

UNESCO - Topic 1 - **MEASURES TO PROTECT ITEMS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN  
CONFLICT ZONES WITH SPECIAL REGARD TO THE UKRAINIAN WAR**



**CONTENTS:**

**I. Introduction**

1. Introduction to the committee
2. Introduction to the topic

**II. History of the topic**

**III. Current issues**

**IV. Past / Current actions**

1. International Legal Frameworks for Cultural Heritage Protection
  - i. *The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*
  - ii. *The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*
  - iii. *The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention*
  - iv. *The 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention*

2. The Blue Shield (BS)
3. The Heritage Rescue Emergency Initiative (HERI)
4. International Council of Museums (ICOM)
5. International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)
6. The International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH)

## **V. Possible considerations for the future**

## **VI. Conclusion**

## **VII. Bibliography and helpful link**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### a. Introduction to the committee

Through international collaboration in education, the arts, sciences, and culture, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to advance global peace and security. It has partners in the non-governmental, intergovernmental, and private sectors in addition to its 193 member states and 12 associate members.

UNESCO was founded in 1945 as the successor to the League of Nations's International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. Its constitution establishes the agency's goals, governing structure, and operating framework. UNESCO's founding mission is to advance peace, sustainable development, and human rights by facilitating collaboration and dialogue among nations. It seeks to achieve this by its five main program areas—education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication/information.

UNESCO supports initiatives that enhance literacy, offer technical education and training, advance science, safeguard free speech and the independence of the press, preserve regional and cultural history, and encourage cultural diversity.

Furthermore, it serves as a focal point for international culture and science. Over the years, its activities have expanded to include bridging the global digital divide, establishing, and protecting World Heritage Sites of cultural and natural significance, and building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication.

b. Introduction to the topic

Cultural heritage includes tangible and intangible elements that reflect the cultural identity of a community, nation, or humanity as a whole. Tangible heritage comprises monuments, archaeological sites, and historic buildings, while intangible heritage includes oral traditions, rituals, and traditional craftsmanship. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on the country's cultural heritage. Numerous churches, museums, and historic sites have been damaged or destroyed, including the Donetsk Regional Museum of Local History, the Luhansk Fine Arts Museum, and the ancient city of Chersonesus.

## **II. HISTORY OF THE TOPIC**

### *Early examples of cultural heritage protection*

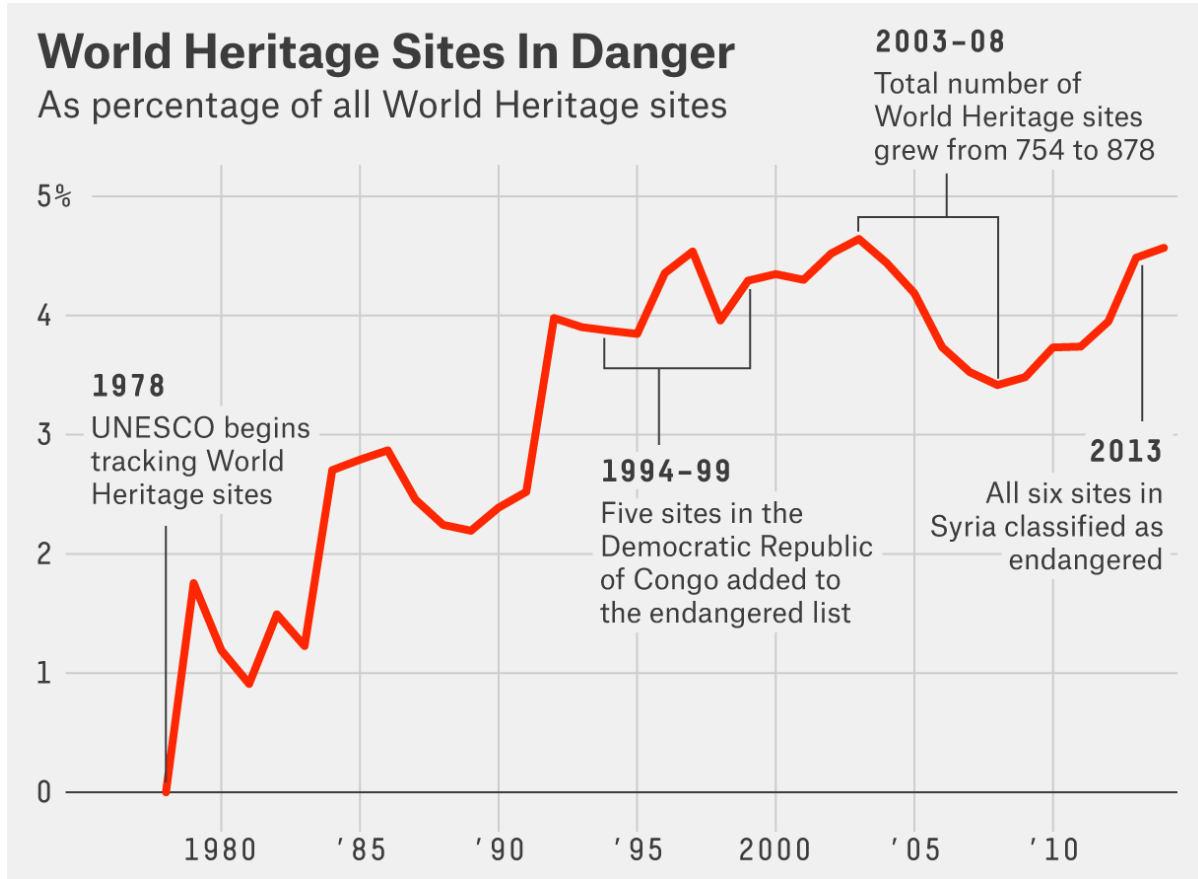
Throughout history, the preservation of cultural heritage has been a concern during armed conflicts. Early examples of cultural heritage protection can be traced back to ancient civilizations, which recognized the importance of preserving cultural artifacts and monuments. For instance, during the Roman Empire, the Romans established regulations on the seizure of spoils of war and often attempted to preserve and showcase the cultural heritage of conquered territories.

