



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Statement of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) in support of the requests, under Article 9 of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States of America regarding the imposition of import restrictions on archaeological material from Jordan from the Paleolithic through the Ottoman Periods; and by the Republic of Chile to the United States of America for an MOU to impose import restrictions to protect its cultural patrimony.

March 25, 2019

SAA has worked for many years in support of the effort to enlarge the network of bilateral agreements under the Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA) in the Americas and around the world. The terrible impact of looting upon the archaeological record—and the permanent loss of knowledge to our shared history and culture that such looting causes—are well known. The MOUs represent our most valuable means of preventing the pillage and smuggling of archaeological materials by not only providing a “front line” defense with import restrictions, but also by helping petitioning nations build up their cultural heritage protection, research, and educational capacities for the benefit of all peoples.

SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to the research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 7,000 members, SAA represents professional archaeologists in colleges and universities, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. SAA has members in all 50 states as well as many other nations around the world.

SAA fully endorses the Jordanian request for an MOU with the U.S. The merits of the request have been fully demonstrated by the statement of Dr. Morag M. Kersel, who is a member of the Society and its International Governmental Affairs Committee. Her testimony clearly shows that the situation in Jordan and the nature of the threat to its cultural patrimony satisfy the four conditions for an MOU set forth in Section 303(A)(1) of the Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA) of 1983. The Middle East is one of the most troubled parts of the world, and yet is home to the archaeological record of many of the most ancient and globally known and recognized cultures that have thrived there over the millennia. As such, the threat of looting in that region is particularly severe, and an agreement with Jordan would provide an invaluable tool in the struggle to protect this irreplaceable heritage.

SAA also supports the request for an MOU by the Republic of Chile. The statement of Dr. Cesar Mendez, an SAA member, demonstrates that the situation in that nation—particularly concerning its prehistoric cultural patrimony—also meets the requirements of Section 303(A)(1). This is a geographic area whose extensive history is just beginning to be better understood by the outside world. Chile has a long history of cultural patrimony conservation, and is itself leading a robust effort to better protect its archaeological record, but the MOU and its import restrictions will be essential in order to maximize the potential benefits of this work.

SAA respectfully urges that the Cultural Property Advisory Committee recommend the approval of the Jordanian and Chilean requests.