



**2025 - 2026**

**Model Arab League**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

**Special Council on Arab Culture and Heritage**

[ncusar.org/modelarableague](https://ncusar.org/modelarableague)



**Original draft by Campbell Tacey, Chair of the Special Council on Arab Culture and Heritage at the 2026 National University Model Arab League, with contributions from the dedicated staff and volunteers at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations**

Honorable Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 Model Arab League season! My name is Campbell Tacey and I'm very excited to serve as your chair for this year's Special Council on Arab Culture and Heritage. This will be my sixth Model Arab League conference and my second year at NUMAL, and I am extremely excited to return to this conference for another year of productive and stimulating debate. I recently graduated with my B.A. in History from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, and I am currently pursuing an M.A. in History, concentrating on Modern European History.

As we move further into the 21st century, we have watched how culture has rapidly changed, becoming both more accessible and more under threat due to conflict, globalization, and climate change. Yet, there remains a wide opportunity to develop cohesive, collaborative solutions to help preserve the long-standing heritage and culture of the countries in the Arab League. As you prepare for the conference, please utilize the background guide as a foundation for further research on more specific, country-focused information to help guide your position during debate. Recommended sources are linked at the end of each topic's guide, as well as questions to help guide your country's position. Additionally, you are encouraged to explore the sources linked in the footnote citations to bolster your research. If you are having difficulties at any point during your research, you are encouraged to reach out to me with the email listed below, and I would be happy to answer any questions or clarify any confusion that may arise.

It is my hope that all four of these topics will produce exciting and passionate debate. But, as always, it is essential to maintain a high level of respect for your fellow delegates during the conference. All delegates are expected to work to maintain a supportive space where we can all learn, make mistakes, and have fun, while also maintaining a respectful seriousness as we discuss real-world issues. Whether this is your first Model Arab League conference or your fifth, I encourage you to speak often, contribute to writing resolutions often, and then stand up and speak even more. I wish you the best of luck in your preparations and debate, and if there are any questions or concerns, please reach out.

Best wishes,  
Campbell Tacey  
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## **Topic I: Protecting historic cultural sites from the impacts of climate change and ensuring their longevity**

### **I. Introduction**

#### **A. General Background**

Climate change is moving at an accelerating pace, and the extreme weather events that accompany the warming climate are placing major pressure on the world's infrastructure and resources, including important cultural sites. Wildfires, droughts, erosion, and flooding all put historic buildings, cities, and archaeological sites at great risk. This is an issue that no region is immune to: in Italy, the city of Venice and its Renaissance buildings are at risk of increasing flooding, in India, air pollution and floodwater damage the surface of the Taj Mahal, and in Peru, the Chan Chan Archaeological Zone is threatened by intense precipitation damaging the earthen architecture.<sup>1</sup> Each of these sites receives hundreds of thousands, or millions, of visitors each year, which plays a key role in the local economies. As historic cultural sites face physical damage, the economic livelihood of the surrounding communities is similarly threatened.

While there is a global push to protect cultural sites worldwide, climate change has made historic preservation an even more complicated task. Given the large regions impacted by extreme weather events, communities face difficult decisions about which historic sites they should prioritize preserving with the available resources. For example, in Venice, as the Italian government has installed barriers to prevent rising sea levels, they have chosen to prioritize protecting famous sites such as Saint Mark's Basilica, but have yet to begin preservation projects for nearby historic buildings in Saint Mark's Square, many of which house businesses that the local community relies upon.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, climate change poses a major threat to private property and infrastructure that communities who live near historic sites rely on, often leading to displacement. As climate change forces migration, the communities that have been historically responsible for maintaining and using these cultural sites will be unable to do so, further complicating the task of historic preservation.<sup>3</sup>

#### **B. History in the Arab World**

While climate change poses a threat to every region, the Middle East and North Africa have been among the areas of the world hardest hit by the impacts of climate change. Temperatures in the Middle East and North Africa are warming nearly twice as fast as the global average, as temperatures have increased nearly 2 degrees Celsius more than

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<sup>1</sup> "From Yellowstone to the Garden of Eden, Climate Change Puts Majority of World Heritage Sites At Risk." *CBS News*, CBS Interactive, 1 July 2025,

[www.cbsnews.com/news/climate-change-impact-flooding-drought-majority-world-heritage-sites/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/climate-change-impact-flooding-drought-majority-world-heritage-sites/).

<sup>2</sup> Buckley, Julia. "The flood barriers that might save Venice." *CNN*, 18 Feb. 2022,

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/mose-venice-flood-barriers>.

<sup>3</sup> Schaer, Cathrin. "Middle East's ancient monuments the most endangered on Earth." *DW*, 22 Sept. 2022,

<https://www.dw.com/en/middle-east-ancient-monuments-the-most-endangered-on-earth/a-63208653>.

pre-industrial temperatures.<sup>4</sup> Natural disasters have also hit the region hard, as Northern Syria experiences its worst drought in decades, Morocco is in the midst of a seven-year drought, and the Kabylia region of Algeria faces huge numbers of wildfires.<sup>5</sup> In 2020, there were approximately 2 million people in the MENA region displaced due to extreme weather events, and these numbers are only expected to increase.<sup>6</sup>

Climate change threats have severely complicated the preservation of historic sites in the MENA region, many of which are famous throughout the world. Petra, considered one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, faces the threat of increasing landslides and flash floods. These events not only threaten the tombs and buildings at the site, but also the well-being of a local community that relies economically on tourism.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the historic region of Mesopotamia is home to some of the oldest sites in the world, including the ancient cities of Babylon and Samarra, yet it is also particularly vulnerable to climate change risks. In Mesopotamia, where soil and groundwater are naturally rich in salt, water shortages are leading to rising salt levels, threatening the preservation of the region's cultural sites.<sup>8</sup> These historic sites are not only economically essential, but also play a major role in diplomacy, helping build a positive national image, fostering understanding between international actors, and challenging stereotypes. Similarly, they help build a sense of national identity and pride for local communities whose history is represented by these sites and who continue to preserve and take care of the sites.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond economic and diplomatic impacts, Cambridge University Professor Augusta McMahon explains that damage to historic sites “will leave gaps in our knowledge of human evolution, of the development of early cities, of the management of empires, and of the dynamic changes in the political landscape of the Islamic era.”<sup>10</sup> Particularly, the loss of archaeological sites threaten ongoing discoveries about the rich history of the MENA region. Rising sea levels, floods, and erosion threaten many of the coastal archaeological sites that seek to elucidate the history of the Arab world. Coastal

