



THE INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TIMES OF ARMED CONFLICTS: THE ROLE OF SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS AND BODIES

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Abstract:

Cultural property occupies a distinguished place in human life, as life cannot be properly sustained without these properties, which express a person's civilization, history, and identity, and consequently the identity of states and their civilizations within the international community.

Humanity has continued to suffer from the scourge of wars and their consequences, which have not been limited to harming humans but have also extended to cultural property that represents the link between humanity's past, present, and future, with the aim of obliterating the opponent's civilization and erasing its history. This situation necessitated the establishment of international organizations and bodies in an effort to curb the repeated attacks on these properties, especially during periods of armed conflicts, and to attempt to establish international peace and security. The first of these organizations was the United Nations, which was established in 1945 and entrusted one of its bodies, UNESCO, with the task of enacting an international convention to protect cultural property from the ravages of armed conflicts.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Protection, International Organizations, Armed Conflicts, International Bodies.

INTRODUCTION

The efforts of the international community have converged to safeguard cultural heritage as a civilizational legacy that expresses the identity of peoples and the civilizations of their countries, especially

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with the increasing complexity and conflicts of political interests between states, which may trigger armed conflicts that lead to the outbreak of wars and pose a threat to humanity, the landmarks of these states, and their heritage.

Armed conflicts are both a factual reality and a legal issue. Although the United Nations has prohibited, since 1945, the use of armed force in relations between states—except in cases of self-defense or aggression—the definition of aggression as a crime under international criminal law was not adopted until 2010 (Al-Awadhi, 1994, pp. 46-47).

The issue of the legal protection of cultural heritage has received unprecedented attention in recent decades, as evidenced by the efforts exerted by international organizations and bodies to strengthen this protection, safeguard cultural heritage, and preserve it through a number of international conventions that ensure the protection of cultural heritage in its various forms during times of peace and war. This comes especially in light of the destruction and devastation that humanity has witnessed, affecting most of its cultural landmarks and heritage during past wars, along with the continuous calls to activate solutions aimed at protecting this heritage (Al-Awadhi, 1994, pp. 46-47).

After the end of the First World War, there were calls to punish German forces for the acts they committed, especially against the cultural property of the affected states, including looting, seizure, and destruction, through the peace treaties concluded in 1919 (Al-Ankabi, 2010).

In 1935, the Russian thinker “Roerich” called for the protection of cultural property from the ravages of armed conflicts, producing the first legal document to grant legal protection to cultural property. However, its implementation on the ground was not very effective, as evidenced by the destruction and devastation caused to these properties during the Second World War. This prompted the international community to deal with the situation with greater firmness and seriousness, given the crucial role and great importance that cultural heritage plays in expressing the identity, civilization, and landmarks of states and peoples. This was effectively reflected in the set of conventions and rules established by certain international



organizations and bodies responsible for playing this role, in order to reduce the repeated attacks on these properties, especially during armed conflicts. The first and most important of these was the United Nations, founded in 1945, one of whose main objectives is to achieve international peace and security. The organization entrusted one of its bodies—the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—with working to enact an international convention to protect cultural property from the ravages of armed conflicts (Al-Hadithi, 1999).

Research Problem:

The immense importance of the cultural heritage of nations necessitated the provision of special legal and international protection, particularly with the increasing number of wars and conflicts resulting from differing opinions and political interests among these states. This was achieved through the establishment of international organizations and bodies responsible for issuing charters and concluding agreements in this regard.

What are these international organizations entrusted with the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflicts? And what are the most important results they have achieved in this regard?

Study Importance:

The importance of the study lies mainly in the following points:

- Cultural heritage is an important subject for all peoples and nations, as it represents a reference for the civilization of peoples and a major landmark of the history and identity of states. Therefore, any seizure, looting, or destruction of these landmarks constitutes an assault on the identity of these states and their peoples.
- It is impossible to fully grasp the disastrous consequences and negative impacts of wars on all levels, including the erasure of monuments, landmarks, and cultural heritage of various kinds in the states affected by these wars. This necessitates the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts to preserve the identity and civilization of states even during war.
- It is essential to understand the efforts of the international community—represented by international organizations and bodies—aimed at countering any infringement upon the cultural

property of states during armed conflicts, in order to impose appropriate sanctions on violators and those who deliberately commit such transgressions.

