**Restricting Trade of Syrian Antiquities**

Syria is one of the cradles of civilization, a place where humans first learned to live together in towns and cities. The societies that flourished in Syria mastered technologies including farming, pottery-making, metal-working, and glass blowing, creating many beautiful artifacts. From the remains of immense Bronze and Iron Age settlements, to extensive Greek and Roman cities, mighty fortresses and castles, and masterpieces of art and architecture, these societies have produced some of the ancient world's most spectacular cultural treasures. Syria is home to six of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites, and another twelve have been nominated for inclusion.

Today, these priceless antiquities are disappearing. Some have fallen victim to the country's five year civil war. But the greatest threat to these irreplaceable historic artifacts is ISIL, also known as Da'esh. Over the past two or so years, while they controlled large parts of Northern and Eastern Syria, these terrorists have deliberately and ostentatiously destroyed some of the most significant archaeological treasures created by the ancients in Palmyra, in Tel Ajaja, in Mari, and dozens of other historical sites.

But beyond their purposeful destruction, ISIL terrorists also have also done a tremendous amount of pillaging, looting, and just plain theft. They plundered sites in territories they controlled, digging up millennia-old artifacts and selling them on the black market.

The United States is committed to helping the Syrian people preserve their priceless heritage, and to preventing these thieves of history from profiting from their theft and the destruction they have wrought. For that reason, the United States has, in early August, imposed strict import restrictions on archaeological and ethnological material of Syria, effective immediately.

Pursuant to the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act of 2016, these emergency import restrictions apply to any cultural property unlawfully removed from Syria on or after March 15, 2011.

The United States will continue to closely monitor and raise awareness about threats to heritage in Syria, and work toward preventing its removal or destruction. We owe this to the Syrian people, who are being stripped of their cultural identity, as well as to the world at large that respects, admires, and studies this heritage.