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## Kairouan (Tunisia) No 499

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### 1. BASIC DATA

*State Party:* Tunisia

*Name of property:*

Medina of Kairouan

*Location:*

Governorate of Kairouan

*Inscription:* 1988

*Brief Description:*

Founded in 670, Kairouan flourished under the Aghlabid dynasty in the 9th century. Despite the transfer of the political capital to Tunis in the 12th century, Kairouan remained the Maghreb's principal holy city. Its rich architectural heritage includes the Great Mosque, with its marble and porphyry columns, and the 9th-century Mosque of the Three Gates.

*Date of ICOMOS' approval of this report:* 17 March 2010

### 2. ISSUES RAISED

*Background:*

The nomination file for the property included a map of Kairouan marking the boundaries of the property in a thick pencil line. The site is a serial property that includes the Medina, the Zawiya de Sidi Sahab and the Aghlabid Basins. Although the limits could be identified, a precise delimitation was needed. The retrospective inventory process further underscored the need for updated topographic maps or cadastral maps to clearly show the boundaries of the three inscribed elements that constitute the World Heritage property as well as the delimitation of the buffer zone. Indications on the precise size of the property and the buffer zone were also requested.

ICOMOS has examined a map submitted by the State Party in February 2009, indicating the boundaries of the inscribed zones and of the proposed buffer zones. The total area of the property was 54ha and that of the proposed buffer zones 73.04ha.

At its 33rd session (Seville, 2009), the World Heritage Committee adopted the following recommendation:

Decision: 33 COM 8B.43

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-09/33.COM/8B and WHC-09/33.COM/INF.8B1.Add,*

2. *Decides not to approve the minor modification of the boundaries of Kairouan, Tunisia;*

3. *Refers the examination of the proposed buffer zones for Kairouan, Tunisia, back to the State Party to allow it to:*

- a) *Review the existing proposal to delineate a buffer zone so as to ensure the proper conservation and protection of the Property. The buffer zone should also seek to integrate the three components of the World Heritage property;*
- b) *Provide information on the criteria for defining the buffer zone, existing regulations and measures to secure protection and arrangements for effective management.*

*Modification:*

The State Party has submitted a map indicating the limits of the property inscribed, whose total area is now 106.2ha, which corresponds to the area of the property inscribed in 1988. The area of the proposed buffer zones is 154.37 ha.

The boundaries proposed correspond to three separate buffer zones which apply respectively to the three components of the property inscribed, that is:

- a) The medina and its outskirts
- b) The mausoleum of Sidi Sahib
- c) The Aghlabid basins

In response to the Committee's recommendation that a single buffer zone should be considered for the three components of the property, the State Party has explained that the intermediate zones between the three components of the property have been developed in the recent past, which is not conducive to their inclusion in a single buffer zone.

ICOMOS considers that the three proposed buffer zones should provide effective protection. The buffer zone for the Medina and the Mausoleum of Sidi Sahib has a radius of around 200 meters; that of the Aghlabid Basins ranges from a few meters to 145 meters, but is the result of the division into parcels of the *Plan d'aménagement* which follows the main thoroughfares around the park.

The *Plan d'aménagement de la ville de Kairouan* (which is currently under review) allows for these buffer zones, prohibiting any building to a height of above 7 meters. The Medina, the Mausoleum of Sidi Sahib and the Aghlabid Basins are listed monuments and are thus protected by the decree of 10 April 1912 and have a

protection zone of 200 meters, doubled by an unbuildable zone (decree of 31 March 1914).

The Medina of Kairouan has an administrative entity inside the Institut National du Patrimoine, staffed by around one hundred people who manage the town's heritage and its conservation. For the last two decades, this team has been carrying out works for the rehabilitation of the urban fabric and the historic monuments. More than 80% of the town's monuments have been surveyed, and technical dossiers are available for them. The Medina of Kairouan preservation project is allocated an annual budget from the entry charges for the town's historic monuments and museums. It ensures the continuity of restoration and rehabilitation works in the Medina and its outskirts.

ICOMOS considers that the existing regulations and arrangements seem to be adequate to ensure effective protection and management of the property.

### **3. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS**

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed boundaries for the Medina of Kairouan, Tunisia, be **approved**.

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zones for the Medina of Kairouan, Tunisia, be **approved**.



Map showing the boundaries of the proposed buffer zone