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<sup>4</sup> Reinsel, Madeline. “Staggering temperature rise predicted for the Middle East and North Africa.” *American Geophysical Union*, 21 Nov. 2024, <https://news.agu.org/press-release/middle-east-north-africa-warming/>

<sup>5</sup> Schaer, Cathrin. “Middle East's ancient monuments the most endangered on Earth.” *DW*, 22 Sept. 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/middle-east-ancient-monuments-the-most-endangered-on-earth/a-63208653>; Del Piccolo, Leonardo. “To the Boiling Point? The MENA Region in the Eye of Climate Change.” *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*, 24 July 2025, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/to-the-boiling-point-the-mena-region-in-the-eye-of-climate-change-214790>.

<sup>6</sup> “Migration and climate change in the Arab region.” *ESCWA*, 2024, [https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/migration\\_and\\_climate\\_change\\_in\\_the\\_arab\\_region-policy\\_brief-eng\\_0.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/migration_and_climate_change_in_the_arab_region-policy_brief-eng_0.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> “Climate Risk Assessment of the Ancient Nabatean City of Petra Published.” *National Geographic*, 2024, <https://news.nationalgeographic.org/climate-risk-assessment-of-the-ancient-nabatean-city-of-petra-published/>.

<sup>8</sup> Lynch, Hannah. “Iraq's ancient buildings are being destroyed by climate change.” *The Guardian*, 15 Apr. 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/15/iraq-ancient-buildings-destroyed-by-climate-change-salt-sandstorm>.

<sup>9</sup> Chkuaseli, Simon. “Cultural Diplomacy and Heritage Preservation: Building Bridges for Global Peace.” *Eustochos*, 23 Aug. 2024, <https://eustochos.com/cultural-diplomacy-and-heritage-preservation-building-bridges-for-global-peace/>.

<sup>10</sup> Lynch, Hannah. “Iraq's ancient buildings are being destroyed by climate change.” *The Guardian*, 15 Apr. 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/15/iraq-ancient-buildings-destroyed-by-climate-change-salt-sandstorm>.

archaeological sites are especially important to the MENA region, as many historic cities emerged on the coast, given the natural hot and dry climate of the area. Yet, these coastal sites are also at an increased risk of disaster. In the face of climate change threats, archaeologists at sites worldwide have produced comprehensive digital inventories and models of these archaeological sites. In the MENA region, however, there is a lack of technology and trained professionals with the skills to produce these inventories and models on a large scale.<sup>11</sup>

Some limited efforts have already been made to protect some major historic sites from the impacts of climate change. In Egypt, international partnerships have demonstrated their value, as a partnership with the University of Chicago helped restore the ancient temple Medinet Habu, and collaboration between the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund and Egypt's Ministry of Tourism helped reopen two Islamic monuments, Yahya al-Shabih and Safiyy al-Din, while also developing workshops focused on the best methods to protect historic sites.<sup>12</sup> There has also been an upsurge in research regarding the impacts of climate change on historic sites in the MENA region, as scientists work to develop long-term strategies to ensure preservation.<sup>13</sup> Collaboration has also proved vital for research efforts, as the World Monument Fund and Jordanian Ministry of Tourism worked together to develop long-term initiatives for the preservation of Petra. The implementation of these initiatives, such as the reconstruction of water channels to help prevent flooding, has helped Petra take initial steps toward conservation efforts.

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

While climate change is a rapidly developing issue, some initial action has already been taken to preserve these sites, to varying degrees of success. Some governments have set up organizations tasked with managing these sites, for example, Iraq's State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and Egypt's Ministry of Antiquities and Tourism. However, these organizations are often under-resourced, which is especially challenging as the increasingly dire and urgent threat of climate change makes preservation an increasingly expensive task.<sup>14</sup> International cooperation can potentially help alleviate the financial burdens of historic preservation, as well as raise awareness across the League of the close link between the preservation of historic sites and boosting tourism.

In any solution the Arab League proposes, it is important to consider how to balance the development of a short-term solution, one focused on helping historic sites recover from climate change disasters, and of a long-term solution that focuses on preventing disaster losses before they occur. While climate change is an immediate issue, it is one predicted

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<sup>11</sup> Westley, K. et al. "Climate change and coastal archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa: assessing past impacts and future threats." *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2021, pp. 251–283, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15564894.2021.1955778>.

<sup>12</sup> Lee, Tori. "Oriental Institute restores ancient Egyptian monuments threatened by climate change." *UChicago News*, 15 Feb. 2023, <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/oriental-institute-restores-ancient-egyptian-monuments-threatened-climate-change>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/africa-heritage-sites-climate-risk-spc-intl>

<sup>14</sup> Schaer, Cathrin. "Middle East's ancient monuments the most endangered on Earth." *DW*, 22 Sept. 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/middle-east-ancient-monuments-the-most-endangered-on-earth/a-63208653>.

to get worse with time, and as such, investing in the development of skilled workers and long-term infrastructure projects may make a difference. Yet, it is also important to consider what can be done to help preserve historic sites that are not expected to withstand the impacts of climate change much longer. While there is still time to potentially reverse many of the effects of climate change on these sites, it is unlikely that every site in the MENA region will remain fully preserved or recover fully from the impacts of climate change. As such, it is important for delegates to consider how these sites can be documented and their historic memory preserved, despite physical damage.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, any solution should consider how best to allocate and distribute available resources amongst historic sites, whether to prioritize ones at a more immediate risk, ones with more cultural value, sites with more economic value, or other categories of sites to prioritize.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What barriers has your country faced in previous efforts toward historic preservation?
- Has your country been involved in international efforts in preventing and protecting against the risks of climate change in the past?
- What cultural sites in your country are particularly at risk, and what extreme weather events put them at risk?
- How has your country responded to climate change and has it been prioritized?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What efforts can the Arab League make towards restoring historic sites already facing climate change damage?
- How should the Arab League determine which sites to prioritize the preservation of while fairly allocating resources?
- What role should local communities play in the preservation of historic sites?
- What long-term solution can the Arab League develop to protect against the risks of climate change?

