



# **EUAM IRAQ: PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE**









## Foreword

The European Union Advisory Mission in Iraq was launched in October 2017 in response to a request from the Iraqi Government to provide advice and expertise at the strategic level in civilian security sector reform (SSR). Within this broad mandate, **one of EUAM Iraq's focus areas is enhancing the civilian security authorities' ability to protect Iraq's cultural heritage.**

The link between cultural heritage protection and security is vital.

The European Union Council highlighted in 2021 that protecting and enhancing cultural heritage in conflicts and crises is essential for any strategy of peace, security resilience and social reconciliation. Cultural heritage is, indeed, a sensitive and highly complex matter with a high degree of symbolic significance at risk of political and criminal manipulation. Thus, cultural heritage can be a driver of conflict as well as a vector for peace, reconciliation and development. Attacking cultural heritage has constituted a means of symbolic violence in wars and crises as a direct target for belligerents who want to increase violence and hatred against opponents. Moreover, the politicization of cultural heritage, often including its religious aspects, can diverge societies, countries, regions, ethnic groups or communities, expanding the risk of violent conflicts.

Thus, safeguarding heritage, cultural goods and properties is not simply a matter of cultural urgency: it is a political and security priority that should translate into a central component of conflict resolution and peace building efforts, the security sector reform.





## Introduction

EUAM Iraq is strengthening its activity by supporting the Iraqi authorities with specific advice on cultural heritage protection. **It is the first and only EU mission with a full-time expert in this critical sector.**

The valuable contribution of the protection of cultural heritage in fulfilling the Mission's mandate in SSR cannot be underestimated. Cultural heritage protection directly links with critical areas such as countering organised crime, violent extremism and terrorism.

Looting and smuggling are profitable ways to finance gangs' malicious activities. It is challenging to quantify the value of cultural looting. Still, according to some surveys, it has been estimated that Daesh raised up to 100 million US dollars a year, a source of financing that was second only to its revenues from oil.

With that in mind, by advising Iraqi authorities on cultural heritage protection, EUAM Iraq is contributing to countering terrorism and organised crime in four fundamental ways:

First of all, the protection of cultural heritage is key in countering radicalisation. The thousands of years shared cultural history that Iraq is home to is essential in promoting cultural pluralism and diversity against obscurantism and violent extremism.

Secondly, by providing strategic advice to the relevant Iraqi ministries and national authorities, EUAM Iraq helps the enforcement of the international protection regime and, particularly, the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Thirdly, the protection of cultural heritage cuts off the funding generated by looting and trafficking of artefacts, which fuels and prolongs conflicts by providing critical revenue for terrorists.



Fourthly, at the end of hostilities, the protection of cultural heritage can help ensure a quicker recovery and stabilisation by promoting societal and economic regeneration. Indeed, the rehabilitation of cultural heritage can play a decisive role in rebuilding societies' fabric and creating the foundations for long-lasting peace and security, contributing to post-conflict income generation and economic security from a return to tourism and related activities



## The Four Golden Pillars in Protecting Cultural Heritage

EUAM Iraq is currently carrying out different courses of action in its work on cultural heritage protection:

The first is a **publicity campaign that raises awareness among youngsters about the importance of cultural heritage protection**, promoting a friendly image of service-oriented police in community policing cooperation. This project is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Interior along with the Ministry of Culture and the Mayoralty of Baghdad.

The second activity involves the Ministry of Education and several Iraqi universities. The goal is to **create a 'think tank' of law professors and legal experts to help review the Iraqi law 55/2002 related to the protection of cultural heritage** and make it more effective.

Thirdly, while mainstreaming the protection of cultural heritage in all Mission's activities as a fundamental cross-cutting issue, we are also **engaging with local communities and civil society organisations** towards the common objective of preserving Iraq's tangible and intangible cultural goods and properties.

Lastly, the fourth activity focuses on **creating a national IT system, a Cultural Heritage Protection Database** that helps Iraqi national capabilities investigate culturally related crimes, hinder international illicit trafficking, disrupt one of the most profitable funding sources for criminal or terrorist organisations, and support the recovering of stolen goods.





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