic area, impacting the cultural monuments, political instability, social instability, economic impact, loss of historical knowledge, and the increase of violent extremist groups.

Countries with the most concentrated cultural heritage

Although these countries had to return valuable pieces, some of those mentioned have the highest amount of World Heritage according to UNESCO, such as:

1. Italy is home to the most significant number of world heritage sites, with 58.
2. China: following Italy closely with 56 World Heritage sites.
3. Germany: with the recent addition of 5 new World Heritage sites, Germany's count now stands at 51.
4. Spain & France tied for fourth position, holding 49 World Heritage sites.
5. Tombs of the Necropolis of Cyrene

Greek-style tombs were a conserved type of tombs, even though those tombs were one of the most wanted objects that violent extremists wanted to loot because of their

cultural and monetary value that they had. Because of the 2011 conflict in Libya, particularly in Cyrene, the zone faced risks and threats of damage and significant tombs; the Tomb of Battus was vulnerable during the conflict. It is believed that the founder of Cyrene built this tomb; it had a doric style and was crucial in history.

Roman tombs faced significant risks due to nearby military combat and the vulnerability of unprotected Rock Carved Tombs, which were frequently looted. These monuments were crucial as they represented a substantial part of Libya's cultural heritage, holding immense cultural value, international significance, and historical background.

After the conflict, UNESCO and other organizations were in charge of the recovery and conservation of the tombs. However, they will never be the same as they were. Most of them have been conserved but not completely recovered. This is because of the large amount of monetary funds that organizations need to help for the full recovery with a stable environment inside the country to accomplish the work that they may do.

Actions Cyrene started to do

- 2011-2013

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Documentation and registers about the damages that the armed conflict left started plans and initiatives for the restoration. Archaeologists and conservators started labeling which sites in Cyrene were at risk of collapse back in 2015. Areas of the ruins, including landmarks like the Temple of Apollo, experienced damage to their columns and infrastructure. The experts made a comprehensive written and photographic record of descriptions and charts showing the damage.

In 2017, restoration plans were crafted as a result of this evaluation. Key to the plan for rebuilding the Temple of Apollo columns was their design using techniques that would work with original materials without contemporary concrete, as traditional cement can erode ancient buildings. They placed security measures to safeguard the sites while restoring the ruined structure. Temporary fences were set up around the most vulnerable sites, such as the Theatre of Cyrene, 2018 to stop them from being entered without permission. In addition, a mobile team was dispatched to check the site's condition and ensure no other damages would occur. UNESCO, the European Union, and the Getty Foundation financially supported the initiatives.

Lately, attention-raising efforts were held to stress the significance of keeping up Cyrene's legacy. During 2020, a campaign was mobilized on media and social networks

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with the backing of UNESCO and local institutions. The campaign also produced documentary films and exhibitions to raise public awareness of the cultural and historical interest in Cyrene's great importance; this initiative targets conservation.

These actions tried to restore the damaged heritage, but despite their efforts, it was not left the same as before, and some monuments did not survive the attacks and disappeared completely.

- 2015-2018

The primary initiatives started when they started emergency interventions to cover exposed areas and conserve vulnerable monuments, as well as awareness campaigns in the UNESCO committee to highlight the importance of conserving their cultural heritage and encourage people to help, support, and spread information.

- 2014-2024

Long-term solutions have been established and functioning since 2014, involving technologies to improve security, preservation, conservation, and full recovery of the monuments that remain in work. Nowadays, more than 70% have been recovered.

- Aleppo, Syria 2012-2016

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According to the UNESCO official website, there were decisive combats and air attacks in Aleppo due to the civil armed conflict in the country of Syria. The Syrian armed conflict started in 2011 with protests against the government, and it went rapidly into an armed conflict; the most affected zone was Aleppo; crucial monuments and historical places were damaged and destroyed.