## **IV. Additional Resources**

### **[State of Conservation - UNESCO](#)**

*UNESCO's State of Conservation Information System provides data on the status of World Heritage properties and any conservation threats they may face. The database allows you to filter by region/country (the above link is filtered to Arab States but can be expanded) or view all threats worldwide. It also allows the user to filter by threat, including flooding, erosion, and other climate-related threats, or by the type of site, including cities, earthen architecture, and religious sites.*

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<sup>15</sup> Graham, Nyah. "Effects of Climate Change on Historical Sites: A conversation with Peter Stone, Ph.D.." *Virginia Commonwealth University*, 22 Apr. 2022, <https://history.vcu.edu/the-archives/news/effects-of-climate-change-on-historical-sites-a-conversation-with-peter-stone-phd.html>.



### [Arab States | ICCROM](#)

*Italy's International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) has numerous articles about preservation projects in the MENA region. This is helpful for showing which efforts have been undertaken already, how effective those projects have been, and where progress still needs to be made, on both a region-wide and a country-specific level.*

### [World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate](#)

*UNESCO's "World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate" report provides a series of case studies on historic cultural sites around the world facing the impacts of climate change. Additionally, the report gives an overview of the issue and provides UNESCO's recommendations on potential solutions to bolster preservation efforts.*

### [The Looming Climate and Water Crisis in the Middle East and North Africa](#)

*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*

*This article from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace describes in detail the impacts of climate change in the Middle East and North Africa. This source may help to understand the most common extreme weather risks in the region and how climate change threats are expected to develop and impact the MENA region in the coming decades.*

## Topic II: Exploring the role of digital technologies in the promotion and preservation of arts and culture

### I. Introduction

#### A. General Background

As the world moves further into the digital era, artists, entertainers, and museums have increasingly adapted their content to the digital landscape. Contrary to popular belief, studies have demonstrated that digital access boosts physical engagement with cultural resources, like museum exhibits and live performances, rather than reducing it. As such, utilizing digital technologies in promoting and preserving art allows it to reach new populations and allows viewers to interact with art in new and unique ways. For artists, digital technologies have provided new opportunities for collaboration, helped spark new ideas, and allowed them to reach a wider audience.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, technology has changed the way art is created, with digital painting, digital photography, and animation emerging as popular new mediums of artistic expression. These technologies can make different forms of art more accessible for inspiring artists who may not have access to traditional materials, as well as allowing established artists to utilize new mediums to create and share art to reach global audiences without the barriers of geography and language.<sup>17</sup>

For museums, digital technologies have been especially transformative, both for enhancing the in-person visitor experience and for reaching new audiences online. Today, museums commonly utilize digital technologies to provide context for exhibits in a comprehensive way, allowing visitors to access relevant texts, pictures, and videos in an interactive manner.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, digital technologies can prove essential in preserving a museum's catalog. In 2018, a fire at the Brazil National Museum destroyed nearly all of the museum's collection. Work had begun on the digitization of some of the museum's collection, preserving documentation of Brazil's Indigenous languages, yet this project was far from complete, leaving many of the museum's 20 million artifacts lost forever. The example of the Brazil National Museum highlights the need for museums to work towards digital preservation, but also demonstrates how much support is needed in this endeavor. Digitally cataloging an entire museum catalog from scratch is a vast undertaking, both expensive and time-consuming. For the Brazil National Museum, without proper support from a government that continued slashing the museum's budget, and a lack of urgency to work toward digitization, the museum lost much of its collection.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "Cutting Edge | Protecting and preserving cultural diversity in the digital era." *UNESCO*, 20 Apr. 2023, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/cutting-edge-protecting-and-preserving-cultural-diversity-digital-era>.

<sup>17</sup> Adeyemi, Abigail. "How Digital Art is Making Art More Accessible to Global Audiences." *MoMAA*, 16 Jun. 2025, <https://momaa.org/how-digital-art-is-making-art-more-accessible-to-global-audiences/>.

<sup>18</sup> Lyu, Dan. "Digital Transformation of Museums: A New Approach to Cultural Heritage Conservation and Inheritance." *Transactions on Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, vol. 11, Aug. 2024, pp. 884-90, <https://wepub.org/index.php/TSSSEHR/article/view/3033/3318>.

<sup>19</sup> Dreyfuss, Emily. "Brazil's Museum Fire Proves Cultural Memory Needs a Digital Backup." *WIRED*, 7 Sept. 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/brazil-museum-fire-digital-archives/>.



## B. History in the Arab World

Unfortunately, the MENA region lags in producing an accessible, cohesive digital art landscape. There are a few art collections from the region digitized online. Some collectors are concerned about potential taxation or resistant to a public display of wealth. Others are simply unaware of the importance of digitizing a collection.<sup>20</sup> Some museums have begun to take steps towards digitization, including the Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Qatar. Mathaf has partnered with the Google Cultural Institute to digitize much of its collection on Google's platform, bringing it to a global audience.<sup>21</sup> This partnership with Google has demonstrated the role of international partnerships, which can help contribute resources towards digitization and easily introduce a museum's collection to a large online audience. Yet, some argue that regional solutions are best to combat Western dominance of the online art world, where international partnerships allow Western countries to maintain control and influence over Arab art and artists. For example, the Arab Image Foundation is a regional solution that seeks to digitize and preserve photographs from the Arab world. The Arab Image Foundation has been successful in reaching countries such as Yemen, which are often neglected by or difficult to reach for Western organizations.<sup>22</sup>

Digital art has already made an important impact on the MENA region. During the Arab Spring, digital artists responded to the revolutions by creating and sharing digital art online with others in the region and with audiences globally. Digital art also has helped address social issues, with art campaigns changing perspectives about refugees and strengthening national identities.<sup>23</sup> In addition to making it easier for artists to explore new ideas, it has also increased the accessibility of art, as traditionally, artists struggle with poor quality domestic materials and the high costs to import supplies from other countries.<sup>24</sup> Some government efforts have already been made to support digital artists. For example, Saudi Arabia has opened the Diriyah Art Futures, an arts and educational

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<sup>20</sup> Munford, Monty. "Technology And Online Access Finally Open The Doors For Arabic Culture." *Forbes*, 28 Apr. 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/montymunford/2016/04/28/technology-and-online-access-finally-open-the-doors-for-arabic-culture/>.

