

What is the impact of the intentional destruction of cultural heritage on the enjoyment of human rights?

Intentional destruction may be:

1. ideological - a constituent element of genocidal and urbicidal violence, the systematic eradication of embodiments of non-conformist communities and alternative possibilities.
2. strategic/political - a cause of displacement, terror and torment. 'Some of its targets flee, which makes territories easier to conquer, and which drains the resources and divides the communities of its enemies. Some of its remaining subjects fall silent, which makes its territories easier to rule. And some of its enemies are provoked into reactions that propel its global recruitment drive.' (<http://washington-dc.eunic-online.eu/?q=content/pornographic-iconoclasm-terrorist-propaganda-islamic-state-cinema-and-audience-reactions-0>)
3. strategic/political - where destruction is committed in the context of a conflict such as Syria and Iraq, it may expose varying and sometimes hypocritical reactions to various acts of destruction. 'While the international community has recognised minorities' persecution, it has not reacted to genocidal destruction of living religions' cultural property in the same way that it has reacted to iconoclastic demolition of UNESCO World Heritage sites. The demolition of archaeological sites has invited appeals to the United Nations Security Council and the International Criminal Court and plans for peacekeepers at historic sites but not, apparently, civilian centres. Such precisely provoked responses fuel the Islamic State propaganda machine by providing evidence of negligence of communities and fetishisation of stones. The international community has not even reacted to stage-managed massacres in historic places in the same way. In 2014, the Islamic State murdered at least fifteen civilians by entombing them in the Yezidi Mausoleum of Sheikh Mend in Jadala, Iraq, then blowing them up. In 2015, IS murdered three civilians by binding them to Roman columns in Palmyra, Syria, then blowing them up. Only one of those was headline news. And one of the responses that it prompted was 'ISIS blows up more Palmyra antiquities, with civilians attached'. (<http://washington-dc.eunic-online.eu/?q=content/pornographic-iconoclasm-terrorist-propaganda-islamic-state-cinema-and-audience-reactions-0>)
4. financial - a driver of donations of money and labour.
5. Organised armed groups (and disorganised armed communities) may be provoked or be provided with an excuse to commit reprisals (or acts of perceived self-defence), which may themselves further intensify violence.

Even false reports can cause harm

(<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2014/07/12/syria-iraq-mosul-nineveh-tomb-prophet-jonah-retraction-correction/>):

1. People may endure internal displacement or international refuge before it is necessary, which exposes them to hardship and risk both during movement and in their new residence. Refugee camps and cross-border towns in safe countries are under-resourced and insecure, so deprivation and exploitation are rife.
2. People may distrust reports of violence and become desensitised to threats so, when there is real danger, they may not react in time to save themselves.

3. People may distrust reports of violence and become desensitised to threats so, when there is real danger, they may not intervene in time to save others.
4. Again, one way or another, it may provoke violence.

What are examples of such action?

There are many cases around the world, but an exemplary case is the Islamic State's destruction of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Church (<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2014/09/27/iraq-syria-islamic-state-destruction-deir-ez-zor-armenian-genocide-memorial-church/> and <https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2014/10/01/iraq-syria-islamic-state-propaganda-destruction-church-armenian-deir-ezzor/>) and a convoluted case is Turkey's extraction of Suleyman Shah's tomb and the pre-emptive destruction of his mausoleum (<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/02/23/syria-turkey-suleyman-shah-tomb-transfer-mausoleum-destruction/>).

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