

World

Archaeological

Congress

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Second WAC Statement

on the invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation as ordered by President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin

On 5 March 2022 WAC issued a statement condemning the invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation as ordered by President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin and demanded the immediate withdrawal of these forces. As a community of archaeologists of the world, WAC urged the forces involved to consider, among their concerns, appropriate strategies to protect Ukraine's heritage and to follow the Hague Conventions on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the First (1954) and Second Protocols (1999).

Continued violation of human rights, illegal occupation and significant evidence of damages to cultural heritage are demonstrating that the Russian Federation is not fulfilling its responsibilities to protect cultural property under the 1954 Hague Convention they have ratified. **As stated in WAC Dead Sea Accord, the intentional and unexcused destruction of cultural heritage is a violation of international humanitarian law and serves as a basis for criminal prosecution.** And we strongly condemn all these actions.

The current situation has prompted some of our members to ask the Executive and the Council of WAC **to consider imposing a ban on colleagues of any nationality affiliated with state-funded Academic and Heritage Institutions in the Russian Federation to participate in WAC-9.**

The Executive and Council of WAC have held several extraordinary meetings to discuss this matter. After a detailed analysis of the current situation and of the history of WAC in response to previous conflicts, a vote was taken on 2 June 2022. Of those present, 76% voted against the ban. This democratically made decision is based on the following facts.

While WAC was born from the ban to South African colleagues back in 1985, there has been no other ban in WAC history since then. During the following 40 years, WAC has followed a policy of condemning any damage and destruction caused by armed conflicts

by issuing statements and organizing forums to promote discussion. WAC adopted the *WAC Dead Sea Accord on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*. While there have been many conflicts around the world, WAC has never again banned anyone from participating in its conferences. In view of this background, the WAC Council has agreed that we should be consistent and ensure conflicts around the world are treated equally and receive the same level of attention and action. It has also been agreed that WAC has to stick to its position as a multivocal organization and strongly oppose and condemn any damage to human rights and heritage, no matter when or where. We emphasize that we are aware of and respect the Czech Republic government's suspension of Visa issuance for the citizens of Russia.

While WAC strongly condemns the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, we believe that banning Russian participation in WAC-9, when the same has not been done in many other recent situations of armed conflicts, such as the US and the UK illegal war on Iraq, Israel illegal occupation of Palestinian land, Saudi Arabia War on Yemen, to name but a few, would be privileging particular regions over others and supporting the dominant discourse.

Once again WAC strongly condemns any damages to heritage and violations of human rights in the Russian invasion of Ukraine and any other conflict.

In support of our colleagues from Ukraine, who are not only losing family members and friends but also witnessing the destruction of their cultural heritage, WAC wants WAC-9 to become a forum for them to share their experiences with the wider community. WAC will also organize a series of academic activities to debate the Russian invasion of Ukraine and organize a forum to discuss **WAC's stands in situations of armed conflicts**.



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On behalf of the WAC Council

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Background information

The World Archaeological Congress, with members in more than 90 countries, is the only fully international and representative organisation of practicing archaeologists. WAC's mission is to (1) promote professional training for disadvantaged nations and communities; (2) broaden public education, involving national and international communities in archaeological research; (3) develop archaeological practice so that it empowers Indigenous and minority groups; (4) contribute to the conservation of archaeological sites threatened by looting, urban growth, tourism, development or war; and (5) re-dress global inequities amongst archaeologists.