<sup>21</sup> Munford, Monty. "Technology And Online Access Finally Open The Doors For Arabic Culture." *Forbes*, 28 Apr. 2016, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/montymunford/2016/04/28/technology-and-online-access-finally-open-the-doors-for-arabic-culture/>.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Ani, Ayad and Carsten Siebert. "A Digital Transformation of Arab Museums: Challenges and Unconventional Strategies." *Digital Arabia Network*, 31 May 2021, [https://digitalarabia.network/media/pages/articles/grab-a-coffee-read/8719c7aa2f-1622536288/museums\\_in\\_the\\_digital\\_age\\_20210531\\_dp.pdf](https://digitalarabia.network/media/pages/articles/grab-a-coffee-read/8719c7aa2f-1622536288/museums_in_the_digital_age_20210531_dp.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> "How Digital Art Expresses Pressing Social Issues in the Middle East." *Future for Advanced Research and Studies*, 27 Feb. 2017, <https://www.futureuae.com/mar/Mainpage/Item/2535/how-digital-art-expresses-pressing-social-issues-in-the-middle-east>.

<sup>24</sup> Sherman, Brooke. "Art in the Middle East: Exposing Realities and Bridging Communities." *The Wilson Center*, 14 Dec. 2022, <https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/article/art-middle-east-exposing-realities-and-bridging-communities>.

center exclusively focusing on digital art.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, challenges remain for those looking to create digital art and find a responsive audience. Many artists in the MENA region note a lack of appreciation for unconventional art among the regional audience, making it difficult for artists to experiment with new techniques and ideas. For example, artist Zaina El Said works with digital collage art, and notes that in her early career, audiences either did not understand the art form or said it should not be classified as art. Additionally, with the increased availability of art online, artists often reproduce trends from the West already demonstrated to be popular, making it harder for artists to develop a distinct identity.<sup>26</sup>

Another challenge in spreading arts and culture online is the limited utilization of the Arabic language online. While Arabic is the fourth most used language among internet users, it is only used by 1.1% of websites.<sup>27</sup> The lack of Arabic language content can further reduce the accessibility of arts and culture to those who are solely fluent in Arabic. There is also a lack of Arabic cultural content, such as ebooks, documentaries, and articles. While online tools can help democratize cultural content, the Arab world lags in providing easy access to this content. Some experts argue that a lack of a cohesive technical vision among Arab states, a decreasing emphasis on the Arabic language in schools, and poor data collection and analysis necessary for technological advancement all contribute to the lack of Arabic language content online. However, advancements have begun to progress, such as the development of an e-reader, Jalees, supporting Arabic text, and Ethraa, a tool designed to translate content into Arabic.<sup>28</sup>

### C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

Digital technologies can play a major role in spreading information about Arabic art, combating stereotypes, and building a global audience for Arabic art. However, problems remain about how best to bring art online. For museums, a lack of funding, preexisting digital infrastructure, and relevant digital skills can make digitization challenging, especially for museums with large collections.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, there remains hesitation from museum management to make materials publicly available, for fears of misuse of materials or losing control over the narrative associated with items.<sup>30</sup> Raising awareness

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<sup>25</sup> “Diriyah Art Futures, MENA Region’s First Hub for New Media Arts, Opens to the Public.” *ARTnews*, 20 Dec. 2024,

<https://www.artnews.com/art-news/sponsored-content/diriyah-art-futures-2-mena-regions-first-hub-new-media-arts-opens-public-1234726674/>

<sup>26</sup> Sherman, Brooke. “Art in the Middle East: Exposing Realities and Bridging Communities” *The Wilson Center*, 14 Dec. 2022, <https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/article/art-middle-east-exposing-realities-and-bridging-communities>.

<sup>27</sup> Pham, Naomi. “Arabic in the Digital Age: As Technologies Merge and the Digital Revolution Progresses, Arabic Digital Presence Lags Behind.” *Al Jadid*, 2021, <https://aljadid.com/node/2292>.

<sup>28</sup> Pham, Naomi. “Arabic in the Digital Age: As Technologies Merge and the Digital Revolution Progresses, Arabic Digital Presence Lags Behind.” *Al Jadid*, 2021, <https://aljadid.com/node/2292>.

<sup>29</sup> “Cutting Edge | Protecting and preserving cultural diversity in the digital era.” *UNESCO*, 20 Apr. 2023, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/cutting-edge-protecting-and-preserving-cultural-diversity-digital-era>.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Ani, Ayad and Carsten Siebert. “A Digital Transformation of Arab Museums: Challenges and Unconventional Strategies.” *Digital Arabia Network*, 31 May, 2021, [https://digitalarabia.network/media/pages/articles/grab-a-coffee-read/8719c7aa2f-1622536288/museums\\_in\\_the\\_digital\\_age\\_20210531\\_dp.pdf](https://digitalarabia.network/media/pages/articles/grab-a-coffee-read/8719c7aa2f-1622536288/museums_in_the_digital_age_20210531_dp.pdf)

of the importance of the digitization of Arab culture and art is essential to motivate individuals, groups, and museums to bring their art online. Collaborative solutions may help to alleviate issues of resources or digitization; however, it is important to determine what actors these solutions should involve. Calls for international support and collaboration may help digitize arts and culture by utilizing preexisting digital infrastructure and resources. However, a solely regional solution may help combat fears of misuse of materials by Western actors while also allowing for collaboration and resource sharing.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, it is important to consider how partnerships with artists can help support and fund cultural projects.<sup>32</sup>

Within the MENA region, work needs to be done to combat stereotypes about digital art as well. Promoting new types of art can help challenge traditional expectations about art, help digital art find new audiences, and build engagement with digital art. For artists, creating networks to share art and collaborate can help inspire creativity and innovation among regional artists. Additionally, improving digital arts education can help artists develop new skills and techniques. Arts education and promotion should not simply be limited to forms of digital art, either, but also consider how to move traditional forms of art and culture, such as literature and poetry, to an online world. By supporting digital artists and promoting art online, Arab culture can continue to develop, artists can experiment in new ways, and art can reach wide new audiences online.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- Is your country a part of any regional or international partnerships concerning digital art?
- What resources are available to emerging artists in your country?
- What major museums are located in your country, and what steps have they taken to digitize their collections and programming?
- Does your country face any unique barriers concerning digital infrastructure or accessibility?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- How can the Arab League collaborate to digitize the arts and culture of the region?
- What role should international partnerships play in digitizing Arab arts and culture, or should they play no role at all?
- How can the Arab League foster collaboration between artists across the region?
- What steps can the Arab League take to improve the accessibility of Arab language content online?

