



Date: 29-04-2015
No: 540-LR-2089

Her Excellency,
Ms Irina Bokova
Director-General UNESCO
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris
France

Re: Protection of Heritage Sites and the Ecosystem in Iran

Your Excellency,

It is with a profound sense of appreciation for your commitment and dedication that I appeal to your high office to assist with the protection of Iran's heritage sites and eco-system as part of UNESCO's global initiative. I join my fellow compatriots to express our shared concerns about wrongful policies and initiatives in the Islamic Republic of Iran that have threatened the preservation of historic sites and the environment. There is now an opportunity for UNESCO to support grassroots initiatives led by Iranian cultural and environmental activists.

At the UNESCO general conference on November 16th 1972, delegates from around the world adopted the World Heritage Convention which acknowledges the increasing threat to world's cultural heritage and natural resources, not only by natural causes of decay, but also by socio-economic factors. The convention recognizes UNESCO's leading role and responsibility in the safeguard and protection of historic and cultural sites that are considered and/or designated as 'world heritage sites'. It is agreed that world heritage sites belong to people from all corners of the world regardless of their color, race, and religious beliefs.

With this acknowledgement, one cannot ignore media reports on increasing number of mass protests against the destruction of national treasures and UNESCO designated world heritage sites in Iran.

The protestors hold the government of the Islamic Republic responsible for the implementation of its shortsighted policies that are contributing to the gradual destruction

of world heritage sites along with remnants and reminders of the country's rich historic past. These historic and cultural sites are several thousand years old, and reflect different aspects

of the world's civilization and cultural development. This practice is similar to the destruction of two 6th century statues of standing Buddha carved into the side of a cliff in the Bamyán valley in the Hazarajat region of Afghanistan by the Taliban.

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Iranians strive to preserve their historic and cultural sites for generations to come with hopes that they will one day attract visitors, and true enthusiasts of history, culture and arts from around the globe following the return of democracy, prosperity and security to their homeland.

Iranians are also equally concerned about numerous environmental issues and challenges facing the country's eco-system. Iran is currently facing a water crisis, as years of neglect and mismanagement by authorities have contributed to drought and climate change. As the result of excessive damming of rivers, and bad irrigation practices, lakes, rivers and wetlands are drying up and entire ecosystems are being destroyed. Equally concerning is the lack of environmental policies and guidelines that are threatening the habitats and sanctuaries of endangered animals. The environmental destruction will have global implications, unless world leaders under UNESCO's leadership remind the theocratic regime in Iran of its commitment and serious consequences of inaction.

We urge UNESCO's support in our efforts to protect world heritage sites, and simultaneous effort to overcome existing environmental crises. It is critical to pressure the authorities in Iran to halt policies and projects leading to the destruction of ancient historic sites. We beseech you to support the people of Iran in the preservation of their historic and cultural inheritance, the cradle of world's civilization.

Yours sincerely
Iran National Council for Free Elections

Secretariat of the Iran National Council for Free Elections

cc: His Excellency Ban Ki-moon,
Secretary-General of the United Nations