

Recovers an Important Artefact from the Akkadian Civilisation

Embassy of Republic of Iraq in London

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USPA NEWS - As part of the ongoing efforts of the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in London to monitor and recover Iraqi antiquities, and in line with the government programme aimed at restoring national heritage held abroad, the Embassy received on 5 March 2026 a valuable artefact consisting of an ancient seal dating back to the Akkadian civilisation (2250 BC). The recovery process was carried out in coordination with the Art Loss Register and the The Metropolitan Police Art and Antiques Unit (AAU) under the UK Home Office.

Investigations confirmed that the piece had been recorded as a stolen artefact from the Duhok Museum in 1991. This recovery reflects the ongoing cooperation between Iraq and the United Kingdom in protecting cultural heritage and restoring Iraqi antiquities.

The handover ceremony was attended by His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq to the United Kingdom, Dr Salih Hussein Ali Al-Tamimi, along with several Embassy officials. Representing the British side were Mr James Ratcliffe, Director of Recoveries and General Counsel at the Art Loss Register, and his colleague Ms Olivia Whitting. Also in attendance were Dr St John Simpson, Head of the Iraq, Iran, Arabia and Central Asia Department at the British Museum, and Mr Ray Swan, Head of Investigations at the UK Art and Antiques Police Unit.

During the ceremony, His Excellency delivered remarks in which he expressed his sincere appreciation for the efforts made by the British authorities, commending their cooperation in pursuing the case and facilitating the return of the artefact to Iraq. In his speech, His Excellency noted that despite the challenges currently facing the region and the wider international environment, as well as the developments taking place across the Middle East, the commitment demonstrated by the British side in fulfilling its responsibilities in this matter represents a notable example of the strong cooperation between the two countries. It also reflects the shared determination of both sides to protect humanity's cultural heritage and safeguard the legacy of civilisation.

His Excellency also praised this initiative and the constructive cooperation shown by the British authorities, emphasising that the recovery of antiquities constitutes an essential part of protecting Iraq's historical and cultural identity. He further highlighted the continued diplomatic and legal efforts, undertaken in coordination with the relevant British institutions, to recover additional Iraqi artefacts that left the country through illicit means and to return them to their place of origin.

The Ambassador stressed that the recovery of Iraqi antiquities remains a national priority due to their historical and civilisational significance, reflecting the depth of the heritage of Mesopotamia. He noted that such cooperation demonstrates the strength of the relationship between Iraq and the United Kingdom and their shared commitment to safeguarding humanity's cultural heritage.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Embassy presented letters of appreciation and thanks to the representatives of the British institutions that participated in the recovery process.

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