There were 3 main places that were looted, damaged, and demolished, starting with the Citadel of Aleppo that was victim of the air attacks and combats, even though the main building of the citadel did not fall entirely, it suffered severe impacts on the structure of many protected buildings and historical monuments of the citadel, such as the Umayyad Mosque, that suffered significant damages on its decorative elements and structure; the wall of the fortress which protected the place for centuries was also significantly damaged, presenting cracks and collapses due to attacks; there were multiple palaces and historic residences that served as governmental residences, which led to its destruction or significant damages; the defensive towers also seem hugely affected since they offered a view of all the city, making them vulnerable after centuries and resulting destabilized; additionally the underground chambers and warehouses

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resulted looted because of the humanitarian resources that they contained, as well as the chambers had historic structures that also resulted with severe injuries.

Moreover, the Aleppo Souk was one of the biggest markets in the world and was founded in the medieval age around the XII century. According to the International Crisis Group webpage, the combats and confrontations damaged more than 1500 stores. These damages impacted the historical heritage of Aleppo. Also, they negatively affected population jobs, leading to economic instability and reduced tourism all around Syria, affecting monetary incomes. Additionally, Aleppo had a critical Mosque that represented the beliefs and the culture of the Syrian country. Unfortunately, it was wholly demolished because of the bombing attacks and the combats near the zone, ultimately affecting the most important Islamic monument at that time. The gardens, praying areas, and the tourist area were destroyed and nonrenewable.

In other contexts, the Al-Waqfiya Library also resulted in damage. Unfortunately, this crucial library in history was one of the most affected by Aleppo's monuments because of the military fights in 2013, according to a UNESCO article. The conflict made most of this library disappear, demolishing their famous gallery and their historical manuscripts, which had medieval language and represented a peculiar way of communication and writing. Similarly, the Temples of Bel and Baalshamin were

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sanctuaries dedicated to one of the city's gods, created in the 1st century C.E. These temples combined Greek, oriental, and palmiran architecture and were relevant for the citizens. Both of them were in a conserved area, and both temples had proper protection, but after the civil armed conflict started, both of the temples were seriously damaged. These monuments are nonrenewable and contribute to cultural and historical heritage loss.

Finally, three region cities were seriously damaged, almost destroyed: Homs, Daara, and Bosra. Homs was the third largest city in Syria. The conflict also affected it, and the country suffered negative impacts on the necessary resources for life. Some of the praying centers, buildings, and hospitals were destroyed because of the air attacks, resulting not only in the loss of heritage but in a severe humanitarian crisis.

On the other hand, Daara had serious combats as a protest against the violations of human rights of teenagers; this caused confrontations between violent extremists and military arming, causing rebellions and insecurity all around the city, leading to the destruction of the city heritage and their important monuments that represented their beliefs. The third place that was damaged was Bosra, which was on the list of UNESCO's cultural heritage because of its relevant city ruins and the theaters they had. The ruins and

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theaters could not be protected during the combats and were abandoned, making the zones an area of fighting. This caused multiple damages to its infrastructure.

All of these monuments were important since they represented the culture, beliefs, traditions, and way of life of Syrians and the economic importance they had to the country's incomes and jobs. The historical evolutions that Aleppo City had were crucial for knowing their historical value and the monuments it involved.

This armed conflict had negative repercussions on the economic impact on citizens' incomes, the economic instability of the country, the low tourism in Aleppo, the damage to cultural heritage and historical monuments, and the low access to basic facilities, for instance, medicines, medical attention, food, clean water, and housing.

The Old City of Sana'a, 2015

UNESCO cataloged this city as a city in danger because of the multiple confrontations happening for almost a decade. This city is inhibited because of the displacement of the population that lived in the city and migrated because of the humanitarian crisis and insecurity because of the constant attacks. This is why UNESCO has been asking for help to preserve, protect, and renew the monuments and buildings that have been affected. Even so, the buildings are complex to protect because of the

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continuing confrontations of Yemen, violent extremists, and Saudi Arabia that remain in the zone.

