



Blue Shield Statement on Egypt

31 January 2011

Following the recent events in Egypt, the Blue Shield expresses its great concern about the safeguarding of the country's invaluable cultural heritage amid the existing turmoil.

Starting last Friday evening, a number of important museums and sites in Egypt have fallen prey to looters. Thankfully, in certain cases, it has been reported that members of civil society stood to protect museums and heritage sites all over the country. This demonstrates not only the attachment of the local population for their cultural heritage and their determination to protect it, but also the vulnerability of cultural institutions, sites and monuments during times of great conflict.

It is universally recognised that Egypt has an incomparable history and heritage which has had a profound and lasting influence on peoples throughout the world. Any loss of Egyptian cultural property would seriously impoverish the collective memory of mankind. Egypt has an exceptionally rich cultural heritage and it is imperative that every precaution necessary be taken by all sides involved in this strife to avoid destruction or damage to archives, libraries, monuments and sites, and museums.

Blue Shield urges all sectors of Egyptian society to do everything in their power to curb or prevent all actions that could result in the damage or destruction of their cultural heritage. The Blue Shield also praises the courageous citizens of Cairo and the rest of Egypt who spontaneously mobilized to protect the Egyptian Museum and other cultural institutions. We call on all Egyptians to continue giving the fullest support to all efforts to prevent damage to heritage sites and institutions throughout the country.

The Blue Shield 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 organisations at the disposal of their Egyptian colleagues to support their work in protecting the country's heritage, in assessing the damage that has occurred, and for subsequent recovery, restoration and repair measures.

The member organisations of the Blue Shield are currently liaising with Egyptian colleagues to obtain further information on both the situation and on the possible needs and types of help required so as to mobilise their networks accordingly.

A more complete report on damages, needs and actions will be published subsequently, in order to facilitate coordination.

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>
- Facebook group: Egypt 2011 Blue Shield Solidarity
- Twitter : [blueshieldcoop](https://twitter.com/blueshieldcoop)