- It is also necessary to know the rules adopted by international organizations seeking to protect cultural heritage and the key provisions and mechanisms that guarantee this protection.

Study Methodology:

In studying this topic, we relied on a set of methodologies. The most important of these is the historical method, used when addressing the periods in which international organizations were established to protect cultural heritage during armed conflicts and past wars. We also relied on the descriptive method to present the most important provisions and measures related to the protection of these properties as stated in the concluded international conventions. Finally, we occasionally used the analytical method to examine the most significant elements contained in these conventions and the work of these organizations concerning the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflicts.

To address the research problem, we divided our study into two main parts. In the first part, we will discuss the role of the United Nations in protecting cultural heritage, focusing primarily on UNESCO as the most important organization concerned with protecting cultural heritage, especially during armed conflicts. The second part will be devoted to the role of other international and regional committees and organizations in protecting cultural heritage.

1- THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE

International organizations have played an active role in the protection of cultural heritage. Their roles have multiplied and expanded at the global level, working on developing strategies for its preservation and rehabilitation. These strategies collectively constitute a theoretical framework from which states can draw appropriate ideas to establish their own systems and legislation for managing and protecting cultural heritage, in order to keep pace with international developments in this field. The first of these organizations is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, known as "UNESCO," which seeks to protect and preserve the



cultural heritage of states both during war and in peacetime (Amr, 2002).

1.1-The Establishment of UNESCO and Its Role in Protecting Cultural Heritage during Armed Conflicts

1.1.1 The Establishment of UNESCO

UNESCO was established in 1945, with its headquarters in Paris. It is considered one of the most important international bodies concerned with the protection of cultural heritage worldwide. It has developed strategies, policies, and targeted programs, and it has worked to identify and shape charters and treaties related to the safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage (Bouchnaqi, 2005).

UNESCO provided the intellectual and executive framework for the protection of the heritage of nations and peoples, calling for its study, dissemination, and use, while clarifying the human values reflected by cultural heritage. This framework has become a tradition that member states rely on for guidance. Regardless of the degree of benefit or the considerations involved, UNESCO's publications, guidelines, and charters have provided local administrations with methods for protecting heritage and with the objective foundations for its development, enhancement, and preservation (Bouchnaqi, 2005).

UNESCO's interest in cultural heritage dates back to the organization's very foundation. This is evidenced by its charter and the agreements it has developed in this field, some of which date back to the early years of its establishment after the First World War in the last century (Bouchnaqi, 2005).

The main objective behind the establishment of this organization was to achieve international peace and security through its affiliated bodies, especially the Security Council. The diplomatic conference for the adoption of the 1954 Hague Convention issued its first resolution, expressing its hope that the relevant United Nations bodies, when undertaking military action pursuant to the Charter, would ensure respect for and implementation of the Convention's provisions. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO, referred the text of this resolution to the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, and the Security Council. The content of this resolution was reflected in paragraph 44 of the United Nations Emergency Force Rules, which

referred to the conformity of international law principles, including the 1954 Hague Convention (Al-Ruhaifa, 2012).

1.1.2- The Role of UNESCO in Protecting Cultural Property during War

Practical reality has demonstrated the role played by the United Nations, both directly and indirectly, in protecting cultural property during armed conflicts. United Nations peacekeeping forces have provided assistance in various areas to UNESCO representatives to secure their access to sites of cultural property during periods of armed conflict. Furthermore, United Nations resolutions issued in the aftermath of several armed disputes emphasized the necessity for the parties to the conflict to preserve the cultural property located in areas where military operations are taking place and to make efforts to protect these properties (Al-Hadithi, 1999). Among these are:

