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## **World Heritage Watch Pressures UNESCO to Stop Destruction on the Acropolis of Athens**

**The international NGO calls for a discussion of the situation on its next session**

Berlin, 12 May 2023

World Heritage Watch has urged UNESCO not to ignore the destructive construction being carried out on the Acropolis of Athens, and to discuss the situation on the next session of its World Heritage Committee in September. The group further asked UNESCO to inscribe the Acropolis on its List of World Heritage in Danger, and to request Greece to stop all practical activities on the Acropolis until it has issued a final decision about the works both implemented and planned.

In an open letter sent to UNESCO today, the international NGO points out that the very extensive construction activities have been criticized by hundreds of international experts, whose opinion merit a discussion by the Committee.

The constructions on the site are so massive, argues the group, that they alter its appearance and character to an extent that will deprive the property completely of its authenticity and integrity, representing a direct threat to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Acropolis.

World Heritage Watch blames UNESCO for allowing itself to be misled by Greek officials who explained that all measures taken were fully appropriate and reversible, in contrast to the obvious and blatant reality on the site. It expresses disbelief that a UNESCO mission visiting Athens in April 2022 should not have realized the massive impact of the works, and implies that non-technical considerations may have influenced their report, hinting at the possibility of political lobbying by Greece to have its works green-lighted by the prestigious body.

World Heritage Watch insists that a Management Plan and Tourism Plan should be developed with full participation of civil society, and all works in reinforced concrete should be demolished and the Acropolis restored to its state in 2020.

“When will the World Heritage Committee act if not now?” says Stephan Doempke, the chair of the organization and an avowed philhellene who has visited Greece and the Acropolis countless times since 1973 at the age of 18. “This monument, which has inspired countless generations for its elevating spirit and beauty, is being turned into a shallow backdrop of must-see locations for selfie photos. Greece will have lost its soul and be no longer considered a stalwart of archaeology and cultural heritage, and the world will have lost a site to which humanity has looked up to in awe for 2,500 years.”

The World Heritage Committee is the decision-making body under the World Heritage Convention, an international treaty to which Greece is a signatory. It is made up of 21 countries elected according to a regional key. Presently, Greece is a member of this body which gives the Greek government additional leverage to influence its decisions. The agenda of the Committee is set by the Director-General of UNESCO upon suggestions by the Committee and its secretariat, the World Heritage Centre.

The letter to UNESCO can be downloaded from [here](#).

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