

Statement of Condemnation and Warning

Issued ICOMOS Palestine Regarding the Israeli Occupation Authorities' Decision to Strip the Local Planning Powers and to Roof the Open Courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque, Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town, World Heritage in Danger



ICOMOS Palestine expresses its strong condemnation and denunciation of the ongoing assaults by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Ibrahimi Mosque, a key element of the Hebron Old Town World Heritage Property, inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 2017. The most recent of these assaults is the decision by the Israeli occupation to strip the Hebron Municipality of its planning powers and approve the project to roof the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque.

The Ibrahimi Mosque is a sacred historical and archaeological monument that embodies an accumulated civilizational heritage and possesses exceptional cultural, religious, and human values. These values are manifested in its outstanding architectural character, distinctive design elements, and the profound spiritual, historical, cultural, and human meanings it

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represents. The Ibrahimi Mosque is an exclusively Islamic endowment (waqf¹). Physically, it consists of the enclosure (al-hir)², a massive stone wall built around the tombs of the patriarchs and matriarchs buried in the cave beneath the mosque. Within this enclosure are a series of internal structures and vaulted spaces, including prayer halls and shrines dedicated to the prophets and their wives, all organized around the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque, located in the north-western part of the sanctuary. The open courtyard is rectangular in shape, with an area of approximately 200 square meters, representing about 10% of the total area of the sanctuary. It constitutes the only open and ventilated space within the Ibrahimi Mosque, as the enclosure walls are solid and contain no external openings.

Since the outbreak of the war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, the Ibrahimi Mosque has witnessed a dangerous and rapidly escalating intensification of violations by the Israeli occupation authorities, as part of ongoing efforts to assert control over the site and undermine its Islamic identity. These violations have included repeated closures of the mosque, the banning of the call to prayer (adhan), obstruction of maintenance and restoration works, and the implementation of technical interventions that are incompatible with the architectural character of this historic monument. They have also involved placing locks on several rooms, closing the central electricity cabinet and unilaterally controlling the mosque's electrical system, in addition to conducting excavations in the vicinity of the mosque and installing an electric elevator on its front façade. Collectively, these actions have resulted in visual and physical distortion of the mosque's distinctive character and have negatively affected its authenticity and integrity.

Since the end of 2024, the Ibrahimi Mosque has been subjected to a serious violation represented by the Israeli occupation's announcement of a plan to roof the courtyard of the mosque—an action that would have a negative impact on the site's state of conservation and threaten the Outstanding Universal Value embodied by this historic and religious monument. ICOMOS Palestine has previously warned, in its correspondence with International ICOMOS, of the danger of this assault and the threat it poses to the authenticity and integrity of this historic monument.

¹ An endowment made by a Muslim to a religious, educational, or charitable cause.

² Al-Hir refers to the massive enclosure walls built around the sacred Cave, which, according to religious tradition, contains the remains of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. This roofless structure, almost certainly built by Herod the Great (37 BC – 4 AD), forms the main physical structure of the Ibrahimi Mosque.

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The events of this latest violation unfolded according to the following timeline, all of which took place while excluding the relevant Palestinian authorities:

- On 11/7/2024, Israeli occupation forces installed iron bars and metal sheets and roofed the open part of the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque.
- On 12/7/2024, the violation was removed and confronted by local community institutions and individuals.
- On 9/12/2024, the Director of the Islamic Waqf was verbally informed by the Israeli occupation authorities of the need to roof the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque.
- On 20/2/2025, an official notice was sent by the Israeli occupation authorities to the Director of the Islamic Waqf requiring the roofing of the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque and granting a deadline until 13/3/2025, after which the occupation would carry out the work if the deadline elapsed without action.
- On 15/9/2025, the Israeli occupation authorities issued an expropriation/confiscation order for “public benefit” purposes related to the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque, aiming to expropriate 288 square meters on the roof of the sanctuary above the courtyard area.
- On 10/11/2025, the Palestinian bodies responsible for managing the mosque submitted an official objection to the expropriation order, and on the same date objections were also submitted against the building permit application intended to implement the roofing works of the courtyard.
- On 23/11/2025, the Israeli occupation authorities issued an official decision to strip the local committee affiliated with the Hebron Municipality of its planning and licensing powers and transfer them to the sub-committee for planning and licensing of the occupying authority. On the same day, a session was convened to examine the building permit application in accordance with the submitted plan, despite the pending objections and notwithstanding the fact that the objection to the expropriation order had not yet been adjudicated.
- On 31/12/2025, the Israeli occupation authorities approved the granting of the building permit.

The decision by the Israeli occupation authorities to strip the Hebron Municipality of its planning powers and approve the project to roof the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque, constitutes a clear and explicit violation of the decisions of the World Heritage Committee, particularly Decision No. 10 issued at its 47 session held in Paris from 6-16 July 2025. This decision clearly stipulated the prohibition of any architectural interventions in the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque prior to conducting a comprehensive on-site assessment through a joint technical mission from the World Heritage Centre and International ICOMOS, in

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accordance with Article 172 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. This decision also represents another breach of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972, as the Israeli occupation's decision to strip the Hebron Municipality of planning and building powers contradicts Article (4) of the Convention, which places primary responsibility on the State Party to ensure the protection, conservation, management, and transmission of World Heritage properties to future generations through appropriate legal and administrative measures.

The decision to strip the Hebron Municipality of its planning and building powers entails serious consequences for the management and state of conservation of the Ibrahimi Mosque. It undermines legitimate Palestinian authorities and marginalizes the role of local institutions responsible for managing the site, depriving competent bodies of essential planning, supervision, and decision-making powers, including those related to restoration and maintenance. This, in turn, threatens the continuity of conservation works in accordance with international standards. Moreover, the decision imposes full control by the Israeli occupation authorities over the Ibrahimi Mosque, enabling the implementation of construction interventions without appropriate legal or heritage reference frameworks. It further reinforces policies of separation and isolation of the mosque from its wider context, thereby threatening the historical, urban, and social relationship between the mosque and the surrounding architectural fabric of the World Heritage Property, and negatively affecting its overall management.

ICOMOS Palestine calls upon the international community, UNESCO, the World Heritage Centre, and International ICOMOS to assume their legal and moral responsibilities toward the Ibrahimi Mosque as a site inscribed by the State of Palestine on the List of World Heritage in Danger. It urges immediate action to halt Israeli occupation violations against this historic monument, foremost among them the project to roof the courtyard of the Ibrahimi Mosque and the stripping of planning and building powers from the Hebron Municipality. The association also calls for the dispatch of an urgent technical monitoring mission to assess the state of conservation of the site and to ensure compliance with the provisions of the 1972 World Heritage Convention and the relevant decisions of the World Heritage Committee, particularly Article (172), and to prevent any interventions by the occupying power that would compromise the authenticity, integrity, and Outstanding Universal Value of the sanctuary.

ICOMOS Palestine affirms that the continuation of these violations constitutes a direct existential threat to the historical, architectural, and religious identity of the Ibrahimi Mosque, undermines its protection and management system, and exposes it to the risk of distortion and

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loss of its authentic attributes. Accordingly, ICOMOS Palestine holds the Israeli occupation authorities fully responsible for any damage that may be inflicted upon the site and calls upon international and human rights institutions and bodies concerned with the protection of cultural heritage to adopt practical and deterrent measures to ensure the protection of the Ibrahimi Mosque, preserve its historical character, and safeguard it for future generations as a global human heritage that must not be tampered with or subjected to coercive measures in violation of international law and established conservation standards.

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