

January 17, 2018

Director-General Audrey Azoulay  
UNESCO  
7 place Fontenoy  
75007 Paris, France

Director-General Azoulay,

We, the nominators of the Palestine heritage document the [Liberation Graphics Collection of Palestine Posters](#) to UNESCO's Memory of the World program, are writing to reiterate our request that your office impartially review this heritage document's eligibility for inscription in the 2017 Register.

The [response we received from UNESCO](#) to our initial December 21 request for review listed the International Advisory Commission's (IAC's) two rationales for denial. We request that the IAC reconsider its denial for the reasons we outline below.

**IAC Rationale 1. "...although this nomination has been re-submitted following previous recommendations, several of the items proposed are still against UNESCO's principles and spirit of peace, dialogue and tolerance."**

- The IAC's position is that "several" of the items are against UNESCO principles. Yet the IAC denied inscription to all 1,600 Palestine posters rather than to only the few posters that it perceived as problematic. Furthermore, no specific reasons were given as to why the posters were objectionable. This lack of specificity denied us the opportunity to defend against the disqualification of specific posters on documentarian, art history, visual anthropology, or library science grounds.
- The [IAC response acknowledges](#) that our nomination for the 2017 cycle incorporated all the changes to our 2015 nomination that the Memory of the World program had recommended. Because we were not informed that further objections to specific posters had materialized, we were denied the opportunity to remove those posters as well so that the rest of the *Collection* could be inscribed.
- In October 2017, UNESCO's Executive Board [reaffirmed the Memory of the World's mission](#), underlining "the importance of documentary heritage to promote the sharing of knowledge for greater understanding and dialogue, **in order to promote** peace and respect for freedom, democracy, human rights and dignity" [bold added]. The Memory of the World program has never referred in its communications with us to any operative guidelines establishing that heritage documents, *in and of themselves*, must accord with a particular aesthetic value or subjective sensibility. We note that the following resources have, rightly, been inscribed to the Register:

The [Bayeux Tapestry](#) (violent battle scenes of the Norman invasion of England)

The [Life and Works of Ernesto "Che" Guevara](#) (Bolivia insurgency diary)

The [Traveling Registry of the Conquistadors of Peru](#) (chronicle of South America's trauma of "westernization")

The [War Diary of Admiral Yi Sun-sin](#) (combat records)

The [Archives of Terror](#) (official documents of Operation Condor and right-wing police repression in Paraguay)

Obviously, the above inscribed documents do not in their entirety reflect “peace, dialogue and tolerance,” but they do admirably serve the Memory of the World’s founding principle, which is to “guard against collective amnesia,” and they provide an historical context on which people may build peace, dialogue and tolerance.

- A similar modern poster collection is already inscribed in the Register: the [Russian posters of the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries](#). The *Liberation Graphics Collection of Palestine Posters* is congruent to this heritage document in terms of its political, social, historical, and graphic content. We fail to see any valid documentarian basis for inscribing the one and excluding the other.

**IAC Rationale 2. “...given the lack of clarity about the archival status of the collection, issues of preservation and access to it could arise and impact the state of the collection as a whole.”**

- Regarding lack of clarity about archival status: Our [nomination](#) (Sections, 4.4.,6.2, 8.0, and 9.0), is highly specific regarding how the *Liberation Graphics Collection of Palestine Posters* has been managed. It is far more detailed on these matters than the application submitted on behalf of the inscribed [Russian posters](#). We note that neither the IAC nor the Register Sub-Committee (RSC) mentioned during the previous cycle that there was a lack of clarity about archival status. Regardless, we are confident that the concerns can be easily addressed and we stand ready to do so.
- Regarding issues of preservation: Twice the RSC has [recommended](#) the *Liberation Graphics Collection of Palestine Posters* for inscription (unanimously at least in one case). We submit this as irrefutable evidence that the nomination comports with the Memory of the World’s objective to “facilitate preservation of the world’s documentary heritage.” We acknowledge that the hard-copy posters in this *Collection* are indeed in a [“parlous state of preservation” and suffer from “inadequate housing and funding”](#)—but addressing vulnerability is at the heart of UNESCO’s Memory of the World program. Even in the absence of resources, the *Liberation Graphics Collection of Palestine Posters* has been well curated over the past forty years. Each poster is digitized, translated, annotated, indexed, and presented in chronological order. The *Collection* itself serves as the foundational plinth for a larger digital [archives](#) now hosting almost 12,000 hard-copy and digital Palestine posters.
- Regarding issues of access: As is made clear in our [nomination](#), the *Liberation Graphics Collection of Palestine Posters* is accessible to the public via a free, searchable online [database](#); posters can be sorted based on year, iconography, wellspring, publisher, and a host of other indices. We have googlestats that show the public is engaging with this material in growing numbers. In addition, all requests for physical access by scholars and journalists to date have been honored.
- Regarding issues of preservation *and* access: The IAC speculated that such issues “could arise,” but this is likely true for every heritage document. Were that to occur for any heritage

document, the Memory of the World program already has a mechanism: it can be [removed from the Register](#).

### **Requested Action**

Based on our above rebuttal, we urge you to redress the IAC's rejection of the *Liberation Graphics Collection of Palestine Posters*, and to:

1. Inscribe the nomination in full to the 2017 Memory of the World Register.

OR

2. Inscribe the nomination minus the several posters that the IAC considers problematic.

OR

3. Provisionally inscribe the *Collection* while we address the IAC's concerns about a specific small number of posters ([as was done with](#) the *Manuscript Collection of the Gazi Husrev-Beg Library* and *The Piri Reis World Map* nominations).

May we receive a pro-forma confirmation that this document has been received? Thank you.

We look forward to your expedited response.

Respectfully,

#### The Nominators

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#### Co-Nominator

Ehab Bessaïso, Ph.D., Minister of Culture, Palestine  
(acting for the Palestinian National Authority)

cc:

Ambassador Elias Sanbar, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO for Palestine  
Ambassador Riyad H. Mansour, Palestinian Ambassador to the United Nations  
Ms. Iskra Panevska, Programme Specialist, Memory of the World Program