

Restoring Palmyra: Yes! Hastily: No!!!

A motion aimed to encourage UNESCO to act
as a neutral organization



The hereunder mentioned signatories and the members of the Board of **shirīn-international**, a NGO composed of Directors of Excavations active in Syria until 2010/11, address to all concerned organizations, institutions, and individuals, members of the international scientific community, the following motion :

The conflict in Syria has lasted five years, having the whole appearance of a civil war, fuelled by foreign powers and interests, with no clear global resolution in sight.

To the tragic and huge human toll must be added the unintended, collateral or targeted destruction of the cultural heritage: religious or historical buildings and monuments, libraries, archaeological sites, remembrance places, symbols of a shared identity, inherited from a multimillenary history.

*We, members of **shirīn**, pay full respect to all the Syrian citizens who have courageously acted for defending their heritage, individually or collectively, in Syria or abroad, under difficult and sometimes highly risky conditions, including unaffiliated Syrian heritage professionals.*

We remain as well respectful of the considerable work already accomplished with determination and total commitment, in the same tragic circumstances, by the members of the (Syrian) Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums, and its Director-General.

This motion has been issued in order to support the Syrian people and our Syrian colleagues, and their independence in the action and in their choices.

A recent statement by the UNESCO Director-General expressing a specific commitment with the President of Russia for the reconstruction of Palmyra aroused concern in international newspaper articles and in a petition posted on the web.

Even if we are aware of the recent presence at Palmyra of experts from further countries, the reconstruction of Syria's cultural heritage cannot be claimed unilaterally and must result first from a national consensus. A World Heritage site means moreover that the international

community should equally be involved. It will therefore be a long process that includes political, social, scientific, technical input and coordination. The study, the preservation and the presentation of Syrian heritage were managed in a context of close international scientific collaboration organized by Syrian authorities over decades. We are convinced that the damage assessment process, the scientific analysis, the research for the best options for the development of an international rescue archaeology must begin now within a neutral framework.

We all know that "reconstruction" is a long and multifaceted transition period that will start before the end of the conflict and continue long after peace is achieved. The transition has already begun, but it is not just the technical tasks that should be prioritized. Syria will become a huge reconstruction zone: rebuilding of buildings and structures, heritage restoration, construction of new buildings, road networks, urban infrastructure, agriculture redevelopment, etc. Emerging threats to the archaeological heritage may become even more numerous than during the conflict, while often less visible.

The entire territory of Syria requires the creation and implementation, wherever possible, of an international archaeological rescue framework. This archaeological system must be designed primarily as a means to assess damage and prioritize the direction of resources within an overall scientific framework.

With respect to Palmyra, the recent recovery by Syrian government forces has allowed us to measure the extent of damage inflicted on the ancient monuments as well as on the contents of the Museum. With the exception of those situations where emergency consolidation is necessary, there is no need to hasten thoughtlessly the restoration process. The international community of concerned scholars should consider, in the light of such an assessment, how best to help our Syrian colleagues in preserving and restoring what can be salvaged from the destruction.

Everything that will be done in the future for restoring the historical monuments, buildings and archaeological sites of Syria will be decided by the Syrians, and the Syrians only. The international community of scholars will be happy to contribute to the reconstruction of the cultural heritage of this wonderful country and its people, in collaboration with and the support of the international organizations, under the guidance of the antiquities service of Syria, at the appropriate time.

It should be a point of honour for all of us to help in this enormous undertaking. This is true particularly of the members of those missions who excavated in Palmyra in the recent past.

Michel al-Maqdissi, Frank Braemer, Michał Gawlikowski, Marc Lebeau,
Andreas Schmidt-Colinet, and the Members of the Board of **shirín**-international,
Directors of Excavations.

Brussels, April 19, 2016



www.shirin-international.org

shirin.braemer@gmail.com

shirín aisbl, 41 Boulevard Auguste Reyers, bte. 6, B-1030, Brussels, Belgium.



