

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 04, 2019

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20220

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I urge you to take swift action under the statutory authorities already available to you in current law to restrict the importation of cultural objects into the United States from Yemen. Among the many difficult issues the United States must address in Yemen, imposing import restrictions would be a step in the right direction that would help prevent terrorist financing and further destruction of irreplaceable antiquities.

The Department of State has recognized that Yemeni arts and antiquities have been looted and illegally exported during the country's ongoing civil war, and it supported the creation of an Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk for Yemen. The internationally recognized Government of Yemen has also warned that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Houthi fighters are arming themselves through a thriving illicit trade in the region's rich cultural property. The Government of Yemen has provided the United States with a report containing examples of stolen antiquities reaching the global market. The report has been corroborated by international experts.

I have led a bipartisan effort to combat trafficking in cultural objects, particularly when such trafficking is tied to conflict and instability. The Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act of 2016 imposed new import restrictions on antiquities that are trafficked out of Syria. These restrictions mirrored those already in place for Iraq under the Emergency Protection for Iraqi Cultural Antiquities Act of 2004.

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
January 04, 2019
Page Two

The United States must continue working to address the humanitarian crisis and bring about a political resolution to the conflict in Yemen. As part of the complex process for addressing this crisis, I urge you to use existing authorities to safeguard Yemeni cultural property – and block them from U.S. consumers and markets – by restricting the import of antiquities from Yemen.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee

CC: The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State