

Archaeological Institute of America

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New York, NY—March 4, 2011—In response to the recent reports on the situation in Egypt the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) released the following joint statement:

Recent news reports and blog posts coming from Egypt--including notes from Zahi Hawass, the well-known minister of antiquities in the Egyptian government, who has just resigned--have presented an alarming picture of the state of antiquities and cultural sites in that country in recent weeks. After initial reports in January that theft at cultural sites and museums had been only sporadic and small in scale, recent stories provided details about the attacks on storage facilities, pharaonic sites, and Islamic monuments across the country. This includes the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, a facility used by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and archaeological sites in Abusir, Aswan, Giza, and Saqqara.

The members of the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) and the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) deplore the looting of these archaeological sites and museums in the strongest terms. We call on Egyptian authorities, even in these unsettled times, to do what they can to protect the country's irreplaceable archaeological and cultural materials.

Pillaging of archaeological sites or cultural repositories causes the destruction of cultural heritage and the unlawful, uncontrolled dispersal of rare and important artifacts. In the face of the current crisis in Egypt, the AAMD and AIA therefore urge all members with appropriate expertise to provide professional support to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and Egypt's archaeological community, to identify and reclaim missing objects.

We further urge museums and archaeological communities around the world to alert the appropriate international authorities and customs officials if they believe they have information regarding objects recently stolen from Egypt.

While the full extent of the damage to Egypt's cultural heritage will only become clear after greater stability is restored, the irreplaceable treasures of more than 5,000 years of history are under threat and we must take immediate action.

Kaywin Feldman, President
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