## **IV. Additional Resources**

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<sup>31</sup>Al-Ani, Ayad and Carsten Siebert. "A Digital Transformation of Arab Museums: Challenges and Unconventional Strategies." *Digital Arabia Network*, 31 May 2021, [https://digitalarabia.network/media/pages/articles/grab-a-coffee-read/8719c7aa2f-1622536288/museums\\_in\\_the\\_digital\\_age\\_20210531\\_dp.pdf](https://digitalarabia.network/media/pages/articles/grab-a-coffee-read/8719c7aa2f-1622536288/museums_in_the_digital_age_20210531_dp.pdf)

<sup>32</sup>Sherman, Brooke. "Art in the Middle East: Exposing Realities and Bridging Communities" *The Wilson Center*, 14 Dec. 2022, <https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/article/art-middle-east-exposing-realities-and-bridging-communities>.

## **Opportunity to digitize Arab cultural treasures should not be missed**

*In this article, Arab News offers region-specific examples of where digital technologies could be used and what the benefits may be. It provides examples of efforts already ongoing in the Arab League, as well as describing the areas in which government support can help digitization efforts.*

## **A Digital Transformation of Arab Museums**

*This report from Digital Arabia Network describes digitization efforts specifically in museums. It highlights the challenges that face Arab museums, as well as potential avenues for digitization and what benefits and drawbacks each of those options holds.*

## **The Humanities in the Arab Digital Age**

*This article provides a perspective on the digitization of Arab culture that centers on the humanities, such as the promotion of the Arabic language and literature. It highlights how social media has altered how Arab authors write and publish, as well as how online sources have affected the accessibility of written works.*

## **Cutting Edge | Protecting and preserving cultural diversity in the digital era**

*Here, UNESCO offers a global perspective on how digital technologies can be used to promote and preserve culture. It describes the challenges that have arisen from new technologies, such as AI. Additionally, it describes innovative efforts taking place worldwide to preserve culture.*

### Topic III: Celebrating intangible cultural heritage practices throughout and beyond the MENA region

#### I. Introduction

##### A. General Background

UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.”<sup>33</sup> Oral traditions, festive events, and performing arts are all classified as intangible cultural heritage, among other practices. Well-known examples worldwide include Argentine and Uruguayan Tango dancing, Neapolitan pizza making, and Jamaican Reggae music.<sup>34</sup> Intangible cultural heritage practices are essential to preserving and promoting a sense of community, identity, and history. Additionally, they can provide economic benefits by attracting tourism and creating jobs.<sup>35</sup>

A well-known example of intangible cultural heritage globally is the practice of making baguette bread in France. As with many intangible cultural heritage practices, making baguettes utilizes specific skills and techniques that are passed down between generations. Additionally, it has a distinct cultural impact in France, encouraging social rituals such as daily bakery visits and festivities promoting the baking of baguettes, as well as helping to foster a unique community of bakers. By marking baguette-making as a specific intangible cultural heritage practice, it has helped make it distinct from the increasing standardization of cooking practices. While the making of baguette bread is just one intangible cultural heritage practice out of hundreds recognized by UNESCO, it serves to highlight how intangible cultural heritage practices help bring together communities, utilize unique skillsets, and unite different generations.

While intangible cultural heritage practices play a central role in cultural life, many practices are also significantly under threat. For some, the challenges are material, such as the loss of traditional materials, economic pressures, and new products that threaten the existence of the traditional craft. Other threats may center more firmly on the changing role of culture in the 21st century, such as negative attitudes or disinterest towards traditional knowledge amongst youth, the widespread introduction of mass media and social media, and the over-commercialization of cultural performance.<sup>36</sup> Many intangible cultural heritage practices are passed down by practitioners sharing the unique knowledge with younger generations; however, without the necessary engagement and resources, cultures are at risk of losing this unique cultural knowledge completely.

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<sup>33</sup> “Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.” *UNESCO*, 2003, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention#art2>.

<sup>34</sup> “Browse the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of good safeguarding practices.” *UNESCO*, 2024, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Mulla, Sara. “We must protect Arab world’s intangible cultural heritage.” *Arab News*, 19 Dec. 2022, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2218316>.

<sup>36</sup> “UNESCO’s interactive visual: Living heritage and threats.” *UNESCO*, 2022, <https://ich.unesco.org/dive/threat/>.

## B. History in the Arab World

The Arab world is rich with intangible cultural heritage, but it nonetheless faces threats to the longevity of these practices. In Upper Egypt, handmade weaving, known as Sa'eed, has been practiced for centuries. Now, weaving is no longer economically lucrative. The materials are expensive, individual practitioners must have significant space in their home to accommodate the large loom, and factories that used to weave with the traditional expensive silk yarn now use cotton, which is cheaper and more widely available.<sup>37</sup> Al Sadu, traditional weaving practiced by Bedouin communities in the UAE, has faced a similar decline resulting from a changing economy. As the UAE's economy has increasingly centered around oil, Bedouin communities have moved towards urban areas, and the women who traditionally practiced Al Sadu have found more lucrative work outside of the home.<sup>38</sup> In both of these examples of traditional craftsmanship, younger generations are less inclined to learn these skills due to economic factors, threatening the survival of these traditional skills.

