PRESS RELEASE

PROTECTING HERITAGE TO BUILD PEACE

Leptis Magna, Libya – Photo: Dr. Hafed Walda
The International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas, ALIPH* has a mandate to offer concrete support for the protection and reconstruction of cultural heritage in conflict zones or post-conflict situations. The Geneva-based Swiss foundation is an international organization established in response to the massive destruction in recent years of outstanding, often ancient, cultural heritage, particularly in the Sahel and the Middle East.

Creating ALIPH, a human-scale organization benefiting from both public and private support, seemed the most appropriate answer to the need to act rapidly and concretely in favor of heritage-safeguarding projects headed by local or international actors in geopolitically fraught regions. ALIPH aims to financially support associations, foundations, cultural and heritage institutions, and international organizations working to preserve cultural heritage in the face of imminent conflict, or to intervene to rehabilitate it. ALIPH has set the objective of becoming a central actor in the protection of cultural heritage around the world within a three-year timeframe.

The organization is already committed to the ambitious project of supporting the rehabilitation of the Mosul Museum in Iraq; restoring the Tomb of Askia in Gao, Mali; and rehabilitating the Mar Behnam Monastery in Northern Iraq.

Today, ALIPH has entered a second phase with the launch, on its new website, of a worldwide call that will enable it to support prevention, protection and restoration projects on every scale, from the smallest local initiatives to ambitious long-term projects. ALIPH also aims to supply immediate aid wherever this is most urgently needed.

* ALIPH for International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas. ‘Aliph’ is also the first letter of the Arabic alphabet.
ALIPH was created as a response to the terror caused during recent conflicts by the massive destruction, either intentional or collateral, of the cultural property of several sites in Timbuktu, Mosul, Nimrud, Palmyra, and Aleppo.

In the wake of those atrocities, the French President invited the President-Director of the musée du Louvre, Jean-Luc Martinez, to draw up a set of recommendations, and in November 2015 he issued ‘Fifty Proposals to Protect the Cultural Heritage of Humanity’.

Among these figured the creation of a global fund designed to financially support the safeguarding of heritage in situations of armed conflict. The idea became a reality immediately following the international conference on the protection of endangered heritage held in Abu Dhabi in December 2016.

Created in March 2017 at the instigation of France and the United Arab Emirates, ALIPH now brings together France, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Morocco, China, and Switzerland, along with key civil society figures and institutions such as The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and philanthropists Thomas S. Kaplan and Jean-Claude Gandur. Of the USD 77.5 million pledged, 60 million has already been paid into the fund; this capital is to be consolidated through further fundraising among public and private donors. Over the next three years, ALIPH will directly dedicate close to USD 30 million to supporting concrete heritage protection efforts in conflict areas.

Through its mission of heritage protection, ALIPH also aims to help promote reconciliation and peacebuilding, local development and cultural diversity, and to restore social cohesion.

Maintenance of the Tomb of Askia in Gao, Mali, is traditionally undertaken on a regular basis by members of the local population, illustrating the unifying nature of the site.
ALIPH is the result of an ‘alliance’ between several national governments and private partners and experts, thereby guaranteeing a pluralistic vision. The Foundation Board is chaired by Thomas S. Kaplan, an American entrepreneur and philanthropist, and the rotating Vice-Chair position is currently occupied by Mohamed al Mubarak, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Department and representative of the United Arab Emirates, with Bariza Khiari, advisor to President Emmanuel Macron, representing France. Its Scientific Committee, made up of experts in cultural heritage from different countries, is chaired by Jean-Luc Martinez, President-Director of the musée du Louvre. The Secretariat of ALIPH is managed by a French diplomat, Valéry Freland, Executive Director, and a Canadian specialist in heritage protection, France Desmarais, Deputy Executive Director/Scientific and Grants Director, and is structured to ensure flexibility and efficiency.

**ALIPH aims to cover the array of needs on the ground through two support mechanisms:**

- A broad call for projects, with two deadlines per year.
- A so-called emergency procedure, for projects below USD 75,000, that will allow it to act immediately, throughout the year, to support measures designed to mitigate an imminent risk of damage to a site, monument, museum or collection.

ALIPH supports cultural heritage throughout areas in conflict or post-conflict, without geographical restrictions.

**ALIPH intervenes in favor of:**

- Preventive protection in the case of imminent risk;
- Emergency protection during conflict;
- Post-conflict rehabilitation.

ALIPH also aims to promote work before and after hostilities, in collaboration with local authorities and partners.

The Foundation Board determines which projects are selected, in consultation with the Scientific Committee.
Rehabilitation of the Mosul Museum (Iraq)

In collaboration with Iraq's State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, ALIPH is supporting professional assessment of the extensive damage inflicted on the museum by Daesh in 2014. The organization is providing up to USD 480,000 in financial assistance for the initial phase of this project, which consists in commissioning an accurate assessment of the damage inflicted, and defining needs for the future of the museum. This first step is headed jointly by the Smithsonian Institution and the musée du Louvre. ALIPH has voiced its wish to follow this up by contributing to the complete rehabilitation of the museum, in collaboration with other funders.

Rehabilitation of the Tomb of Askia in Gao (Mali)

This second project aims to ensure the restoration of the damaged monument. The occupation of the city by armed groups in 2012-2013 prevented routine annual maintenance work from being carried out by local authorities, and the tomb – dating from the late 15th century and inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger in 2012 – is today at risk of collapsing. The project is overseen by the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Mali in collaboration with CRAterre. ALIPH is providing financial assistance totaling USD 500,000.

Rehabilitation of the Mar Behnam Monastery (Iraq)

The Mar Behnam Monastery in Khidr, in northern Iraq – a 4th-century monument that formerly housed one of the most important Syriac libraries in the world – was destroyed by Daesh in 2015. This project, instigated by the association Fraternity in Iraq, has allowed several parts of the church and the tomb to be rebuilt. ALIPH has contributed up to USD 250,000 to the project.
Today, ALIPH is launching its website and its first call for projects. Project leaders from around the world can use the online platform to apply for grants in favor of the protection of cultural heritage in conflict.
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Mr. VALÉRY FRELAND Executive Director of ALIPH

MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE:
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Mr. WANG CHUNFA (China), Director of the National Museum of China in Beijing

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