- The report of the UN Secretary-General in June 1983 concerning the conflict between Iran and Iraq, in which he confirmed that both parties to the conflict had destroyed civilian objects and resources of utmost importance for the survival of the population (Hladik, 2000).
- The organization bears responsibility for the actions of its peacekeeping forces in areas of armed conflict. The role of these forces is to ensure the implementation of the will of the international community, using the means at their disposal, in the direction of protecting property in conflict zones. This is expressed in the UN Secretary-General's Circular No. 13/1999 dated May 6, 1999, where Article 3 of the aforementioned circular states: "The Organization, in the agreement it concludes with the state on whose territory the United Nations deploys its forces, undertakes to ensure that these forces, during their operations, fully respect the principles and rules stipulated in the general conventions applicable to military personnel" (Hladik, 2000).
- The organization also played an important role in protecting cultural property during the Second Gulf War between Iraq and Kuwait. Security Council Resolution No. 686 required Iraq to take immediate measures to return all Kuwaiti property it had seized. Accordingly, Iraq returned many cultural properties



under the supervision of the United Nations Cultural Property Return Unit (Nafziger, 1975).

UNESCO plays an important role in protecting cultural heritage during armed conflicts. The Director-General may receive special reports on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention in conflict areas, which are sent by the committees responsible for preserving cultural property in the states parties to the conflict. The Director-General of UNESCO may send personal representatives to conflict zones to assess any cases of destruction or looting of cultural property and to propose appropriate solutions to restore the situation to what it was. The Director-General may also appoint a general custodian of cultural property (Nafziger, 1975).

Furthermore, the Director-General of UNESCO may request the warring states to appoint protecting powers, and he may ask these protecting powers, in any international dispute, to hold a meeting attended by representatives of the conflicting parties whenever there is a need to protect cultural property in areas where conflict is taking place. The Director-General may also invite the Chairperson of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict to organize a meeting of its representatives to resolve this dispute (Hladik, 2000).

UNESCO has made the necessary efforts to protect cultural property during international armed conflicts. For example, the Director-General of the organization intervened during the outbreak of conflict between Honduras and El Salvador in 1969 by sending two telegrams to the governments of both states, even though they were not parties to the Convention, suggesting that they accede to the Convention and urging them to protect the property located in their territories (Wadefal, 2011, pp. 100-101).

UNESCO also played an important role in protecting cultural property during non-international armed conflicts. The Director-General previously appealed, during the outbreak of the conflict in Yugoslavia in 1991, for the protection of cultural property located in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, in accordance with the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention and its First Protocol. UNESCO also participated in investigations into the serious violations

committed against cultural property in the former Yugoslavia (Wadefal, 2011, pp. 100-101).

As soon as the Taliban announced their intention to destroy Afghanistan's cultural property, the Director-General of UNESCO issued an urgent appeal to Taliban leaders, calling on them to stop the acts of destruction targeting the Buddha statues in Bamiyan. He considered these acts of destruction to be international crimes committed against cultural property. To this end, the Director-General sent his personal representative to Afghanistan to seek to stop the acts of destruction carried out by the movement against cultural property (Amr, 2002).

1.2- The Role of UNESCO in the Protection of Cultural Heritage During Peace

International organizations have contributed to funding cultural heritage preservation projects and protecting them by calling on the international community, governments, agencies, and global companies to give a higher priority to preservation funding, and by providing technical assistance not only in managing heritage sites but also in securing the necessary funding, collecting funds, and providing them in a way that ensures the success of heritage preservation and protection projects. The most prominent of these organizations is "UNESCO" (Obeid, 2009, p. 11).

UNESCO is considered one of the most important bodies working to preserve the cultural heritage of humanity and to strengthen the necessary measures in this field. It has made great strides by laying the legal foundations for cultural heritage and global human culture, and by establishing restrictions to prevent or limit the theft, destruction, transfer, and illicit import of cultural property (Obeid, 2009).

