WAC Statement on the current situation in Gaza

As a global archaeological community dedicated to upholding fundamental human rights and Indigenous rights, the World Archaeological Congress strongly denounce the unlawful and deeply disturbing military attacks launched by Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (Hamas) on the civilians of Israel. Equally, we deplore the disproportionate retaliatory military actions taken by the Government of Israel, actions that result in unnecessary and severe human suffering, and which can only be interpreted as collective punishment. Drawing from our extensive historical knowledge, although marred by numerous past failures, we recognize that we have averted human catastrophes through the difficult but vital act of unilaterally ceasing violence.

It is with the utmost sincerity that the World Archaeological Congress implore both sides to immediately cease all military actions and work together to prevent a human catastrophe on an unprecedented scale.

As a global archaeological community, the World Archaeological Congress also urges all military forces involved in this conflict to consider, among their concerns, the implementation of appropriate strategies to safeguard Palestinian Cultural heritage. We implore them to adhere to the Hague Conventions on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its First (1954) and Second Protocols (1999). It is crucial that military operations avoid targeting archaeological and cultural heritage sites and maintain a safe distance from their immediate surroundings.

We wish to emphasize, in the strongest terms possible, that the importance of human life and the principle of adherence to basic human rights must take precedence over all other considerations. Simultaneously, we recognize that cultural heritage is a fundamental
pillar for the existence and well-being of human societies and cultures. Therefore, it constitutes an irreplaceable component of basic human rights.

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On behalf of the WAC Council

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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.