



ISIS Video Purports to Show Militants Smashing Ancient Iraq Artifacts

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ISIS released a video on Thursday purportedly showing militants using sledgehammers to smash ancient artifacts in northern Iraq, describing the relics as idols that must be removed. The destructions are apparently part of a campaign by the ISIS extremists who have destroyed a number of shrines — including Muslim holy sites — in order to eliminate what they view as heresy. They are also believed to have [sold ancient artifacts on the black market](#) in order to finance their bloody campaign across the region.

The video does not indicate where the destruction of the artifacts occurred aside from being in Nineveh Province, but Laith Alkhouri, director of MENA research and analysis at Flashpoint Global Partners, told NBC News he believes it took place at the Mosul Museum in northern Iraq. The five-minute video shows a group of bearded men inside the building using hammers and drills to destroy several large statues, which are then shown chipped and in pieces. The artifacts are Assyrian and date back to as early as the 7th century, Alkhouri said, including the statue of the Assyrian King Sargon, which appears destroyed in the video. The beginning of the video also shows what appears to be the burning of books or manuscripts or scripture. The video was posted on social media accounts affiliated with ISIS. NBC News has not independently verified that the antiquities in question have been destroyed.

The desecration is "an affront to any civilized person anywhere," Peter Herdrich, co-founder of [The Antiquities Coalition](#), told NBC News by email. "These objects are part of humanity's shared cultural heritage and help to tell the story of all of us. Since they are irreplaceable, it's impossible to put a value on them, so it is safe to say they are priceless." In New York, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the U.N.'s cultural agency, UNESCO, is examining the video. "The destruction of cultural heritage is reprehensible and criminal," Dujarric said, adding that it robs current and future generations of their past.