UNESCO's role has not been limited to adopting international conventions and declarations; since its establishment, it has sought to affirm its role in protecting world heritage through practical measures consisting of mobilizing international support to raise the necessary funds to restore what has been demolished or destroyed in many regions and countries. It should be noted that UNESCO is not a funding institution but an organization for cultural cooperation and technical work, while the funding comes from the initiatives of



member states. Through its scientific staff and financial resources, UNESCO has made significant efforts in carrying out many cultural property protection projects through international campaigns that succeeded in rescuing some monuments threatened with disappearance, which are considered part of the world's human cultural heritage in various parts of the world.

The most important of these achievements include, for example (UNESCO, n.d.):

- The international campaign to protect and rescue the Nubian monuments in Egypt (the temples of Abu Simbel and the Philae temples), as well as the neighboring archaeological sites built more than three thousand years ago, to prevent their submersion in the waters of the Nile during the construction of the High Dam in Aswan in 1959. During this campaign, which lasted 20 years, 22 monuments and architectural sites were relocated.
- The campaign it led to rescue the landmarks of Venice in Italy following the catastrophic floods that struck the city in 1966.
- The construction and restoration of the "Borobudur" temple in Indonesia, which is considered one of the largest Buddhist temples there, in addition to many other campaigns in Morocco, Carthage in Tunisia, Sana'a in Yemen, and other places, to preserve the link between the past, the present, and the future.

The activities carried out by UNESCO in the field of protecting cultural property during peacetime are aimed at implementing the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention and its two additional protocols. The Convention authorizes the Director-General of UNESCO to invite States Parties to convene a meeting, provided that prior approval is obtained from the organization's Executive Board. The Director-General may also request a meeting of the States Parties if at least five states submit such a request.

UNESCO is also the depository of the ratifications of the 1954 Hague Convention, through which official translations are exchanged. The Director-General of UNESCO may also invite states to join the Convention and its two Protocols (unesco, n.d.).

UNESCO supervises the International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection. It is the body authorized to receive requests from States Parties to include or delete cultural property from

the list of cultural property covered by the special protection system (Dulti, 2000).

UNESCO may provide technical assistance to States Parties to the Convention to organize means of protecting cultural property. It may also make proposals to States Parties on its own initiative. The Director-General of the organization may communicate directly with States Parties or through their permanent delegations to the organization regarding the need to adopt certain measures and procedures necessary for the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts (Dulti, 2000).

Every four years, UNESCO receives a report from the States Parties to the Convention and its two Protocols containing the information necessary for the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts, as well as the measures prepared for the implementation of the Convention (Al-Daqqaq, 1995).

UNESCO prepares publications containing the main provisions for the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts and distributes them to member states to disseminate them among their armed forces and among the forces assigned to UN peacekeeping operations to familiarize them with these rules and provisions (Al-Daqqaq, 1995).

The prominent role that UNESCO plays in preserving and protecting international cultural heritage is not limited to periods of war and armed conflict but also extends to normal periods of peace as a preventive measure to protect sites and monuments of great material and moral significance to states and their peoples. This has actually been achieved in several instances, including, for example:

- Halting projects that pose a potential catastrophic threat to major world heritage sites. The program adopted by UNESCO contributed to stopping the construction of a highway near the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, closing a salt mine in the breeding areas of the gray whale in Mexico, canceling a proposal to build a dam over Victoria Falls on the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe, preventing the construction of a factory planned next to the Temple of "Apollo" in Greece, stopping the construction of a residential complex near the "Sanssouci Palace" in the city of Potsdam, Germany, and the government of



Sri Lanka abandoning the expansion of a military airport near the ancient site of “Sigiriya” (Bouchnaqi, 2005).

