**The Director-General of UNESCO appeals to Stop Violence and to Protect the World Heritage City of Aleppo**

**For more than a year now, I have been expressing on behalf of UNESCO my deep concern about the dramatic humanitarian situation in Syria and the threats to the outstanding cultural heritage of the country, which bear testimony to its history and to its cultural identity. I have called upon all those involved in the conflict to ensure the respect and protection of this heritage. The tragedy has reached new heights with the growing and serious destruction to the World Heritage City of Aleppo. After the damages on the Citadel and the burning of the Souqs, and previous damage to the Great Mosque last October, it has been reported that considerable destruction has taken place at the Mosque on Thursday 28 February, turning this place of peace and study, one of the most beautiful mosques of all Islamic culture, into a devastated battlefield, notably its museum and library of manuscripts. Destroying the inheritance of the past, which is the legacy for future generations, serves no purpose except that of deepening hatred and despair and it further weaken the foundations for cohesion of Syrian society. Once again, I urge all belligerents to stop such destruction and to respect the legacy of their past along with the integrity of human lives and to abide by all relevant international conventions. UNESCO stands ready to assist in all its fields of competence.** http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/990

**DEFEND SYRIA - SAVE ALEPPO - INTERNATIONAL APPEAL**

**Italian Version , Arabic Version , English Version**

**Our appeal was sent to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, to European Parliament President Martin Schulz, to European Council HRVP Catherine Ashton, to Unesco Director-General Irina Bokova, to Arab League Secretary General Nabil El Araby, to Syrian Minister of Tourism Hala Mohammad Al-Nasser, to Syrian Minister of Culture Lubanah Mshaweh, and to other international institutions .**

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**DEFEND SYRIA - SAVE ALEPPO**

**INTERNATIONAL APPEAL TO:**

**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC,**

**TO ALL PARTIES IN THE CONFLICT**

**THE GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AND EASTERN COUNTRIES,**

**THE EUROPEAN UNION,**

**UNITED NATIONS,**

**UNESCO,**

**INSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

**FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SYRIA.**

**In uniting with the great suffering of the Syrian people and trusting in the urgent pacification of Syria, we ask for the immediate implementation of protection for the cultural heritage of the country, which is undergoing extensive damage. In particular, we appeal for the protection of the Citadel, the old town and all the monuments and buildings belonging to all the different religions in the city of Aleppo.**

**The uniqueness of the cultural history of Aleppo is a priceless cultural heritage and is beautifully demonstrated by a long tradition of peaceful coexistence between different religious groups. The loss of this unique unity and capacity for coexistence would represent a resounding defeat for the civilization of the twenty-first century, which we do not want and we oppose. In particular, we call for the reintroduction of the use of those very religious sites (mosques, churches, synagogues, monasteries, shrines), which risk complete destruction, as they are being occupied and used for military purposes by the various parties in the conflict. In addition, we ask that religious buildings, museums, archaeological sites, ancient houses, are protected from looting and vandalism, and international governments commit themselves to pursuing and punishing those who are trafficking the stolen cultural property of the Syrian people. The ancient historical centers of Aleppo and Damascus, Bosra, Palmyra, Hisn al Akrād and Qal'at Salah El-Din, and a group of ancient villages of northern Syria, are recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Defending the Syrian cultural heritage means defending the civilization of the twenty-first century.**

**Rome, 28/10/12 SALVAIMONASTERI-SAVETHEMONASTERIES**

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