There are essential monuments that exist in the city:

- The Tower houses are a crucial type of building in the Old City because most of them were built 400 years ago and are an important part of the cultural heritage.
- Mosques are temples that must be protected urgently because they contain valuable historical information, manuscripts, and paintings.
- There is also a Brick Tower that was burned in part as a repercussion of the armed conflict. Its infrastructure is difficult to renew and has not been protected since the beginning of the conflict, which causes it to continue to be damaged. This tower was important because its design represented the region's culture. It not only worked as a defense tower but also represented a part of Aleppo's legacy.
- Gypsum Trims are plaster used as decoration in some houses and buildings. They are very peculiar and usually placed for decoration and tradition since they represent their culture. The problem with this plaster

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is that due to the attacks, most of this material was damaged in the buildings, and it is very difficult to restore since it has an elevated price, making families may not have access to maintenance.

Because of these multiple situations, attempting to end this issue will have repercussions, such as impacting families and communities, economic challenges for the country and citizens, difficulties in restoring and conserving, loss of cultural heritage, and impact on country stability and peace.

- The Heritage Emergency Fund, established in 2015, plays a crucial role in protecting cultural heritage during crises such as conflict, natural disasters, and other emergencies. It aims to provide quick support to preserve cultural sites, artifacts, and traditions at risk of damage or loss. This fund underlines the importance of preserving cultural heritage worldwide, recognizing its significance in safeguarding identity, fostering resilience, and promoting understanding between communities.

According to the Heritage Emergency Fund, an “emergency” is an urgent situation requiring immediate action to prevent or minimize significant damage to

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cultural heritage. This includes scenarios such as natural disasters, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, armed conflicts, civil unrest, and other unforeseen events that pose a substantial risk to the safety and preservation of cultural sites, objects, and monuments. The fund seeks to respond quickly to such situations to ensure that essential steps are taken to protect and recover cultural heritage.

In 2022, the Heritage Emergency Fund published its annual report, highlighting that emergency preparedness and response interventions were implemented. During that year, \$4,560,287 was mobilized to support these interventions to address urgent threats to cultural heritage. The report details how these funds were allocated, showing efforts to safeguard cultural sites, recover damaged artifacts, and build resilience to future emergencies.

In Africa, a significant amount was allocated to protect and restore cultural sites damaged by conflict and natural disasters, such as floods and droughts. Additionally, training in cultural emergency management was funded to strengthen local response capacity to future risks. In Asia, funds were mainly used to respond to natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons, with interventions including the protection of cultural assets and the reconstruction of affected historic sites. In Latin America and the Caribbean, investment was made in recovering archaeological sites and protecting

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collections at risk due to hurricanes and landslides. In Europe and the Middle East, funds were used to address conflict crises, including conservation and protection of cultural heritage in affected areas. The report also highlights improvements in emergency preparedness, with the implementation of early warning systems and staff training in cultural risk management, underlining the positive impact on heritage preservation and the resilience of affected communities.

A memorandum is a formal agreement between 2 or more organizations or nations that specifies responsibilities or commitments that the ratified ones must follow. In 2016, the first memorandum of understanding agreement was to improve the preservation and management of cultural heritage worldwide, particularly in regions affected by conflicts and natural disasters. It was signed between CICK and UNESCO to strengthen cooperation on the issue and coordinate their actions to protect the cultural assets, with a protocol that should be followed.

We will start by describing the Blue Shield's role, mission, and aspirations, presenting the story and its implications for those involved in these conflicts. It discusses why the humanitarian sectors are interested in protecting cultural assets and heritage that may threaten cultural property in armed conflicts.

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- Russia and Ukraine armed conflict

In December of 2022, the armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia started and kept going. The ongoing strife goes to a cultural level where both countries have been severely affected. The conflict resulted in years of damage to historic sites, monuments, and artistic objects. A lot of historical sites were destroyed or damaged due to the martial actions in Ukraine. Cultural heritage has also been massively demolished in cities like Mariupol, Kharkiv or Kyiv. This has affected centuries-old buildings, including churches, museums and libraries. Numerous 19th-century buildings in the historic center of Mariupol were destroyed.

