

Subject: Gunmen ransack Herqla storehouse and stolen hundreds of artifacts

The storehouse of Herqla archaeological site (10 km far from Raqqa), has been subjected to a series of violations in May 2013 by some armed men specialized in antiquities theft, who have been attempting to break into the storehouse and burgle it; the last attempt was carried out by a group of 20 gunmen. However, the storehouse was protected thanks to the efforts of the guards of the site and the employees of the Directorate of Antiquities in addition to the local community in the surrounding region who are assisting the guards and the employees.

And in order to ensure the safety and protection of the objects in the storehouse, the workers of Raqqa Department of Antiquities emptied out the storehouse and transferred its objects to a safer place having coordinated with and gotten the permission of the central administration of the DGAM in Damascus to do that.

Due to the increasing of violence in the area, Raqqa city and its suburbs are been out of the control and hence the area is now in great danger. During the last days the storehouse was attacked again by at least 100 rebels with heavy equipment's and trailers who entered the store, threatened the guards and inhabitants by weapons, and stole hundreds of pieces which included objects made of pottery, gypsum and mosaic and broken pieces of pottery that were the results of missions excavations works for many years and have scientific and museology importance.

Therefore, we urge all international organizations and authorities, international organization concerned with preserving museums and heritage, to support the antiquities authorities in aggressive this phenomenon, in order not to be repeated in Raqqa Museum due to the absence of the government authorities and the army forces in the area.

We also demand the neighborhood countries to take responsibilities in order to prevent the smuggling the Syrian heritage through its borders.

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