### *The emergence of international legal frameworks*

The modern history of cultural heritage protection began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the development of international legal frameworks aimed at safeguarding cultural assets during armed conflicts. The 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions on the Laws and Customs of War on Land were among the first international agreements that contained provisions for the protection of cultural heritage. Subsequent conventions and protocols have further expanded on these provisions, establishing a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of cultural property.

Armed conflicts have led to the deliberate or incidental destruction of cultural heritage worldwide. Examples include the destruction of the:

- Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan
- The looting of the National Museum of Iraq
- The damage to the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria.



### III. CURRENT ISSUE

#### *Destruction and damage of cultural heritage sites*

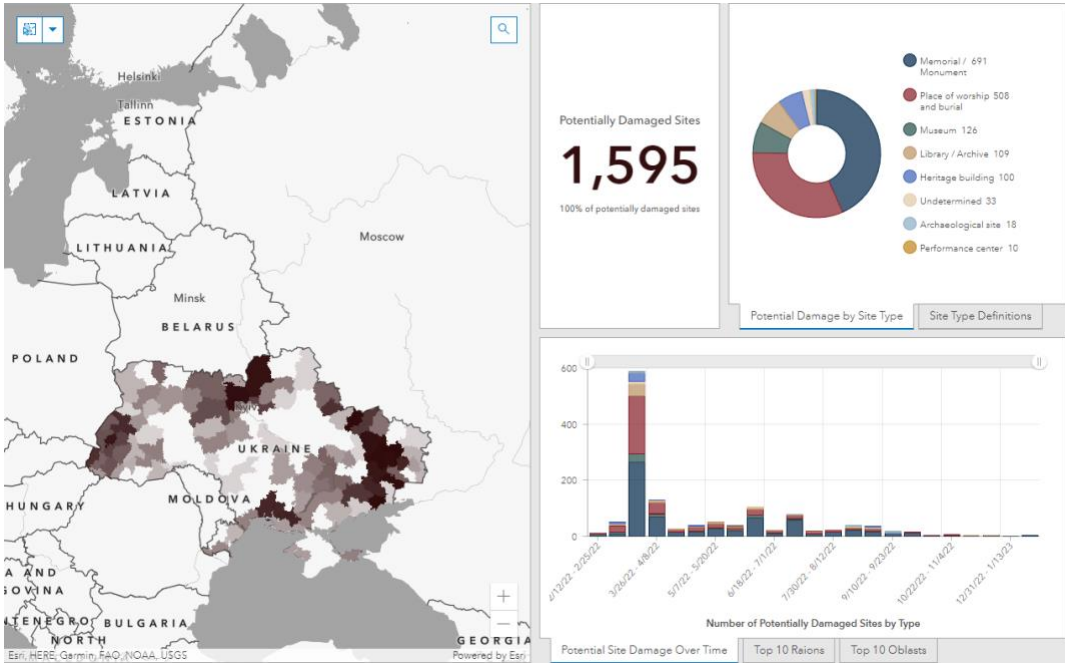
The primary issue in conflict zones, including the ongoing Ukrainian conflict, is the intentional or incidental destruction, damage, or looting of cultural heritage sites. This destruction can result from targeted attacks, collateral damage, or the actions of armed groups and individuals engaged in the illicit trade of cultural property. The loss of cultural heritage sites and objects can have long-lasting implications, as they are often irreplaceable.