A significant problem continues to be the looting of ethical artifacts. Essential artifacts and pieces of art are said to be missing from museums, as well as from private collections. For instance, in Kyiv, the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in World War II was looted, and many invaluable artifacts were lost. Among Ukraine's UNESCO World Heritage Sites are the ancient center of Lviv, Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, and Saint Sophia Cathedral. One worry is that the bomb attacks and fires could damage these sites, putting them at more risk. Nigel J Callinan The Kyiv Lavra of the Caves is a major religious tourist destination, but its location has posed significant threats to it.

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The conflict has also resulted in cultural erasure that has led to the deletion of Ukrainian history and culture from occupied territories.

- Mali conflict

The conflict in Mali, which began in 2012 and continues to affect the country, has had severe and multifaceted impacts on the region. The crisis originated from a series of events, including a rebellion in the country's north and a coup in the central government.

A Tuareg rebellion, an ethnic group who have historically wanted independence in northern Mali, was ultimately kidnapped by Islamic extremist groups, including Ansar Dine and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The militants took control of large areas in the country's north, where they set up Islamic law under their extreme interpretation.

France led an international intervention under Operation Serval in January 2013 that succeeded in ousting these groups from the north Mali strongholds of Timbuktu and Gao. Nonetheless, the situation was far from stable and spiraled to other parts—central Mali especially came under attack when various armed groups clashed with President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's forces.

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The conflict has had a devastating impact in several areas:

The destruction of cultural heritage is one of the most visible effects. In 2012, extremist groups destroyed several tombs and mausoleums in Timbuktu, a site of great historical and artistic importance, recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. These destructions were motivated by the radical interpretation of Islamic laws, which prohibit the veneration of tombs and other religious sites.

There has also been considerable loss of life and displacement. The conflict has already claimed thousands of lives and driven more than a million people from their homes within Mali or across borders into Niger and Mauritania. Violence and insecurity have driven local communities from their homes. The conflict has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis with widespread severe food insecurity, limited access to health and education services, which have been extensively disrupted, and damaged infrastructure. Insecurity is slowing the delivery of humanitarian aid and access to areas affected, making a bad situation worse for those most at risk.

International Actions

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a professional association that works to conserve and protect cultural heritage sites worldwide. This

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council provides expert advice to international organizations while collaborating with several stakeholders to assess the state of heritage sites, especially in conflict zones. The ICOMS has done and developed the Heritage at Risk program, which publishes reports on the threats to cultural heritage, including those in conflict zones, while also providing technical support and capacity building for local conservation efforts.

Similarly, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) has dedicated itself to the conservation of cultural heritage worldwide through training, information, research, cooperation, and advocacy programs. Blue Shield International is an organization that works for cultural heritage protection in emergencies, collaborating with UNESCO and the Red Cross International Committee. This organization knows about the prevention and preparation before a possible issue that may pose a risk to the cultural heritage of a country. Additionally, it raises awareness about the protection of heritage. It promotes the protocols that prevent the damage of monuments in case of an emergency while providing training for citizens to conserve those zones.

Furthermore, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is extremely linked with UNESCO. The council was founded in 1965 as a non-governmental organization that works on protecting and conserving cultural heritage

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worldwide, adopting the International Convention for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites made in 1963 while collaborating actively with UNESCO.

One of its crucial approaches is the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts, analyzing the damages and suggesting measures to protect and mitigate the impacts. Additionally, ICOMOS makes land evaluations and provides information about multiple armed conflicts under the eye of cultural heritage preservation, documenting and analyzing the effects of historic sites.

Regarding heritage protection in conflict areas, EUNPACK started an initiative called the International Alliance for Protection of Heritage in Conflict Zones (ALIPH) to protect and rebuild cultural sites destroyed by armed conflicts or natural disasters. Launched in 2017, ALIPH has operated in places such as Syria, Iraq, and, most recently, Ukraine, where it lent support to the preservation of cultural heritage affected by the ongoing conflict. The European Union has also taken steps to support Ukraine during the crisis triggered by Russia's attack, and all these measures include aid to the Ukrainian government, military help, and humanitarian assistance for displaced persons caused by the violence. Both also have concentrated on saving and maintaining Ukrainian societal and cultural heritage.