SHIRĪN MOTION / PALMYRA / ENDORSEMENT

INDIVIDUALS

Directors of Excavations

- Luc **Bachelot**, Directeur de la Mission archéologique de Tell Shiukh Fawqâni, CNRS, Nanterre, France.
- Leila **Badre**, Director of the Tell Kazel Excavation Project and the Exc. at Tyre, American University of Beirut, Lebanon.
- Dominique **Beyer**, Dir. de la Mission archéologique de Mashnaqa, UMR 7044 Archimede, Univ. de Strasbourg, France.
- Piotr **Bieliński**, Director of the Tell Arbid Mission, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland.
- Pierre-Marie **Blanc**, Chef de Mission Syrie du Sud / Hauran, I. R. CNRS, France.
- Dominik **Bonatz**, Director of the archaeological Mission at Tell Fekheriye, Free University of Berlin, Germany.
- Guy **Bunnens**, Directeur de la Mission archéologique de Tell Ahmar, Université de Liège, Belgique.
- Ricardo **Cabral**, co-Director of the Kani Shale Archaeological Project (Iraq/Kurdistan), University of Coimbra, Portugal.
- Sophie **Cluzan**, Directeur de la partie française de la Mission arch. syro-française de Tulul el-Far, Paris, France.
- Kate **da Costa**, Dir. Borders of Arabia & Palaestina Project, co-Dir. Pella Exc. Proj. (Jordan), Univ. of Sydney, Australia.
- Christiane **Delplace**, Directeur de la Mission archéologique française de Palmyre, Dir. rech. ém. CNRS, France.
- Jesper **Eidem**, Director of the Tell Aushariye Exc., Gen. Dir. of the Neth. Inst. for the Near East, Leiden, The Netherlands.
- Michel **Fortin**, Directeur de la Mission archéologique canadienne à Tell 'Acharneh, Université Laval, Québec, Canada.
- Denis **Genequand**, Directeur de la Mission archéologique syro-suisse de Palmyre, Université de Genève, Suisse.
- Claus Peter **Haase**, Director of the Excavations at Madinat al-Far, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, Germany.
- Timothy **Harrison**, Director of the Tayinat Archaeological Project (Turkey), Chair, University of Toronto, Canada.
- Frank **Hole**, Director of the Excavations at Umm Qseir and Tell Ziyadeh, Yale University, USA.
- Jean-Louis **Huot**, ex-Directeur de l'IFAPO, Directeur des fouilles françaises de Larsa (Iraq), Université de Paris I, France.
- Heather **Jackson**, co-Director of the Jebel Khalid Excavations, University of Melbourne, Australia.
- Rafał **Koliński**, Director of Excavations, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland.
- Grzegorz **Majcherek**, Director of the Polish Archaeological Mission to Palmyra, University of Warsaw, Poland.
- Maria Grazia **Masetti-Rouault**, Directeur de la Mission arch. franc.-syr. à Tell Masaikh, EPHE/CNRS, Paris/Ivry, France.
- Augusta **McMahon**, Tell Brak Field Director, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.
- Miquel Molist **Montaña**, Directeur de la Mission arch. espagnole à Tell Halula, Univ. Autónoma de Barcelona, Espagne.
- Simone **Mühl**, Archaeological Director of the Shahrizor Survey Project (Iraq), Lud.-Max.-Universität München, Germany.
- Yoshihiro **Nishiaki**, Director of the Excavations at Tell Seker al-Aheimar, University of Tokyo, Japan.
- Mirko **Novák**, co-Director of the Tell Halaf Excavations, President of the SGOA, Bern, Switzerland.
- Ewa **Paradowska**, Hawarte Restoration / Conservation Project, National Museum in Warsaw, Poland.
- Clemens **Reichel**, Dir. of the Hamoukar Expedition, Ass. Prof. of Mesopotamian Archaeology, Univ. of Toronto, Canada.
- Lauren **Ristvet**, Associate Director of the Tell Leilan Project, Assoc. Prof., University of Pennsylvania, USA.
- Olivier **Rouault**, co-Directeur de la Mission archéologique syro-française à Ashara-Terqa, Université de Lyon 2, France.

Kiyohide **Saito**, Director of the Japanese archaeological Mission at Palmyra, Archaeological Institute of Kashihara, Japan.
Gil **Stein**, Dir. of the Syrian-American Archaeological Project at Tell Zeidan, Dir. of the Oriental Institute, Chicago, USA.
André **Tomé**, co-Director of the Kani Shale Archaeological Project (Iraq/Kurdistan), University of Coimbra, Portugal.
Önhan **Tunca**, co-Director of the Chagar Bazar Excavations, Prof. ord. hon., University of Liège, Belgium.
Régis **Vallet**, Directeur de la Mission franco-syrienne de Tell Feres, CNRS, UMR 7041, Nanterre, France.
Didier **Viviers**, Dir. de la Mission archéologique belge d'Apamée, Recteur de l'Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgique.
Agnès **Vokaer**, Field Director, Mission archéologique belge d'Apamée, Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgique.
Tomasz **Waliszewski**, Director of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland.
Harvey **Weiss**, Director of the Yale Tell Leilan Project, Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology, Yale University, USA.
Jean-Baptiste **Yon**, Responsable du programme sur l'épigraphie de Palmyre, Dir. Rech. CNRS, Univ. Lyon 2, France.
Graham **Philip** (U. K.), Hartmut **Kühne** (Germany) & Andrew **Jamieson** (Australia), Members of the shirīn Board.
Michel **al-Maqdissi** (Syria), Frank **Braemer** (France), Michał **Gawlikowski** (Poland), Marc **Lebeau** (Belgium) & Andreas **Schmidt-Colinet** (Austria), Signatories of the Motion.