*The illicit trade of cultural property*

The illicit trade of cultural property has emerged as a significant challenge, with non-state actors such as terrorist organizations and criminal networks engaging in the looting and trafficking of cultural property to finance their activities. This illicit trade not only contributes to the loss of cultural heritage but also perpetuates cycles of violence and conflict.

*Findings:*

A total of 1,595 potentially damaged cultural heritage sites were identified across Ukraine between 24 February 2022 and 31 January 2023, which represents approximately 5.6% of the sites monitored by CHML, SCRI, and the University of Maryland’s Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM). Based on analysis, the highest number of sites with potential damage (38.7% total) were in the ruins of Mariupolskyi, Sievierodonetskyi, Kharkivskyi, Kramatorskyi, and Buchanskyi. Memorial/Monument (43.3%) and Place of Worship & Burial (31.8%) were the most common types of sites sustaining potential damage across the country (see table).



#### IV. PAST / CURRENT ACTIONS

##### a. International Legal Frameworks for Cultural Heritage Protection

1. *The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.* The Hague Convention establishes the basic principles for the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts, prohibiting attacks and requiring parties to take preventive measures.
2. *The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.* This convention seeks to combat the illicit trade of cultural property, encouraging international cooperation and providing guidelines for restitution and return.
3. *The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention.* The World Heritage Convention aims to identify, protect, and preserve cultural and natural heritage sites of outstanding universal value, fostering international collaboration and assistance.
4. *The 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention.* The Second Protocol enhances the protection of cultural property by establishing a higher level of protection for cultural property of the greatest importance and by introducing measures to prosecute those responsible for violations.

##### b. The Blue Shield (BS)

The Blue Shield (formerly known as the International Committee of the Blue Shield) was created in 1996 and envisaged as the cultural equivalent of the “Red Cross” to be a neutral organization to protect cultural heritage in times of armed conflict. In practice, however, mainly due to a lack of funding, its capacity has not (yet) allowed it to fully fulfil this role. BS’s main activities focus on advocacy at UNESCO level – it has a consultative status in the 1999 Second Protocol Committee - and advising national authorities on implementing the preparatory measures states should take in times of peace, as foreseen in the Hague Convention 1954 and the Second Protocol. In this regard, BS cooperates with organizations, such as the Cultural Emergency Response (CER) and the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative (SCRI).

c. The Heritage Rescue Emergency Initiative (HERI)

The Heritage Rescue Emergency Initiative (HERI) has collected information on the most pressing needs of museums and museum professionals in Ukraine. 75 museums from 16 regions in Ukraine (excluding the western regions, which are comparatively safer) have answered to HERI's questionnaire on needs. The list is regularly updated online.

HERI collects resources, including money, to cover the museums' needs and communicates with those museums directly. The list includes price estimates of the different items to give an overview of the overall budget that is needed to efficiently help the Ukrainian museums and museum professionals.

Heritage Rescue Emergency Initiative (HERI) is a newly founded initiative working with the aim of preserving cultural heritage in war zones and its post-crisis recovery.

d. International Council of Museums (ICOM)

Created in 1946, ICOM is the global organization of museums, currently with 118 national committees. Together with its thematic international committees, ICOM develops standards and tools for the museum field, such as a Code of Ethics for museums, a standardized procedure to describe and document collections ("Object-ID") and "Red Lists," which bring types of objects at high risk for being looted or unlawfully exported, often from conflict zones, to the attention of law-enforcement (police and customs), and the wider public. It published an Emergency ICOM Red List of Cultural Heritage at Risk for Ukraine in November 2022. Created in collaboration with Ukrainian experts from diverse cultural institutions, the List contains types of Ukrainian cultural objects that span archaeology, books and manuscripts, numismatics, and folk, religious, applied, and fine art at risk of theft or illicit trafficking.

Furthermore, ICOM launched a program of Special Grants to support Ukrainian museums and museum professionals, focusing on the protection of collections, digitization of collections and education and support for museum staff. Beyond the activities of the ICOM secretariat, many national ICOM committees have been active in supporting Ukrainian museums in various ways, in particular, by distribution of donated

supplies for emergency evacuations of endangered and damaged museum collections in Ukraine.

e. International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

ICOMOS is a global organization dedicated to conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage. It was established in 1965 and has 104 national committees and 30 international scientific committees. In Ukraine, ICOMOS undertook the previously mentioned joint mission to Ukraine with ICCROM to assess the situation of heritage.