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In Gaza's case, ALIPH's one million dollars have been dedicated to protecting the cultural heritage of Gaza because it understands that while conflicts continue, their history and culture need to be preserved. Additionally, the rehabilitation projects in Beirut and Mosul are examples of the efforts to recover cities. In Beirut, the monetary and humanitarian funds have been mainly dedicated to recovering their historic buildings and the cultural infrastructure after the devastating explosion in 2020, while in Mosul, reconstructing the city after its destruction because of ISIS has been the main focus.

UN Actions

The United Nations (UN) has played a crucial role in safeguarding invaluable cultural assets through various strategies and initiatives. The UN underscores the importance of protecting cultural heritage, especially in conflict zones where these assets are particularly vulnerable. Committed to preserving the historical significance of cultural sites and artifacts for future generations, the UN fosters international collaboration and raises awareness about this critical issue. The involvement of UN organs, alongside partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is essential to these efforts.

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The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) leads global efforts to protect cultural heritage. UNESCO has launched various awareness campaigns and established conventions to provide a legal and operational framework for preservation. Key among these frameworks are the World Heritage Convention and the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The World Heritage Convention, adopted in 1972, aims to safeguard sites of outstanding universal value, while the 1954 Hague Convention focuses on protecting cultural property during armed conflicts.

The 1954 Hague Convention addresses the protection of cultural property during both armed conflicts and times of peace. Its preamble states, “Any damage to cultural property, irrespective of the people it belongs to, is damage to the cultural heritage of all humanity because every person contributes to the world's culture.” This reflects the idea that cultural heritage is a shared global asset. The Convention establishes legal obligations for participating states to prevent the destruction of cultural sites and artifacts during conflicts; the registration of high-value cultural property on the International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection, special military forces; sanctions for breaches of the conventions; and more. It also outlines provisions for international

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cooperation and assistance in protecting and restoring valuable cultural property, ensuring that these irreplaceable assets are preserved for future generations.

Alongside the Hague Convention, UNESCO established the Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) program. Closely linked to this initiative, a multi-donor fund, the Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF), was created to facilitate rapid intervention and funding during emergencies. According to UNESCO, "The Fund is a pooled, non-earmarked funding mechanism conceived as a flexible means of enabling UNESCO to respond more effectively to crises" (UNESCO, n.d.). The EPR program prioritizes preparation for and response to emergencies affecting cultural heritage.

The EPR Unit is the secretariat for the Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF) and is critical in coordinating the Emergency Preparedness and Response program. In 2015, the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria suffered significant damage when the extremist group ISIS captured the town and destroyed major cultural landmarks, including the Temple of Bel and the Arch of Triumph. The HEF was instrumental in providing funding for the reconstruction and preservation of the remaining heritage and securing the sites to prevent further deterioration. Additionally, the EPR Unit managed the UN's response to this destruction, coordinating with archaeology and heritage experts, local authorities, stakeholders, and other international partners to address the crisis effectively.

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The Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Unit works with the World Heritage Centre to manage cultural heritage emergencies. Established in 1992, the World Heritage Centre has a range of high-priority responsibilities. It organizes annual Heritage Conventions, provides assistance with site nominations, coordinates international support through the World Heritage Fund when requested, and oversees emergency responses and site conditions. As stated by UNESCO, “The Centre also organizes technical seminars and workshops, updates the World Heritage List and database, and develops teaching materials to raise awareness among young people” (UNESCO, n.d.).

#Unite4Heritage is a social media campaign launched on March 28, 2015, by UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. The campaign aims to counter propaganda related to cultural cleansing and the destruction of heritage, particularly in Iraq, and to mobilize global support for its protection. It was inspired by the widespread devastation of cultural sites in Mosul, Nimrud, and Hatra. Endorsing this initiative, Bokova stated, “We must respond by showing that exchange and dialogue between cultures is the driving force for all. We must respond by demonstrating that diversity has always been and remains today a strength for all societies. We must respond by standing up against forces of fragmentation, by refusing to be divided into ‘us’ and ‘them.’ We must respond by claiming our cultural heritage as the commonwealth of all humanity.”