Academic / Educational / Museums / NGOs

Stefano **Anastasio**, Soprintendenza Archeologia della Toscana, Firenze, Italia.
Alfonso **Archi**, former Professor, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità, Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy.
Zeinab **Bahrani**, Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University, New York, USA.
Marcin **Białowarczuk**, Member of shirin Poland, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland.
Maria-Giovanna **Biga**, Storia del Vicino Oriente antico, Dip. Scienze dell'Antichità, Sapienza Università di Roma, Italia.
Felix **Blocher**, Seminar für Orient. Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte, Martin-Luther-Univ. Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.
Nicolas **Cauwe**, Curator, Royal Museums of Art & History, Brussels, Lecturer, Catholic University Louvain, Belgium.
Lisa **Cooper**, Classical, Near Eastern & Religious Studies, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.
Harriet **Crawford**, Senior Fellow, McDonald Institute, Cambridge, United Kingdom.
Alexandra **De Poorter**, Director-General, Royal Museums of Art & History, Brussels, Belgium.
Lynn **Dodd**, Director of Archaeology, University of Southern California, USA.
Cynthia **Dunning Thierstein**, MAS Director of ArchaeoConcept, Biel/Bienne, Suisse.
Bleda **Düring**, Near Eastern Archaeology, Leiden University, The Netherlands.
Christine **Elias**, shirīn-Australia, University of Melbourne, Australia.
Elisabeth **Fontan**, Conservateur en chef honoraire, Département des Antiquités orientales, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.
Eric **Gubel**, Senior Keeper, Antiquity Department, Royal Museums of Art & History, Brussels, Belgium.
John **Healey**, Fellow of the British Academy, University of Manchester, United Kingdom.
Fiona **Hill**, Deakin University, Wadi Tishreen Archaeological-Historical Conservation, University of Melbourne, Australia.
Krzysztof **Jakubiak**, Member of shirin Poland, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland.
Manfred **Krebernik**, OriIndUFA, Seminar für Altorientalistik, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany.
Maria da Conceição **Lopes**, CEAACP-FCT Unit, Research Coordinator, University of Coimbra, Portugal.
Cécile **Michel**, Directeur de Recherche, Histoire et Archéologie de l'Orient cunéiforme, CNRS, Nanterre, France.
Patrick Maxime **Michel**, Maître Assistant en Assyriologie, Université de Genève, Suisse.
Lucio **Milano**, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, Italia.
Olivier P. **Nieuwenhuys**, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, The Netherlands.
Katarzyna **Pawłowska**, Member of shirin Poland, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland.
Marco **Ramazzotti**, Dr., Ancient Near East Art and Archaeology, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy.
Arlette **Roobaert**, Mission archéologique de Tell Ahmar, Wavre, Belgique.
Anna **Smogorzewska**, Member of shirin Poland, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland.
Arkadiusz **Soltysiak**, Member of shirin Poland, Department of Bioarchaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland.
Rannfrid **Thelle**, Senior Lecturer, Wichita State University, USA.
Véronique **Van der Stede**, Researcher, Department of Antiquity, Royal Museums of Art & History, Brussels, Belgium.

Andrew G. **Vaughn**, Executive Director, American Schools of Oriental Research, Deer Isle, Maine, USA.
Emmanuelle **Vila**, Archéozoologue, Spécialiste du Proche-Orient, Chercheur au CNRS, Lyon, France.
Eva **von Dassow**, Classical & Near Eastern Studies, College of Liberal Arts, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA.
Zuzanna **Wygnańska**, Member of shirin Poland, Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland.

INSTITUTIONS / ORGANIZATIONS / NGOs

ArchaeoConcept, Biel/Bienne, Suisse.

Collart Archive/Fonds Paul Collart (fouilles Temple Baalshamîn, 1954–56), IASA, Université de Lausanne, Suisse.

The Day After – Heritage Protection Initiative, Syria.

European Centre for Upper Mesopotamian Studies, Brussels, Belgium.

Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology at the Free University Berlin, Germany.

The International Association for Assyriology, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire / Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis, Bruxelles/Brussel, Belgium.

Research Assessment & Safeguarding of the Heritage of Iraq in Danger, Munich, Germany.

Swiss Society for Ancient Oriental Studies (SGOA), Bern, Switzerland.

25/04/2016 18:00 UTC+2