- UNESCO’s and related organizations’ efforts have not been limited to tangible heritage but have extended to intangible cultural heritage, which is considered vulnerable to extinction. It has become one of UNESCO’s priorities in the cultural field. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage opened up a great opportunity to enhance, preserve, and safeguard it as an important factor for maintaining the cultural diversity of societies in the face of globalization. UNESCO, being the only organization within the United Nations system dedicated to protecting cultural heritage, has worked on preparing inventories of intangible heritage and identifying a list of intangible cultural elements that need urgent safeguarding in several countries, covering dances, oral narratives, performing arts, traditional skills, folk rituals, traditional knowledge, festivals, and the cultural practices and expressions of local communities. It has also adopted several international conventions related to cultural and linguistic diversity and oral heritage (Obeid, 2009).
- Since 2009, UNESCO, with support from the European Union, has launched the “Mediterranean Living Heritage” project to implement the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (UNESCO, n.d.).
- UNESCO has also inscribed a number of traditional knowledge and practices on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity through the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. By December 2015, the total number of intangible heritage elements inscribed reached about 391, including 25 recognized Arab elements from 163 countries, among them 18 Arab countries that ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. These include songs, dances, masterpieces, as well as performing arts, social practices, rituals, festivities, and traditional dishes.

2- THE ROLE OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

In addition to UNESCO, as a global organization striving to protect world cultural heritage, there are other organizations and bodies that work toward the same goal, which are as follows:

2.1-The International Committee of the Red Cross

The International Committee of the Red Cross is an independent and neutral organization that carries out humanitarian protection tasks and provides assistance to victims of both international and non-international armed conflicts. It is considered the primary sponsor and protector of international humanitarian law. In the field of protecting cultural property, the International Committee of the Red Cross plays an important role through the measures it can take during both peacetime and periods of armed conflict (Amr, 2002).

2.1.1- The Role of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Protection of Cultural Heritage During Peacetime

During peacetime, the International Committee of the Red Cross, through advisory committees, assists states in implementing the obligations established by international conventions related to international humanitarian law, including the 1954 Hague Convention and its two additional protocols. The Committee also provides technical assistance and advice to national advisory committees concerned with the protection of cultural property, prepares model legislation and distributes it to states, in addition to publishing educational materials and organizing expert conferences with the aim of protecting cultural property. It also produces publications and books to introduce the rules and provisions governing the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts (Amr, 2002).

2.1.2- The Role of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Protection of Cultural Heritage During Armed Conflicts

The primary role of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the event of violations of international humanitarian law, according to the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, is to carry out the tasks entrusted to it by the Geneva Conventions and to work toward the optimal application of



international humanitarian law during armed conflicts. It is also authorized to receive complaints concerning alleged violations of that law (Al-Sayyid, 1984, p. 253).

When attacks on cultural property occur, the International Committee of the Red Cross works to open communication channels between the conflicting parties in order to find the best ways to protect such property in accordance with the provisions and rules set out in the 1954 Hague Convention and its two additional protocols (Al-Sayyid, 1984, p. 253).

2.2- The Role of Other International and Regional Organizations in the Protection of Cultural Heritage

The legal protection of cultural heritage requires three levels of protection: the international level, the regional level, and the local level. Effective protection will not be achieved except through the application of all these levels together, because heritage in its various forms ultimately does not concern the identity and civilization of a single state as much as it represents the civilization of the entire nation and humanity as a whole. This requires the international community to cooperate in protecting it and pursuing those who steal, traffic, smuggle, or destroy it (Al-Kitani, 2010, p. 72).

For this reason, the international community has spared no effort in establishing numerous organizations, bodies, and committees at the global level to protect the cultural heritage of states from any harm or violation it may face during times of peace or war.

As previously mentioned, many organizations were established for this purpose, headed by “UNESCO” followed by the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, there are also a number of bodies established for the protection and preservation of the world’s cultural heritage, which will be addressed as follows:

2.2.1- The International Council of Museums

It is an international non-governmental organization founded by UNESCO in 1946. It focuses mainly on museum display and the preservation of museum collections. The Council has adopted several agreements regulating the ownership of archaeological and heritage artifacts, the legitimate ways of acquiring and exchanging them, as well as methods of museum exchange, artifact preservation, and the ways of maintaining and restoring them (Kabashi, 2008).

