

PROTECT AND PRESERVE INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTY ACT TO BE SIGNED INTO US LAW

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Last week the US Senate voted unanimously to ban the import of nearly all ancient art and artefacts [from Syria](#). The Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act has now passed onto President Obama to be signed into law.

The law [restricts the import](#) of “any archaeological or ethnological material of Syria” and grants the President and Congress other powers to review imports. It will fulfill the US commitment to the UN security council more than a year ago to help stem the sales of antiquities that are believed to be helping finance the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and other military groups in Syria and Iraq. At present American law does not specifically ban the trade in ancient art or artefacts.

The passage of the bill coincided with the publication of a report, [#CultureUnderThreat](#), that intends “to explore solutions to this growing crisis and serve as an ongoing resource to policy makers.” The report, written by a Task Force led by the Antiquities Coalition, the Asia Society and the Middle East Institute, criticizes the “lack of action [that] has kept the US market open to the import of Syrian antiquities—making it a potential source of funding for extremist organisations”.

According to the [New York Times](#), a spokesman from the White House, Peter Boogaard, issued a statement welcoming the Congressional action and pledging to “enhance our ability to identify and prosecute those who unlawfully acquire or sell precious historical artifacts.”