It is not always economic issues, however, that discourage young people in the Arab world from learning traditional skills. In Algeria, foggaras are the traditional systems of water channels used in the desert, dating back to the 11th century. The trade of water measuring is essential to maintaining this system, as the measurer monitors water levels and helps in the construction of the distribution pond.<sup>39</sup> The knowledge necessary to perform these tasks, however, is under threat. There is a lack of communication between young people and the older generations already skilled in the craft, and as fewer young people enter the career, the issue of preserving necessary knowledge has been neglected.<sup>40</sup> While in some instances, young people may be discouraged from partaking in intangible cultural heritage practices due to a lack of knowledge and resources, as with the water measurers, in other examples, younger generations are simply disinterested. In the western High Atlas mountains of Morocco, Taskiwin is a traditional martial dance. In past generations, Taskiwin has served as a key source of socialization for younger generations and was a large group celebration where young people could learn directly by participation.<sup>41</sup> Today, the dance is not practiced as widely, making it difficult for young

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<sup>37</sup> "Handmade weaving in Upper Egypt (Sa'eed)." *UNESCO*, 2020, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/handmade-weaving-in-upper-egypt-sa-eed-01605>.

<sup>38</sup> "Al Sadu, traditional weaving skills in the United Arab Emirates." *UNESCO*, 2011, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/al-sadu-traditional-weaving-skills-in-the-united-arab-emirates-00517>.

<sup>39</sup> Nemer, Zoubida. "The Foggara of Adrar." *IGRAC*, 5 Jun. 2024, <https://un-igrac.org/latest/stories/the-foggara-of-adrar/>.

<sup>40</sup> "Knowledge and skills of the water measurers of the foggaras or water bailiffs of Touat and Tidikelt." *UNESCO*, 2018, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/knowledge-and-skills-of-the-water-measurers-of-the-foggaras-or-water-bailiffs-of-touat-and-tidikelt-01274>.

<sup>41</sup> "Taskiwin, martial dance of the western High Atlas." *UNESCO*, 2017, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/taskiwin-martial-dance-of-the-western-high-atlas-01256>; Lahsini, Chaima. "Taskiwine, an Amazigh Martial Dance, Named UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage." *Morocco World News*, 6 Dec. 2017, <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/12/93880/taskiwine-amazigh-martial-dance-named-unesco-intangible-cultural-heritage/>.



people to learn actively and participate in dances. Additionally, older generations have struggled to find young people to teach the dance to, as many neglect traditional artistic practices in favor of involvement in modern ones.<sup>42</sup>

While there are many intangible cultural heritage practices at risk, it is equally important to recognize ones that are not recognized as threatened. For example, cultural culinary practices, such as Harissa in Tunisia, couscous in the Maghreb, and Al-Man'ouché in Lebanon, are essential to supporting the economy, maintaining ecosystems, and even bolstering diplomatic efforts, as countries utilize food to showcase their rich cultural heritage.<sup>43</sup> These practices demonstrate how intangible cultural heritage practices that are not threatened can help attract tourists, draw attention to the rich cultural life of the Arab world, and develop economies. Culinary practices are not the only examples of intangible cultural heritage practices to achieve this, either, as live performances and markets filled with traditional craftsmanship frequently attract tourists and create opportunities for economic exchange.

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

Intangible cultural heritage practices are an essential part of the cultural life of the MENA region. However, these practices must be celebrated and prioritized by communities that wish to foster interest among younger generations and ultimately preserve these practices. Some successful efforts have already been made. Shadow puppetry is an example of an intangible cultural heritage practice in Syria, as artists use puppets to tell stories in cafes. Yet, this practice was growing less popular, and by 2018, there was only one shadow puppeteer left in Damascus. Now, with the support of the Syrian Ministry of Culture, workshops have been organized to teach the youth and excite them about the art style.<sup>44</sup>

Supporting intangible cultural heritage requires a multi-faceted approach, one that promotes cultural practices and inspires young people to create and participate in traditional activities, yet also ensures interested young people have the resources needed to partake in these cultural practices. Young people, firstly, must see intangible cultural heritage practices performed and exhibited, for example, in festivals, galleries, and marketplaces. New audiences do not have to be limited to young people, either, and solutions may explore how to spread awareness about practices across a wide variety of people.<sup>45</sup> As for resources, any potential solutions may consider addressing both the issue of training and educational programs, as well as ensuring the accessibility of material resources needed, such as textiles, instruments, or other tools. For young people, arts

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<sup>42</sup> "Taskiwin, martial dance of the western High Atlas." *UNESCO*, 2017, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/taskiwin-martial-dance-of-the-western-high-atlas-01256>.

<sup>43</sup> Rahman, Fadly. "Culinary Traditions as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage.'" *Independent Observer*, 11 Jan. 2025, <https://observerid.com/culinary-traditions-as-intangible-cultural-heritage/>.

<sup>44</sup> "Workshop on shadow play to revive the intangible heritage in Aleppo." *Syria Times*, 15 Jun. 2023, <http://syriatimes.sy/workshop-on-shadow-play-to-revive-the-intangible-heritage-in-aleppo/>.

<sup>45</sup> Hayajneh, Hani. "Against All Odds: Keeping Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Arab World Vibrant." *Handbook on Intangible Cultural Practices as Global Strategies for the Future*, edited by Christoph Wulf, Springer, 2025, pp. 349-401. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-72123-6\\_20#Abs1](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-72123-6_20#Abs1).

education can play an essential role in passing down essential skills.<sup>46</sup> However, it is important to consider how to further develop arts education programs, both for young people and others, while also centering intangible cultural heritage practices.

It is important to note that many of these practices are not confined by borders. For example, Arabic coffee, Henna, and Arabic calligraphy are popular throughout the Arab world.<sup>47</sup> As such, the Arab League needs to explore how to celebrate these cultural practices on a regional level. Promoting intangible cultural heritage practices across the region can also assist in finding new audiences for the practices, potentially helping to alleviate economic barriers and bolster tourism. Collaborating on a regional level is important, but it is similarly essential to consider how local communities can take a leading role in intangible cultural heritage, even when it is celebrated on a much larger level.<sup>48</sup>

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What intangible cultural heritage practices exist in your country, and how have they impacted your country's economy and culture?
- Has your government focused on promoting and celebrating intangible cultural heritage practices?
- Is your country particularly susceptible to a specific threat to intangible cultural heritage, such as urbanization, conflict, or rapid economic changes?
- What material resources are needed to support cultural heritage practices in your country?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- What measures should be taken to inspire new generations to participate in intangible cultural heritage practices?
- How can the Arab League work cohesively and on a regional level to promote intangible cultural heritage practices across the league?
- What can be done to enhance the availability of resources for intangible cultural heritage practices and alleviate economic concerns?
- How can the Arab League involve local communities in the celebration of these practices?

