



STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO THE DESTRUCTION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SITES IN TIMES OF CONFLICT

(February 4, 2020)

The National Coalition for History (NCH) condemns the targeting of historical and cultural heritage sites as a tactical option in wartime or peacetime.

NCH comprises historians, archivists, museum professionals, preservationists, genealogists, researchers, teachers, students, and other stakeholders. Many of our constituencies have already spoken out in opposition to recent reports that the US government was considering the threat of destruction of cultural sites in the Middle East as a policy of coercion. However, this issue transcends disciplines and national boundaries. As humanists, we must respect the civilizations and cultural traditions of all peoples.

To threaten a nation or a people by seeking to destroy evidence of its past contradicts the 1954 Hague Convention for the protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2347, and the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

Our government needs to be cognizant of the lasting impact such tactics would have on the nation in question as well as the indelible stain it would make on our reputation around the world. Following the 2017 withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO membership, we remain concerned about the declining role of the United States in protecting cultural heritage at an international level.

As we take pride in our nation's history, we too must respect that of other countries and peoples even in times of conflict. It is not only legally right, but morally as well.