

Resolution des Verbandes Deutscher Kunsthistoriker zum Krieg gegen die Ukraine

Verband Deutscher Kunsthistoriker Resolution on the War against Ukraine

Since 24 February 2022 Russia's war of aggression against the sovereign neighbouring state of Ukraine has been taking place before our very eyes. Immeasurable suffering is being inflicted on the people of Ukraine with a blatancy that was unimaginable for us only a short time ago, and on a scale almost unknown in the recent past. The country's rich and diverse cultural heritage is also put in danger by the Russian military and is in some cases being deliberately attacked and destroyed - in Kyiv as well as in Chernivtsi, Kharkiv, Lviv, Mariupol, Odessa, Chernihiv and other places. For weeks now, we have been dramatically witnessing how our colleagues not only have to fear for their own lives on a daily basis, but how they are at the same time fighting with the utmost energy to preserve Ukraine's rich cultural heritage and to safeguard its irreplaceable churches, synagogues, mosques, museums, theatres and libraries, together with the valuable collections and objects housed in these buildings.

The Russian government and the Russian military are causing appalling suffering and the death of countless people in Ukraine. They are working the irreversible destruction of the cultural heritage shaping the nation's identity. For the future of Ukraine in an era after the military aggression, being able to resume the country's diverse cultural traditions will be of major importance. All efforts must therefore be directed towards protecting cultural property in Ukraine from damage and loss and at the same time towards documenting its existence. In view of the destruction that also occurred in Ukraine as a result of the German war of aggression against the Soviet Union from 1941 onwards, the Federal Republic of Germany has a special responsibility in this regard.

We emphatically condemn the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. We insist on compliance with the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Russian Nicholas Roerich played an influential role in preparing the ground for the Convention, whose signatories also included the Soviet Union, of which the Russian Federation is the legal successor. The 1954 Hague Convention and its Second Protocol of 1999 unequivocally prohibit the destruction, theft and looting of movable and immovable cultural property in war. Violations of the Convention are also subject to criminal prosecution.

We call on **the Russian government and the Russian military** to protect the movable and immovable cultural property of Ukraine and to take all measures that serve to protect this cultural property. We appeal to the Russian Federation's representatives to UNESCO, ICOM and ICOMOS, as well as to our Russian colleagues in the spheres of heritage conservation, museums, and art-historical research and teaching, to engage

with the leaders of the Russian government and the Russian military to ensure the strict and effective protection of cultural property and compliance with the Hague Convention.

We call on **the German government, the relevant ministries and the Bundestag** to rigorously enforce the protection of Ukrainian cultural property, by means of foreign policy and diplomacy as well as with rapid, concrete and non-bureaucratic aid measures. In particular, German cultural policy must work to ensure that cities such as Kyiv and Lviv, which contain UNESCO world heritage sites, as well as cities such as Chernivtsi, birthplace of the German-speaking Jewish poets Paul Celan and Rose Ausländer, receive financial and professional support in order to protect both their architectural heritage and the holdings of their museums, archives and libraries.

At the same time, we appeal to **the art historians in Germany** to fulfil their professional responsibilities. As Germany's largest professional association for art history, with over 5000 members, we are offering our professional and material support as well as our cooperative networks. We have sought to contribute to the conservation of Ukraine's architectural heritage and collections by supplying firefighting equipment and other materials, for example. We are providing our expertise and support in the documentation of cultural property and of cultural property losses, documentation that serves not least to preserve evidence in the prosecution of war crimes. We stand in solidarity with our colleagues - both with those who have had to flee their country, and with those who have remained with their monuments and collections.

The General Assembly of the Verband Deutscher Kunsthistoriker e.V.

Stuttgart, 25 March 2022