August 6, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
U.S. Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write on behalf of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and its Cultural Heritage Task Force to bring to your attention the systematic destruction of cultural heritage sites in Mosul, Iraq by militants associated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) movement. Over the past several months, more than a dozen mosques, shrines, tombs, and statues have been completely obliterated – sites like the tomb of the prophet Jonah, and statues of Abu Tammam, a famous Arab poet, and Mullah Othman, a beloved 19th-century musician and poet.

We ask that you allocate resources to prevent further damage to these witnesses to global cultural history. AAA offers our services to assist in preserving the fragile heritage these sites represent by drawing attention to and explaining the significance of these sites, assembling inventories of the properties at risk, and organizing public discussion of their importance.

Founded in 1902, the AAA is the world’s largest professional organization of anthropologists, representing all specialties within anthropology, including archeology and cultural resource protection. Among our over 11,000 members, many have research specialties in the preservation of cultural heritage and Iraqi culture.

We are certain that with your direct intervention, further damage to the rich archeological and cultural history of Iraq can be prevented, and we at the AAA stand ready to assist in this effort. If you have any questions or comments about this request, please contact Damon Dozier, AAA Director of Public Affairs at (703) 528-1902 ext. 1163 or email: ddozier@aaanet.org.

Sincerely,

Monica Heller, President
American Anthropological Association

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