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UNESCO to contribute in renovating Museum of Islamic Art



dailynewsegypt.com/2014/01/27/unesco-contribute-renovating-museum-islamic-art/

Omar El Adl / January 27, 2014



Workers inspect the damage in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo after it was hit during a car bomb explosion outside the police headquarters near the museum on January 24 in the capital. (AFP PHOTO / MOHAMED EL-SHAHED)

Minister of Antiquities Mohamed Ibrahim has confirmed that UNESCO will send a delegation by next week to assess the damage done to the Museum of Islamic Art and its facade after a bomb exploded across the street, killing at least four people and injuring dozens, originally targeting the Cairo Security Directorate.

The UNESCO confirmed that it is setting aside \$100,000 in emergency funds to help the museum rebuild after the explosion, but said further details were yet to be finalised.

Director Irina Bokova said: "I pledge today that I will mobilise all of UNESCO's experience and expertise to rebuilding the museum and restoring the damage – this is as essential for the people of Egypt as it is for men and women across the world."

The museum's front facade, over 100 years old, was destroyed and the blast propelled objects into the museum, damaging many priceless artefacts. Located in Old Cairo's Bab Al-Khalq, the museum is known for housing one of the most extensive and valuable collections of Islamic art in the world. It reopened in 2010 after eight years of renovations. In a statement by the Ministry of Antiquities, Ibrahim said it was the oldest museum in the world to house Islamic art. The museum houses 24 exhibition halls and more than 4,000 artefacts.

Ibrahim said the ministry has not yet released a full account of the damaged artefacts but proposed that the most damaged artefacts be on display in a special section of the museum as a sign of Egypt's, and the museum's, resilience against acts of terrorism.

In the same statement, Ibrahim praised museum staff members and renovation specialists in collecting the damaged artefacts and helping preserve them, as well as the tourism police in protecting the museum after some of its windows and doors were blown off.

Ibrahim also commended the crisis management unit, previously cited as problematic for being on the scene for less than half an hour and sealing off the museum, which prevented unauthorised individuals from entering, and contributed substantially to the museum's artefacts being looted in the aftermath of the chaos caused by the explosion.

A committee from the Faculty of Engineering will also assess the damage done to the museum architecturally, in efforts to bring back the museum to its original state. The museum's landmark building is considered an artefact itself.

Ibrahim said he was contacted by many celebrities, including actor Mohamed Sobhy, to express concern over the state of the museum and that Sobhy had launched a campaign spearheaded by celebrities, who have launched national fundraisers to save the museum.

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