

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, August 9, 2012 5:50 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Bombing of Cultural Heritage in Syria

Importance: High

From: Bonnie Burnham [mailto:bburnham@wmf.org]
Sent: Thursday, August 09, 2012 05:47 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Toiv, Nora F; Laszczych, Joanne
Subject: Bombing of Cultural Heritage in Syria

From: Bonnie Burnham
Sent: Thursday, August 09, 2012 3:32 PM
To: 'millscd@state.gov'
Subject: Bombing of Cultural Heritage in Syria
Importance: High

Dear Ms. Mills,

I am now resending an email that was released prematurely in error.

I am writing to you in the hope that you will bring an issue of great urgency to the attention of the Secretary of State.

Today we have learned that the airplanes of Syrian government regime are bombing areas in the Old City of Aleppo, a World Heritage site, including the Citadel and its surroundings. It would have great meaning if the Secretary of State would issue a statement to the Syrian government urging it to protect the heritage of mankind in Aleppo and avoid destruction in the Old City and Citadel.

Syria and the United States are both parties to the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Aleppo Old City was placed on the World Heritage list in 1986 and is one of several outstandingly significant sites that have traditionally been the pride of the Syrian people.

We have no news of what has been hit, and no means to verify, but we can confirm that the citadel is in danger. While all the buildings of the Citadel are of outstanding significance, we are particularly concerned about the Temple of the Storm God, a 5000-year-old structure recently rediscovered by Syrian and German archaeologists, with a magnificent monumental sculptural frieze. The temple was hastily protected with sandbags when the conflict began in Syria last year, and there has been no formal monitoring since. Damage to this sculpture would be irreversible.

I am encouraged to write to you because of the fact that the Secretary has made frequent statements condemning violations of humanitarian standards and other internationally accepted rules of behavior on the part of rogue governments in the Middle East and elsewhere. We feel that this violation of the world's cultural legacy warrants an equally serious expression of concern.

As you may know, the World Monuments Fund is a U.S. based organization working internationally to preserve monuments of worldwide significance. We have in recent years been the beneficiary of a number of funding awards from the Ambassador's Fund, and are presently working with support from the U.S. government on projects in at Angkor in Cambodia, Babylon in Iraq. The Secretary of State is aware of our activities, and has visited our work at Angkor and at other places around the world in the company of WMF staff. I have met her personally on a number of occasions and greatly admire the way she has represented the United States and its interests abroad as Secretary of State.

WMF was active in the preservation of Aleppo's citadel from 2002 until 2011, when we were forced to suspend our activities because of civil unrest. We are accustomed to working in situations of high international importance and urgency. We deeply believe that support of the protection and preservation of a country's cultural legacy is an important and deeply meaningful gesture of public diplomacy.

I would be happy to give you more information and work with you in any way that is helpful. Thanking you in advance for your consideration, I am

Your sincerely,

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