

Open Letter

Save Palmyra

Palmyra is one of the most complete ancient cities in the world dating back to the third century AD. Palmyra, also known as “the Pearl of the Desert”, is currently in danger of being a military target by the “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria” (ISIS). If little effort is exerted to protect it at an early stage, Palmyra could lose its chance at gaining international mobilization in order to protect it from “ISIS”. Historically, Palmyra is one of the most important cultural centers of the ancient world. Placed at the crossroads of civilizations, it stands firm through the ages as an oasis of heritage that includes timeless monuments, classical theatre, and ancient unprecedented Arab architecture. All of this bears witness to a glorious history.

The recent military strikes and targeted demolition of world heritage in Iraq and Syria by the “ISIS” is detrimental to our collective heritage. It is no surprise that “ISIS” acts under the guise of religious fundamentalism in order to destroy invaluable culture, and make profit from selling and smuggling antiquities. Therefore, allowing “ISIS” to destroy Syria's cultural heritage is to stand idle and watch a criminal loss to humanity. The annihilation of a symbolic giant like Palmyra is far more disastrous than a plunge in the Syrian tourism industry.

We, a group of academics from the *Arab German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA)* call on all world leaders, the UN Security Council and more importantly, the UNESCO to take full and urgent action in order to prevent the destruction of one of the Arab world’s most cherished heritage sites.

We demand an immediate response to put an end to this foreseen atrocity against people’s history in both Iraq and Syria. We call for immediate action against “ISIS” and its supporters in order to protect Palmyra.

Signatures:

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