Moreover, in July 2022, it partnered with the Foundation to Preserve Ukraine's Sacral Arts, and the World Monuments Fund, by sending 440 fire extinguishers for the protection of Tserkvas, historic wooden churches. The background to this initiative is that Ukraine is home to more than 2,500 wooden churches, 8 of which are on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

f. The International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH)

ALIPH is the main global fund exclusively dedicated to the protection and rehabilitation of cultural heritage in conflict zones and post-conflict situations. It was created in 2017 in response to the massive destruction of cultural heritage over the past decade, predominantly in the Middle East and the Sahel. ALIPH is a public-private partnership assembling several countries and private donors. Based in Geneva, this Swiss foundation also benefits of the privileges and immunities of an international organization, thanks to a headquarters agreement signed with the Swiss Confederation. To date, ALIPH has supported more than 150 projects in 30 countries (for instance, Iraq, Yemen, Mali, Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya, North-East Syria) on 4 continents. ALIPH finances concrete projects carried out on the ground, hand in hand with local partners, authorities, and communities. The ultimate goal is that cultural heritage protection contributes to peace and sustainable development.



## **V. POSSIBLE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

1. Conducting risk assessments and implementing preventive measures, such as creating no-strike lists and relocating movable cultural property, can mitigate the risk of damage. Comprehensive documentation and inventory of cultural heritage sites facilitate monitoring, protection, and post-conflict recovery efforts.
2. Strengthening international legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms. This could include revising existing conventions and protocols to address new challenges and emerging threats, promoting the ratification and implementation of relevant legal instruments by more countries, and enhancing the capacity of international and national judicial institutions to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.
3. Enhancing collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, local communities, and the private sector, is crucial for the effective protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones. This could involve the establishment of joint task forces or networks, the development of shared databases and information-sharing platforms, and the promotion of public-private partnerships.
4. Investing in capacity-building and technical assistance to improve the ability of national and local actors to protect their cultural heritage is another potential consideration. This could include the provision of training, resources, and technical assistance, as well as the promotion of best practices and the development of guidelines and toolkits for cultural heritage protection.
5. Leveraging innovative technologies, such as remote sensing, satellite imagery, and digital documentation, could play a significant role in the protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones. These technologies can be used for monitoring, documentation, damage assessment, and the development of virtual reconstructions, as well as for raising awareness and fostering public engagement in cultural heritage protection.

6. Promotion of cultural heritage as a tool for peacebuilding and reconciliation could be an important consideration for the future. This could involve initiatives that foster intercultural dialogue, understanding, and cooperation, as well as the integration of cultural heritage protection into broader peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian efforts. By highlighting the shared values and common history that cultural heritage represents, these initiatives can contribute to building trust, fostering social cohesion, and promoting long-term peace and stability in conflict-affected regions.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires the concerted efforts of the international community, national governments, NGOs, local communities, and other stakeholders. By strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing collaboration, investing in capacity-building efforts, leveraging innovative technologies, and developing comprehensive national strategies for cultural heritage protection, the international community can contribute to the preservation of humanity's shared cultural heritage and promote peace, stability, and sustainable development in conflict-affected regions.

## VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND HELPFUL LINKS

<https://www.justsecurity.org/81212/how-can-we-protect-cultural-heritage-in-ukraine-five-key-steps-for-the-intl-community/>

<https://www.unesco.org/en/ukraine-war/actions-timeline>

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/733120/IPOL\\_STU\(2023\)733120\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/733120/IPOL_STU(2023)733120_EN.pdf)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNESCO>

<https://hub.conflictobservatory.org/portal/sharing/rest/content/items/56776560f5a94c1c88d361e3dd1aef59/data>

<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/dangerous-times-for-the-worlds-cultural-heritage/>

[https://www.aliphfoundation.org/storage/wsm\\_presse/eiTlwaVo8AcWrJEJaLOzI5wlzrjDX8QrU0PVsyAD.pdf](https://www.aliphfoundation.org/storage/wsm_presse/eiTlwaVo8AcWrJEJaLOzI5wlzrjDX8QrU0PVsyAD.pdf)

<https://www.icomos-ukraine.com/>

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9962-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

[https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/ICCROM\\_18\\_ProtectingHeritageConflict\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/ICCROM_18_ProtectingHeritageConflict_en_0.pdf)