

World Archaeological Congress

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World Archaeological Congress Statement on the invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation as ordered by President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin

As a community of archaeologists of the world, the World Archaeological Congress opposes the violation of basic human rights and condemns the use of force in any form for solving political disputes. We, therefore, condemn the invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation as ordered by President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin in the strongest possible terms and demand the immediate withdrawal of these forces.

We note that the self-justification that President Putin presented for the invasion specifically includes claims about the Ukrainian past which we as archaeologists who study the past identify as false and historically untrue. We abhor the use of such claims about the past to justify any action that violates basic human rights, international law, and the sovereign independence of nations. WAC, therefore, stands in solidarity with all those who protest this aggression.

We are extremely concerned about the wellbeing of our Ukrainian colleagues and citizens, and wish all our colleagues in affected territories well in these very difficult times. We wholeheartedly thank the authorities and all those involved in refugee protection for their extraordinary efforts, and ask them to ensure that all those who are displaced are given equal protection, irrespective of their nationality, gender, ethnicity or any other factor.

Finally, as a world archaeological organization, WAC urges the forces involved to consider, among their concerns, appropriate strategies to protect Ukraine's heritage and to follow the Hague Conventions on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the First (1954) and Second Protocols (1999). WAC urges them to avoid strike in any archaeological and cultural heritage sites and to keep military operations away from their immediate surroundings.

The importance of human life and the principle of compliance with basic human rights takes precedence over all others. At the same time, cultural heritage is one of the fundamental conditions for the existence and wellbeing of human societies and cultures, therefore constitutes an irreplaceable component of basic human rights.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Mizoguchi', written in a cursive style.

Koji Mizoguchi
President of the World Archaeological Congress

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Background information

The World Archaeological Congress, with members in more than 90 countries, is the only fully international and representative organisation of practicing archaeologists. WAC's mission is to (1) promote professional training for disadvantaged nations and communities; (2) broaden public education, involving national and international communities in archaeological research; (3) develop archaeological practice so that it empowers Indigenous and minority groups; (4) contribute to the conservation of archaeological sites threatened by looting, urban growth, tourism, development or war; and (5) re-dress global inequities amongst archaeologists.