2.2.2- The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

It is an international organization that emerged from UNESCO in 1959 and is headquartered in Rome, Italy. ICCROM devotes its efforts to protecting cultural, heritage, and archaeological legacy without exception, serving the international community and safeguarding its cultural heritage. Its statutory tasks include implementing programs in research, documentation, technical assistance, training, and awareness-raising to enhance the preservation of both movable and immovable cultural heritage (iccrom, n.d.).

ICCROM is one of three advisory bodies of the World Heritage Committee that work to implement the 1972 World Heritage Convention. It has significant contributions to raising awareness of the needs of heritage sites, managing them, and developing standards that lead to their integrated preservation (Kurdi & Saman, 2008, p. 67).

2.2.3- The International Council on Monuments and Sites

It is a non-governmental organization established by UNESCO in 1965 and headquartered in Paris. Its objective is to preserve sites and landmarks around the world. Among its notable activities are the drafting of the Washington Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas and the 1976 International Charter on Cultural Tourism, which is based on a set of goals that can be summarized as facilitating and encouraging those managing archaeological sites to make this heritage a destination for both local residents and tourists, and encouraging and promoting tourism in ways that ensure the enhancement of heritage and the living cultures of host communities (Kurdi & Saman, 2008, p. 67).

2.2.4- The World Monuments Fund

The World Monuments Fund was established in 1965. It is an international non-profit organization based in New York and London, with a regional center in Paris. It receives requests for assistance from stakeholders in all countries to preserve cultural heritage sites (Sultan, 2012, p. 219).

2.2.5- The World Heritage Fund

The World Heritage Fund was established under the 1972 World Heritage Convention. The fund is financed through compulsory and voluntary contributions from member states, private organizations, or



individuals. It is used to meet the requests submitted by member states to ensure the protection of cultural heritage located on their territory, to address urgent needs for the preservation of properties listed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, or to provide technical support for the maintenance of heritage monuments and buildings (UNESCO, n.d.).

2.2.6- The World Heritage Committee

It is one of the committees associated with the management of world cultural heritage, and it emerged from the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage. It has been operating since 1976, and the purpose of the convention is to identify cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value, protect it, preserve it, restore it, and transmit it to future generations (Saadah, 2009, p. 111).

The committee is responsible for studying nomination files according to criteria it has established to guide the selection of properties to be included on the World Heritage List, in consultation with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and ICCROM (Saadah, 2009, p. 111).

2.2.7- ALECSO — The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization

It was established in 1945 with the founding of the League of Arab States and is headquartered in Tunisia. Its aim is to coordinate Arab efforts to preserve, protect, and disseminate Arab heritage, whether in the form of manuscripts, artistic works, or archaeological artifacts. This organization has provided support to several historic Arab cities to preserve their civilizational heritage, and it has contributed to the inscription of many Arab cities on UNESCO's World Heritage List (Kurdi & Saman, 2008).

2.2.8- The Organization of Arab Cities

It is a non-governmental organization established in 1967 with its permanent headquarters in Kuwait City. Its goal is to foster cooperation and exchange between Arab states, in addition to preserving the identity and heritage of the Arab city and assisting it in achieving its development projects (Al-Sayyid A. S., 2010).

2.2.9- The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture - IRCICA

This center was established by the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1976 and began its activities in 1982. The center aims to promote and revitalize traditional handicrafts in Islamic countries in cooperation with regional and international bodies and organizations. It also aims to strengthen the concept of Islamic cultural heritage, document it, preserve it, and highlight the achievements of this heritage regarding archaeological and architectural heritage (Al-Asqa, 2010).

2.2.10- The Heritage Foundation

It is a private foundation established by Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in 1996 and later became a charitable organization in 2008. It focuses on heritage both intellectually and practically, viewing it as a renewable element drawing its authenticity from the past to contribute confidently to a civilizational renaissance toward the future (htt3).

It is important to note one of the successful centers in a form of cultural heritage: the National Urban Heritage Center of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, which aims to preserve and develop urban heritage (NBHF, n.d.).

