

A Call to Protect Egyptian Antiquities, Cultural Heritage and Tourism Economy

We, the undersigned, strongly urge immediate action to protect Egyptian antiquities, important sites, and cultural heritage. In so doing, significant archaeological artifacts and irreplaceable historic objects will be preserved. Importantly, such protection will help the Egyptian economy in the wake of political revolution. Such an initiative will also help stem illicit international crime organizations that have links to money laundering, human trafficking and the drug trade.

Whereas, Egyptian antiquities and sites are among the most historically significant and important in the world,

Whereas, Egypt has numerous museums and historical sites, some of which are victims of ongoing looting, including recent reports that artifacts originally from Tutankhamen's tomb have been stolen,

Whereas, more than 50 ancient Egyptian artifacts have been reported stolen from the Cairo Museum alone,

Whereas, UNESCO has called for international mobilization to block cultural artifacts stolen from Egypt,

Whereas, the tourism industry in Egypt is closely tied to cultural expeditions, employs one in eight Egyptians, accounts for some \$11 billion in revenue for the Egyptian economy, and is the one of the largest sectors of the Egyptian economy,

We call upon Congress and the President to direct the following actions:

- The Department of Homeland Security and other law enforcement agencies to use vigorously their authority under the National Stolen Property Act and smuggling statutes to prevent the import of, and trade in, stolen cultural objects from Egypt.
- The Department of State to work with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency in implementing import restrictions on undocumented cultural artifacts from Egypt.
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation and ICE/HSI to coordinate with foreign counterparts and to initiate targeted law enforcement operations with the aim of seizing stolen or illegally exported cultural property, arresting the criminals involved, and seizing and confiscating the proceeds of these and related crimes.
- US-AID to grant additional monies for protection and management of archaeological sites, museums, and historical monuments.

We further call for the following additional actions:

- INTERPOL to use its special expertise in identifying and sharing critical information throughout its 188 member countries, and in particular to use its I- 24/7 telecommunications system for the exchange of information related to crimes involving Egyptian cultural property and to identify suspicious financial transactions which can lead to the freezing and confiscation of the proceeds.
- The United States Congress to designate funds for the protection of Egyptian antiquities as part of its economic aid package for Egypt.

These actions are in keeping with U.S. law and international obligations, including those under the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. They will help promote the protection of invaluable cultural heritage and will continue to provide the crucial basis for tourism revenue as Egypt seeks to build a successful democratic economy.

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