## **IV. Additional Resources**

**[Browse the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of good safeguarding practices](#)**

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<sup>46</sup> Al-Mulla, Sara. "We must protect Arab world's intangible cultural heritage." *Arab News*, 19 Dec. 2022, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2218316>.

<sup>47</sup> "Browse the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of good safeguarding practices." *UNESCO*, 2024, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>.

<sup>48</sup> Hayajneh, Hani. "Against All Odds: Keeping Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Arab World Vibrant." *Handbook on Intangible Cultural Practices as Global Strategies for the Future*, edited by Christoph Wulf, Springer, 2025, pp. 349-401. [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-72123-6\\_20#Abs1](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-72123-6_20#Abs1).

*This list from UNESCO includes the 788 practices that the organization officially recognizes as intangible cultural heritage practices. This website will allow you to filter by region or country to view practices across the Arab world or those that are country-specific. Each item links to information about the practices, including photos and videos of how the practice is performed.*

### **[We must protect Arab world's intangible cultural heritage](#)**

*This article from Arab News highlights important examples of intangible cultural heritage in the Arab world, as well as explaining how these practices impact communities and their values. Additionally, the article provides recommendations on potential ways to protect and promote intangible cultural heritage.*

### **[UNESCO | Living heritage and threats](#)**

*This source offers a visualization of intangible cultural heritage. The link leads to a visualization of all of the current threatened examples of intangible cultural heritage, but by navigating the side menu and clicking on the plus icon and then “more visualizations,” there are other visual representations of intangible cultural heritage practices. These will show how the practices connect to the environment, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the five domains of the UN Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage. (You may need to wait a few minutes for this site to load in your browser.)*

### **[Culture Department](#)**

*The culture department of ALESCO (Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization) provides several links and resources to examples of past actions of the Arab League in celebrating culture, heritage, and traditions. These can be helpful for understanding what has already been done, and for finding inspiration for new solutions amongst examples of previous celebrations of culture.*

## Topic IV: Investigating the role of museums in protecting cultural heritage and recovering cultural property from non-member states

### I. Introduction

#### A. General Background

Through centuries of conflict, colonization, and looting, significant amounts of cultural property have been illegally stolen from their countries of origin. In the 1950s, the first movements to return stolen cultural property emerged, and they have since gained significant support as people throughout the world increasingly call for repatriation. Repatriation is defined as the return of cultural materials to their country of origin, distinct from restitution, which is the return of materials to an individual or group.<sup>49</sup> While there have been increasing calls for repatriation, there remains a significant group opposed to the return of cultural property, arguing that countries of origin cannot properly preserve cultural material, that the items were obtained legally, or that once an item enters a museum, it should not leave.<sup>50</sup> This opposition poses a significant challenge to repatriation efforts, and alongside the logistical challenges of returning objects, such as identifying a rightful owner and properly transporting items, repatriation efforts have made limited progress so far.

Perhaps the most famous example of repatriation worldwide is the case of the Benin Bronzes, which have become central to global discussions about repatriation. The Benin Bronzes are a collection of five thousand sculptures looted by British soldiers in the Kingdom of Benin (located in modern-day Nigeria) in the 19th century. Now, the sculptures are scattered across museums in North America and Europe. The Nigerian government made its first formal call for repatriation in 2016, and since then, success in repatriation has been mixed. There have been some successes—France returned their bronzes in 2018 and more recently in 2025, all museums in the Netherlands and Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts returned theirs. However, some major museums remain reluctant to return their collections, including the British Museum, which has a staggering 928 bronzes.<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, the burden of repatriation is often on the shoulders of the country of origin, as the country currently holding the object is rarely motivated to work toward returning the objects.<sup>52</sup>

#### B. History in the Arab World

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<sup>49</sup> Owen, Chris. “A Beginners Guide to the Repatriation of Stolen or Looted Art and Cultural Material.” *Norton Rose Fulbright*, Jan. 2024, <https://www.nortonrosefulbright.com/en/knowledge/publications/dd56579f/a-beginners-guide-to-the-repatriation-of-stolen-or-looted-art-and-cultural-material>.

<sup>50</sup> Jilani, Sarah. “Why We Need to Change the Art-Repatriation Debate.” *ArtReview*, 17 Mar. 2023, <https://artreview.com/why-we-need-to-change-the-art-repatriation-debate/>.

<sup>51</sup> Cascone, Sarah. “Why the Benin Bronzes Are Being Returned—and Who Gets Them.” *Artnet*, 2 Jul. 2025, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/mfa-boston-benin-bronzes-restitution-2662790>.

<sup>52</sup> Irfan, Anmol. “Reclaiming Heritage: The Global Push for Repatriation of Looted Artifacts.” *Nonprofit Quarterly*, 21 Nov. 2024, <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/reclaiming-heritage-the-global-push-for-repatriation-of-looted-artifacts/>.

Due to a long history of looting and stolen objects in the MENA region, major museums across North America and Europe, such as the British Museum and the Louvre, are prided for their extensive collections of Arabic art and objects, where Arab museums are missing essential objects from their histories.<sup>53</sup> This loss has prevented the Arab world from studying its own history and culture itself, especially regarding objects that have been looted directly from archaeological sites before they could be studied by local archaeologists.<sup>54</sup> The return of cultural property to countries of origin in the MENA region could help spark new research and studies of Arab history. Additionally, the return of items would likely prove very economically beneficial for countries whose tourism industry is closely tied to their history.<sup>55</sup>

Recent museum openings across Arab League states have demonstrated the cultural and economic role of museums. 2025 has seen the opening of The Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza and the Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi, each providing visitors with a detailed and comprehensive history of Egyptian and Emirati history, respectively. Other recent openings, such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi in 2017, have already demonstrated the economic and cultural importance of museums, as millions of visitors from across the globe visit the museum yearly. Additionally, this success has demonstrated that there is an audience eager to see local artifacts and art, as well as resources in place to protect and properly exhibit those artifacts. Despite the rapidly increasing success and interest in these museums, they are still without many famous and important cultural artifacts that remain in Western institutions.<sup>56</sup>