The center represents a successful initiative by Prince Sultan bin Salman, Chairman of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, to establish organized entities with clear responsibilities concerned with urban heritage, similar to some other countries. The center seeks to preserve, develop, study, and present urban heritage to local, regional, and global communities in a rigorous scientific manner, as well as to make it a living heritage that contributes to contemporary and future social structures and provides a source of livelihood for those who inhabit and live in it. This is based on the center's vision of preserving, developing, and investing in urban heritage without compromising its authenticity and its role in affirming national identity in general and shaping the character of the Saudi city in the present and the future.

CONCLUSION:

Cultural properties found in different countries of the world are considered evidence of the development of civilization and



urbanization. However, the numerous wars and armed conflicts have caused damage to these landmarks, which necessitated the establishment of international and local legal mechanisms to protect them. These mechanisms are represented in various international and regional organizations and bodies that were created to preserve and safeguard them from any potential aggression.

UNESCO is considered one of the organizations contributing to the protection of cultural property in times of peace and during armed conflicts. It was established as an attempt to build bridges of peace between many countries, especially after the outbreak of World War I, and it focuses on science, culture, and education. The devastation that befell the world drew attention to the existence of places and sites of exceptional cultural and natural value that must be protected from armed conflict, deliberate destruction, economic pressure, natural disasters, and other causes that could threaten their safety and continuity, given their value and importance in human life. The organizations entrusted with the protection of cultural properties are not limited to UNESCO alone, but also include other international and regional organizations and bodies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and others.

Perhaps the most prominent reasons that prompted the international community to unite and exert efforts to establish these organizations in order to protect cultural properties across countries of the world are as follows:

- Ideology: fear of the power of beliefs and the people who hold them, as by destroying those symbols or valuable cultural artifacts, that power itself can be destroyed.
- The pursuit of profit from stealing these antiquities.
- The damage caused by war: many cultural artifacts are destroyed as a result of wars.
- Negligence: especially the neglect of rare books and manuscripts.

Research on the subject of the study has led to the extraction of a set of results as follows:

- The importance of cultural heritage in shaping the features of individuals' and societies' identities, whether intellectual or material.

- The importance of surrounding cultural heritage with the necessary legal and international protection to preserve it from any attack or obliteration that it may be subjected to.
- The role and importance of international organizations seeking to preserve the cultural heritage of states in all its forms in order to safeguard the cultural properties of states.
- There is no doubt that UNESCO has made a major contribution to establishing rules for the protection of cultural properties during armed conflicts, which represents an important enrichment in the activation of international humanitarian law. However, the international reality of repeated violations of these rules through attacks on cultural properties raises serious questions about the effectiveness of this mechanism in ensuring the implementation of the agreements in this field. The various armed conflicts witnessed on the international scene in recent decades, particularly in Iraq, Mali, and Syria, and the massive destruction they have caused to a large and distinguished human cultural heritage, stand as strong evidence of the shortcomings surrounding this organization, as it usually contents itself with condemnation only. This once again affirms the need to find complementary mechanisms that are more effective in enforcing the rules of international humanitarian law in the field of protecting cultural properties.

Based on the results reached, some recommendations can be proposed as follows:

- The need to work on developing these organizations and their bodies responsible for protecting cultural heritage to keep pace with contemporary circumstances, especially with the growing idea of conflicts and wars in the world, to ensure the greatest possible protection for these cultural properties.
- The need for third world countries, especially Arab countries, to work on establishing organizations or bodies that defend their identity and cultural heritage, particularly since they are the most exposed to armed conflicts and wars.
- Working on involving international and non-international organizations in providing practical and necessary guidance to protect cultural properties during armed conflicts, given that these



organizations play an active role, especially from the practical side, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is considered the official guardian of international humanitarian law.

- The need for UNESCO to work on involving the largest number of countries in the Hague Convention and its two protocols, considering that it is the organization specialized in everything related to science and culture, as well as encouraging them to adhere to the provisions and rules of protecting cultural properties through international and regional conferences in order to promote awareness of this protection.
- The need for UNESCO to cooperate with other organizations concerned with protecting cultural heritage, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

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