

Stockholm Statement on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Ukraine

Ukraine is under attack by Russia. More than 11 million people have been displaced by the aggression, and more than 7 million of these remain in Ukraine. They need shelter and temporary housing, but also hope and support for their identity. Helping to protect and recover the country's damaged cultural heritage is not a secondary need; it is just as important as military and humanitarian aid contributions because a nation is much more than the territory it occupies, much more even than the people who make it up today and it gives the people of Ukraine hope.

Ukraine has a rich cultural heritage, with over 145,000 notable objects and 401 historical towns and cities. That heritage is a fundamental, tangible resource for Ukrainians. The growing number of visitors to the national cultural reserves of Davniy Halych, Chigyrin and Baturin during the war indicates the importance of this cultural heritage for the people in Ukraine.

Since 2014, the unprovoked war on Ukraine has clearly shown that Russia is in violation of the 1954 Hague Convention, despite having signed the agreement. Several cases of destruction even indicate that Russia is intentionally destroying Ukraine's cultural heritage. Perhaps the most important of these was the destruction of the National Literary Memorial Museum, housed in the last residence eighteenth-century philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda (1722–1794), on May 6, 2022 in a suburb of Kharkiv. The Russian missiles that have been launched all across Ukraine since 24 February are intended to destroy all of civil society in Ukraine: homes, public services and infrastructure as well as cultural heritage. As of 3 August 2022, Ukraine's Ministry of Culture had verified the damage of 500 cultural heritage sites, and since then the total number has risen to nearly 550. The most affected oblasts are Kharkiv, Donetsk, Kiev, Luhansk, Chernihiv and Sumy. According to the ministry, the damage includes 169 religious sites, 75 cultural centres, theatres, cinemas and other art centres, 52 memorial monuments and works of art, 45 libraries, 36 museums and reserves and more than 108 historic buildings.

The scale of the destruction is unimaginable. These atrocities deprive the Ukrainian people of their past, their cultural identity and sense of belonging, their source of consolation and inspiration for the rebuilding of the country. This is a crime not only against the people of Ukraine but also against humanity.

There is an immense need for immediate action to protect heritage sites, to document the damage to them, and to collect that documentation in archives to enable future reconstruction, either digitally or with a full-scale reconstruction. This must be included in the aid that is provided and in the economic plans that are made for the recovery.

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