Recently, Egyptian officials have made a push for the return of five objects located in museums in Europe and the US, and this effort has highlighted the challenges that countries face in the return of the objects.<sup>57</sup> Egyptian officials have called for the return of the Rosetta Stone, currently located in the British Museum. In addition, Zahi Hawass, former Egyptian antiquities minister, began a petition to bring the Rosetta Stone back to Egypt, which garnered thousands of signatures. However, the British Museum has ignored these calls entirely, stating that there has never been a formal request from Egypt for the return of the Rosetta Stone.<sup>58</sup> While some museums ignore calls for repatriation, others contest them, such as the Neues Museum in Berlin, which holds an Egyptian bust of Queen Nefertiti. The museum has acknowledged its holding of some stolen colonial art, but maintains that the bust of Queen Nefertiti was obtained legally through a deal that split the 10,000 artifacts found by a German archaeological team working in Egypt

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<sup>53</sup> Al-Mulla, Sara. "National museums vital for celebrating Arab cultural heritage." *Arab News*, 20 Apr. 2025, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2597811/%7B%7B>.

<sup>54</sup> Arraf, Jane. "Iraq Reclaims 17,000 Looted Artifacts, Its Biggest-Ever Repatriation." *The New York Times*, 3 Aug. 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/03/world/middleeast/iraq-looted-artifacts-return.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Osman, Nadda. "Five relics Egypt wants back from foreign museums." *Middle East Eye*, 2 Nov. 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/egypt-five-relics-want-back-foreign-museums>.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Mulla, Sara. "National museums vital for celebrating Arab cultural heritage." *Arab News*, 20 Apr. 2025, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2597811/%7B%7B>.

<sup>57</sup> Osman, Nadda. "Five relics Egypt wants back from foreign museums." *Middle East Eye*, 2 Nov. 2022, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/discover/egypt-five-relics-want-back-foreign-museums>.

<sup>58</sup> Aton, Francesca. "2,500 Archaeologists Demand the British Museum Return Rosetta Stone to Egypt." *ARTnews*, 7 Oct. 2022, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/archaeologists-demand-british-museum-return-rosetta-stone-1234642390/>.

between the two countries. Egypt contends that the bust was smuggled out of the country under the misrepresentation that the object was not a major discovery.<sup>59</sup> Egypt's difficulty in repatriation efforts is not unique, as countries throughout the MENA region face similar difficulties when calling for the return of stolen cultural property.

### **C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future**

The challenges faced in repatriation efforts highlight the importance for the Arab League to work collaboratively to retrieve important cultural property. Forming partnerships across the Arab League can help bring in financial support and further develop artistic research, which helps provide further context to the Arab League museums' collections and history. Research can also play an essential role in determining the origins of contested objects and the methods by which they were removed from the country of origin. Museum partnerships can also help support the sharing of resources and artefacts across the MENA region, especially those impacted more strongly by looted property. Any solution should also consider the role of cultural organizations and how partnerships with outside organizations can support repatriation efforts.<sup>60</sup>

It is also important to consider how the Arab League can support public awareness surrounding repatriation efforts. It is essential museum-goers can understand more fully where their artefacts come from and contextualize missing important cultural property. Fostering public support and excitement for museums in the Arab world can demonstrate the necessity of focusing efforts on repatriation.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, supporting research can help contextualize the looting of cultural property and challenge notions that objects were acquired legally. Recovering cultural property poses significant challenges; however, the Arab League has the opportunity to develop a cohesive effort to support museums and member states in repatriation efforts.

## **II. Questions to Consider in Your Research**

- What major museums are located in your country, and have they faced barriers in acquiring their collection?
- Are there any artifacts your country has requested be returned, and if so, what challenges have impeded their return?
- What partnerships do your country's museums currently have with external actors?
- Has your country been a part of any successful repatriation efforts, and if so, how was that accomplished?

## **III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer**

- How can museum partnerships support the protection of cultural property?
- What actions can the Arab League take to strengthen calls for repatriation?

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<sup>59</sup> Braun, Stuart. "Should Germany return Nefertiti bust to Egypt?" *DW*, 25 Oct. 2024, <https://www.dw.com/en/should-germany-return-nefertiti-bust-to-egypt/a-70601354>.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Mulla, Sara. "National museums vital for celebrating Arab cultural heritage." *Arab News*, 20 Apr. 2025, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2597811/%7B%7B>.

<sup>61</sup> Irfan, Anmol. "Reclaiming Heritage: The Global Push for Repatriation of Looted Artifacts." *Nonprofit Quarterly*, 21 Nov. 2024, <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/reclaiming-heritage-the-global-push-for-repatriation-of-looted-artifacts/>.



- How can the Arab League strengthen support for research concerning cultural property?
- How can the Arab League foster public awareness about the importance of protecting cultural property and issues of repatriation?

#### IV. Additional Resources

##### [A Beginner's Guide to the Repatriation of Stolen or Looted Art and Cultural Material | Global law firm | Norton Rose Fulbright](#)

*This source describes the basics of repatriation, including the challenges of repatriation, the law relevant to stolen cultural property, and potential next steps in supporting repatriation efforts.*

##### [National museums are vital for celebrating Arab cultural heritage](#)

*This article describes the importance of national museums in the MENA region. Additionally, it discusses the challenges that face countries and their national museums when significant amounts of cultural property are missing. The article also addresses potential solutions to support national museums and to support repatriation efforts.*

##### [1995 Convention - UNIDROIT](#)

*The 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects is an international treaty concerning stolen cultural property. The Convention states that stolen cultural property should be returned, and while the treaty is not retroactive, it is important in governing cultural property stolen since 1995.*

##### [Museums and looted art: the ethical dilemma of preserving world cultures](#)

*This article from The Guardian highlights the debates concerning the repatriation of artifacts. The Guardian discusses why some museums are resistant to giving up looted works and how they justify keeping artifacts. Additionally, the article examines the perspective of those in favor of repatriation, discussing how museums can uphold colonialist ideas by holding onto stolen goods.*