

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/TA/1687/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 27 January 2023

H.E. Mr Mounir Anastas  
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate  
Permanent Delegation of Palestine to  
UNESCO  
Maison de l'UNESCO  
1, rue Miollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15

## World Heritage List 2023

### Ancient Jericho/Tell es-Sultan (Palestine) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2023. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation procedure.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Ancient Jericho/Tell es-Sultan” was carried out by Mr. Adrian Olivier in December 2022. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organisation and implementation of the mission.

On 3 October 2022, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the proposed justification for inscription, boundaries and Jericho Spatial Urban Plan. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 3 November 2022 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

On 13 January 2023, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel held an extraordinary session to evaluate the cultural property nominated by the State Party of Palestine for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2023. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2023.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation for attending the meeting held on 13 January 2023 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting. During its last part meeting, the Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

### **Comparative analysis**

The ICOMOS Panel considered the Outstanding Universal Value that has been proposed by the State Party and has indicated that some of the conclusions drawn on the significance of Ancient Jericho, especially in the Neolithic period, appear to be based on 20<sup>th</sup>-century theories around the development of agriculture, urbanisation or the spread of cultic practices in the Levant and the wider Near Eastern cultural context. These theories have been often challenged by the more recent archaeological investigations and interdisciplinary studies of the Neolithic sites in the Near East and Anatolia. These seem to suggest that a more nuanced understanding of the values of the nominated property of Ancient Jericho/Tell es-Sultan may need to be proposed.

In light of the ongoing debates, the nominated property with its rich archaeological material may be seen as an example of the Neolithization of the Fertile Crescent that included shifting of humanity to new ways of communal life, sedentary lifestyle and the related transition to new subsistence strategies. With its monumental features such as walls and a tower, the presence of shared structures, and the well-known treatment of skulls, this permanent collective settlement may be interpreted as an example of the developments in the wider early Neolithic historical-cultural context, providing insights into changes in lifestyle and social organisation. In the later stages of occupation, the nominated property shows evidence of the development of urbanism during the Early and Middle Bronze Age. The long history of the occupation of the tell allows to observe the development of building traditions both in private and public spheres over many millennia, from the Neolithic period until the Bronze Age.

Taking into consideration the above-proposed values, the ICOMOS Panel would be grateful if the State Party could consider revising the comparative analysis, which seems to have been currently set out to prove 'uniqueness' of the nominated property by focusing on the differences between the comparators rather than evaluating the attributes of the proposed values to demonstrate the outstanding nature of the nominated property. The current analysis provides more of a general overview of the developments in the Near East and Anatolia in the Neolithic period, and hints at the prominent place of Ancient Jericho within this region in the Bronze Age. Moreover, potential comparable archaeological sites across the region are mentioned in a rather vague manner, without stipulating in what way these examples can be said to be similar or different from Ancient Jericho in terms of values and attributes. A more focused approach is needed, with the selection of the closest comparators regarding to the proposed combination of values and attributes, and with a more robust analysis and assessment of the exceptional characteristics of the nominated property in comparison to these other archaeological sites.

The ICOMOS Panel also considered that the comparative analysis, while listing many archaeological sites spread across the relevant geo-cultural region, does not account for some important potential comparators already inscribed on the World Heritage List, in particular Choirokoitia in Cyprus, Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat) in Iraq, and Archaeological Site of Troy in Türkiye, as well as properties on the Tentative Lists of the States Parties; the archaeological sites on the Tentative List of Türkiye would be here especially critical. The cultural impact of Ancient Egypt on the Levant during the Bronze Age may also be important to recognise.

In summary, the ICOMOS Panel would therefore be pleased if the State Party could include in the comparative analysis the above-mentioned missing comparators and provide a more focused analysis that would demonstrate in a more convincing way that the proposed combination of values and attributes that convey them has not been yet included on the World Heritage List, and the nominated property is the best example thereof among its closest comparators from within the stipulated geo-cultural region.

## **Conservation and management of the property**

### *Conservation and Management Plan*

The ICOMOS Panel notes that the Conservation and Management Plan is currently being prepared by the State Party in cooperation with the Jericho Municipality and relevant stakeholders as a component of a Palestinian-Italian collaboration funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. The ICOMOS Panel would like to seek clarity on the schedule for the preparation of the Plan. At what stage is the Plan development now, what is the envisaged timeframe for the related action plan and when would its implementation possibly begin?

The ICOMOS Panel is also interested in understanding in what way would the Conservation and Management Plan address the identified factors negatively affecting the nominated property, and in particular the rainwater. Is a risk management plan currently in place or will it be part of the new Conservation and Management Plan? Have the State Party considered preparing a hydrological survey and hydrological management plan for evacuation of rainwater from the site?

### *New developments*

The ICOMOS Panel has noted that the spring of ʿAin es-Sultan is currently separated from the tell by a public road. Building an alternative road at a distance from the nominated property and converting the existing one into a pedestrian path have been endorsed. Re-routing of this road to form the eastern edge of the proposed buffer zone has been approved and financed by the Jericho Municipality; construction started in August 2022 and appears to be scheduled for completion by July 2023. The ICOMOS Panel would like to seek clarity on whether Environmental and Heritage Impact Assessment has been concluded for this development, as this type of assessment is required for new structures and major changes in the areas surrounding the nominated property, in line with the Tangible Cultural Heritage Law that applies to heritage in the country.

### *Community engagement*

The ICOMOS Panel notes that some issues were raised by the refugee community, inhabiting the Refugee Camp north of the nominated property, in relation to the re-routing of the road that runs through the nominated property. They indicated the need for continuous engagement with the local communities regarding to the development of the nominated property. The ICOMOS Panel would be interested in receiving from the State Party information as regards the engagement of local communities (including the refugees from the ʿAin es-Sultan Refugee Camp) in the process of development of the nominated property but also in the management of the property, as well as the communication strategies that can be used to build good relationships with all stakeholders.

### *Future research*

The ICOMOS Panel recognised the potential that the nominated property represents for further archaeological studies and how the deep stratigraphy preserved on the tell can help answer many research questions related to development and change in the Neolithic period and later. The ICOMOS Panel would be pleased to know what plans the State Party have in relation to future archaeological investigations and studies of the site that would not affect negatively the archaeological vestiges. Is a research strategy in place or being developed?

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation procedure.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above requested information **by 28 February 2023 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* for additional

information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any additional information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So, we would be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation procedure.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gwenaëlle Bourdin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gwenaëlle Bourdin  
Director  
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
	Jericho Municipality
	Palestinian National Commission for Education, Culture and Science
	UNESCO World Heritage Centre