

"Actions of the Cyprus Police for Combating Illegal Possession and Trafficking of Antiquities"



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Michalis Gavrielides
Chief Inspector
Head of the Office for Combating Illegal
Possession and Trafficking of Antiquities
Cyprus Police Headquarters

Today's presentation will focus on:



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ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ ΚΑΤΑΠΟΛΕΜΗΣΗΣ ΠΑΡΑΝΟΜΗΣ ΚΑΤΟΧΗΣ & ΔΙΑΚΙΝΗΣΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΤΗΤΩΝ

Looting, destruction and Illegal trafficking of cultural property is an international crime. This is a phenomenon that affects especially the countries of origin. Just by listing the countries whose cultural heritage has been looted in recent years, we will see the magnitude of the crime: Ukraine, Syria, Egypt, Afghanistan, Iraq and Cyprus, Greece, and many other countries around the world.



«One of the most dangerous types of crime that people face today... »



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Since July 1974, a great part of Cyprus Cultural Heritage has been destroyed, looted, and illegally traded in different countries of the world. Specifically, more than 16,000 Christian icons and many mosaics, dating back to the 6th and 5th century have been stolen and sold abroad.



The main objectives of the Office for Combating Illegal Possession and Trafficking of Antiquities are:



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1. the protection,
2. the preservation of the International cultural heritage,
3. the fight against illicit trafficking of works of Art and Cultural heritage and
4. The immediate return (repatriation) of stolen antiquities to their lawful owners



Strict legislation has been adopted in this direction, which includes:

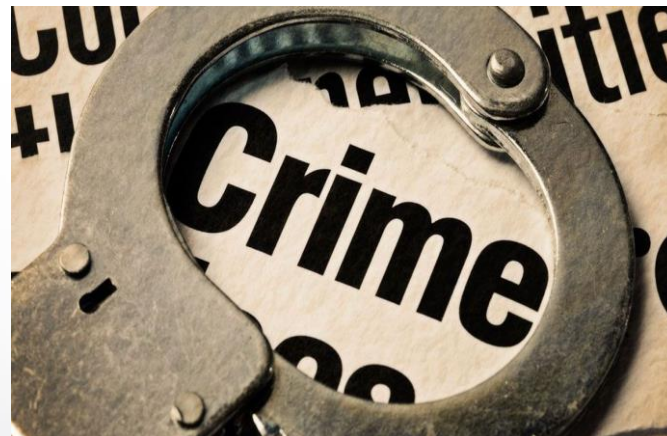


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While in terms of International Law, Cyprus has signed and implements numerous International Conventions. Among them is the Nicosia Convention, which includes serious provisions for criminal prosecution in relation to committing crimes of looting and illicit trafficking of Cultural Goods.



Locally:



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- We apply the Multidisciplinary Approach (Administrative Approach), which plays the most important role in close cooperation with governmental and non-governmental organizations. The establishment of the "National Committee for Combating Cultural Heritage Theft and Trafficking" has made co-operation between the competent authorities more effective and has a direct impact on efforts to curb trafficking and coordinate return and rehabilitation efforts.
- In the field of prevention, the police systematically monitor and protect sensitive areas and buildings, cultural and religious heritage (museums, churches, archeological sites, etc.). In addition, the Maritime Police, conducts frequent maritime patrols and inspections of seagoing vessels.
- The close cooperation with the National Bureau of INTERPOL, is very effective.
- Establishment of a network of investigators in the District C.I.Ds - Serious Crimes, who investigate such cases and trained them accordingly.
- Identifying gaps in legislation.
- Use high technology for the prevention and detection of Antiquities.

International cooperation:



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- Exchange information and cooperate with European and International Organizations, such as EUROPOL, INTERPOL, the WCO and UNESCO, as well as with third countries,
- Participate in international conferences / seminars organized by INTERPOL, the European Union, EUROPOL, Carabinieri and other organizations,
- We organize and coordinate operations under the supervision and cooperation of EUROPOL and W.C.O,
- Cooperation with the FBI, HSCI, Carabinieri, the Greek, French and Dutch Police and other specialized Security Police,
- Cooperation with non-profit organizations (NGOs) and experts abroad,
- We are an active member of the EU CULTNET and other relevant networks,
- We have contributed to the signing of bilateral agreements with other countries on police cooperation in the fight against organized crime and other forms of crime, including the illicit trafficking of works of art and antiquities.

Main challenges and threats:



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- **The Increase of both the National and the International Active Market (Market),**
- **Lack of legislation and regulations for on online auctions,**
- **Increase in illegal excavations of ancient tombs and illegal use of metal detectors,**
- **Lack of evidence, for the items that have been illegally excavated,**
- **Use by the criminals the legal terms "Due diligence", "Limitation period", "Burden of proof" and "Good faith", to facilitate the activities of Archaeologists and art dealers and private collectors,**
- **Criminals, smugglers and their accomplices are part of a well-organized criminal network, difficult to detect and identify,**
- **Different Legislations, between countries of origin and destination,**
- **International Treaties are not effective,**

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- **Illegal trade in cultural goods is linked to money laundering, drug trafficking, financing organized crime and terrorist groups,**
- **The constant change of the itineraries that the stolen Antiquities move, depending on how friendly the environment is to the smugglers (gaps Legislation, corruption phenomena, etc.),**
- **Lack of exchange of information and experience,**
- **Low risk, big profits,**
- **Use of the dark web (Dark web) and electronic currency (Bit coin),**
- **Use of modern technology by criminal groups in their illegal activities,**
- **Looting in war zones, result difficult cooperation with local authorities and governments.**



TWO ICONS FROM THE CHURCH OF AGIOS IAKOVOS IN TRIKOMO VILLAGE IN OCCUPIED CYPRUS. REPATRIATED FROM SWITZERLAND.



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“It is necessary to safeguard every Nation’s cultural heritage because we have a duty to preserve history and culture for the benefit of future Generations”





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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION**

