PRESS RELEASE

ALIPH will devote a first envelope of 5 million dollars to the stabilization and rehabilitation of Beirut’s damaged cultural heritage

Monday, 24 August 2020 – Following the explosion of 4 August and the damage it caused to museums, libraries, monuments and historic houses in central Beirut, the ALIPH Foundation Board decided to allocate an initial envelope of 5 million dollars to finance emergency measures to stabilize, protect, or rehabilitate the city’s cultural heritage.

The first studies carried out by the Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon (DGA), in association with several international institutions (UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOM, ICOMOS, IFLA, the Blue Shield, the French Institute of the Near East, etc.), found that nearly 650 houses or buildings listed as cultural heritage were damaged by the explosion, particularly in the Gemmayzeh district, founded in the mid-19th century. Several museums were also damaged, including the National Museum, which houses archaeological collections, and the Sursock Museum, devoted to modern and contemporary art, as well as libraries, monuments, and religious buildings.

After contributing to the mobilization of the international heritage community by initiating the “Statement of solidarity with Lebanon and support to recover the damaged cultural heritage in Beirut”, signed by nearly 30 major cultural institutions, ALIPH is now providing concrete assistance by financing measures to stabilize, protect or rehabilitate damaged cultural heritage. Among the first projects financed are the protection and restoration work at the National Museum of Lebanon in Beirut, in partnership with the Louvre Museum and the Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon, and emergency relief for some twenty cultural heritage entities (museums, libraries, etc.), in cooperation with the Prince Claus Fund and the Lebanese Committee of the Blue Shield. ALIPH will extend its action in the coming days, in particular to contribute to the stabilization of historic houses and the rehabilitation of other museums and cultural establishments. In this respect, ALIPH is working closely with all actors, notably the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

“ALIPH’s objective is to finance as quickly as possible concrete and operational measures to protect and restore damaged heritage, especially to avoid further weakening by the next rainy season,” said Valéry Freland, ALIPH’s Executive Director. “Beyond these emergency measures, we must also work with the international community and the Lebanese people on the sustainable rehabilitation of entire neighborhoods: this will require more time and resources.”
For the implementation of this first envelope, ALIPH will carefully apply the principles of urgency, efficiency and coordination mentioned during the International Conference on Assistance and Support to Beirut and the Lebanese People (Paris, 9 August 2020), and closely evaluate the concrete nature of the projects that will be submitted via its online grant platform: https://aliph.smartsimple.ie/.

(ENDS)

About ALIPH

The International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH) is currently supporting nearly sixty projects in sixteen countries for a total amount of almost 20 million USD. ALIPH has also recently helped over 100 local heritage operators in conflict or post-conflict areas to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, for an amount of 2 million USD.

The Foundation provides concrete support for the protection and reconstruction of cultural heritage in conflict zones and post-conflict situations. It financially assists associations, foundations, academic, cultural and heritage institutions, and international organizations to preserve cultural heritage facing imminent conflict, also intervening for its rehabilitation. Its three areas of intervention are: preventive protection to limit the risks of destruction, emergency measures to ensure the security of heritage, and post-conflict actions to enable local populations to once again enjoy their cultural heritage.

ALIPH was founded in March 2017 in response to the massive destruction of exceptional, often ancient, cultural heritage in recent years. Operating under Swiss law, this Geneva-based foundation also has the status of an international organization. You may find more information at www.aliph-foundation.org.

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