



Blue Shield 2nd Statement on Libya

21 June 2011

As the situation in Libya endures, the organisation and its members continue to deplore the suffering and loss of life this conflict imposes on the Libyan population. The Blue Shield reaffirms its initial statement of 14 March 2011 for the protection of the country's invaluable cultural heritage amidst the existing turmoil. Reiterating its call on all parties to respect the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the Blue Shield warns of the potential risks for the country's cultural heritage as the conflict escalates.

Libya is a State party to the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Five sites in this vast country, stretching from the Prehistoric era to Islamic civilization and bearing witness to the rise and fall of sophisticated cultures, are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Three of these sites, Cyrene, Leptis Magna, and Sabratha, are evidence of the civilization that flourished in Libya during the Punic, Greek, and Roman eras. The prehistoric site of Tadrart Acacus and the ancient city of Ghadames are standing proof of the cultural and architectural development of the region.

The ongoing armed conflict in Libya and the vulnerability of cultural institutions, sites, and monuments, gives reason for great concern to all who are involved in the preservation of cultural heritage. Particularly, aerial bombardments and artillery pose a grave danger to fragile cultural sites. Several of the recognized World Heritage sites now find themselves in the centre of combat zones. The potential threat posed to these sites placed in high-risk situations is cause for great apprehension. Any loss of Libyan cultural property would seriously impoverish the collective memory of mankind.

Libya is also a party to the 1954 Hague Convention since 1957, and recognized its Second Protocol in 2001. The Blue Shield is appealing to all member states involved to respect the stipulations of the Convention and to protect the world's cultural heritage.

The Blue Shield's mission is "to work to protect the world's cultural heritage threatened by armed conflict, natural and man-made disasters". For this reason it places the expertise and network of its member organizations at the disposal of their colleagues working in Libya in order to support their work in protecting the country's heritage, and if necessary, for subsequent recovery, restoration, and repair measures.

The member organisations of the Blue Shield are currently liaising with colleagues in Libya to obtain further information on both the situation and on their possible needs so as to mobilize their networks accordingly.

The Blue Shield

The Blue Shield is the protective emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention which is the basic international treaty formulating rules to protect cultural heritage during armed conflicts. The Blue Shield network consists of organisations dealing with museums, archives, audiovisual supports, libraries, monuments and sites.

The International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS), founded in 1996, comprises representatives of the five non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in this field:

- The International Council on Archives (www.ica.org),
- The International Council of Museums (www.icom.museum),
- The International Council on Monuments and Sites (www.icomos.org)
- The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (www.ifla.org)
- The Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations (www.ccaaa.org)

National Blue Shield Committees have been founded in a number of countries (19 established and 19 under construction). The Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield (ANCBS), founded in December 2008, will coordinate and strengthen international efforts to protect cultural property at risk of destruction in armed conflicts or natural disasters. The ANCBS has its headquarters in The Hague.

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The actions of the Blue Shield can also be followed on:

- Our Website: <http://www.blueshield-international.org>
- Twitter: [blueshieldcoop](https://twitter.com/blueshieldcoop)