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The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has increasingly focused on preserving and protecting cultural heritage in conflict zones, acknowledging the significant impacts that the destruction of cultural sites and artifacts can have on communities, identity, and history. Resolution 2347, adopted on March 24, 2017, was a pivotal resolution in this regard. This resolution marked a significant step in raising awareness about cultural property, as it represented the UNSC's formal recognition of the importance of safeguarding heritage. Two significant outcomes of this resolution were “the creation of an international fund and the organization of a network of safe havens for endangered cultural property.” (Fiankan-Bokonga, 2017)

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Points to Discuss

1. Context

- a. Addressing the ongoing armed conflicts
 - i. Addressing the heritage zones that may be at risk
 - ii. Such as the recovery of heritage
- b. Reaffirming the already existing protocols
 - i. Registering of heritage
- c. Addressing the causes of the destruction of the cultural heritage
- d. Addressing looters impunity
- e. Addressing the importance of the cultural heritage

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- i. Impact on Identity
 - ii. Impact on economy
 - iii. Impact on tourism
- f. Ensuring the accomplishment of the legal framework by the members of the conventions made regarding this topic

2. Development

- a. Ensuring legal framework in each of the countries
- b. Preventing a loss of cultural heritage from happening again
 - i. Preparation for facing a cultural crisis correctly
- c. Facing causes for the ongoing armed conflicts
 - i. Ensuring the correct protection of heritage areas
- d. Reaffirming the recuperation processes
 - i. Taking into account the already existing organizations

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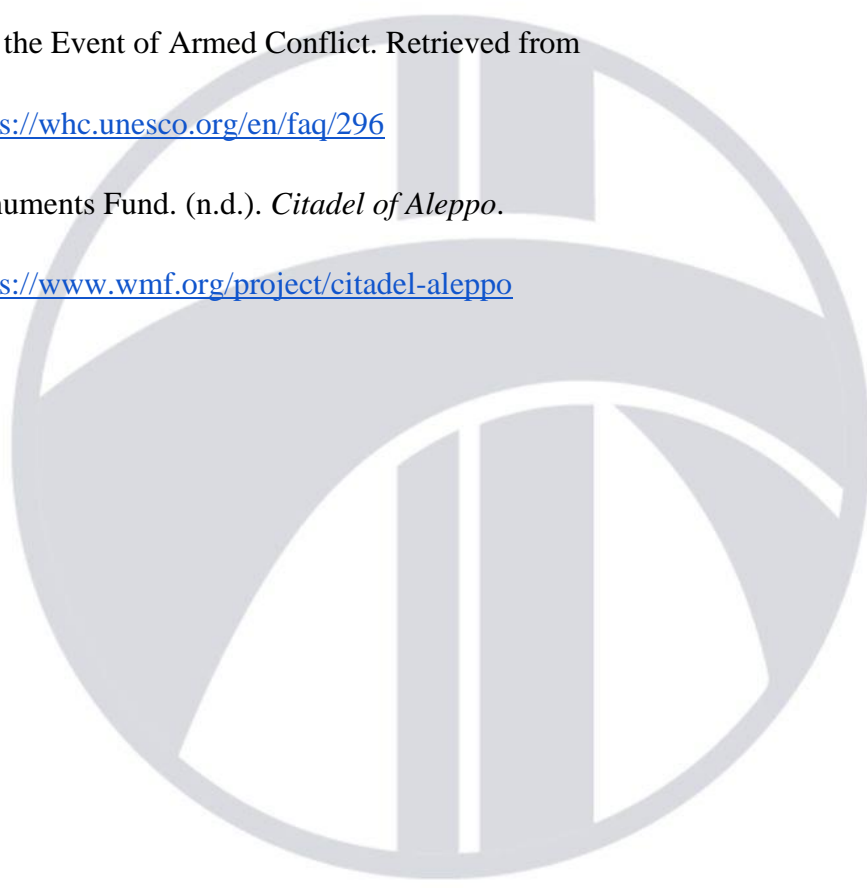
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