



**ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT
MINISTRY OF ANTIQUITIES
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER**

PRESS RELEASE

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From: Office of Dr. Zahi Hawass, Minister of Antiquities

Subject: The state of Egyptian antiquities today

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Yesterday Dr. Zahi Hawass was appointed as the Minister of Antiquities, the newly created department that will be charged with the care and protection of all Egyptian monuments and museums. This department will absorb the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and Dr. Zahi will continue excavating, writing books, and representing his country.

The following statement was made by Dr. Hawass this morning:

I would like to tell the people all over the world the good news: the storage magazine that was looted in Qantara, in the Sinai, has had 288 objects returned! I cannot say exactly how many objects were lost, but it seems that the majority of what was stolen has been returned.

I would like to say that we were afraid that sites around Alexandria were robbed, but the military is now protecting them all. Also, the site of San el-Hagar in the Delta, where important 21st and 22nd Dynasty tombs are located, is being protected by the local Egyptians. More good news comes from Saqqara, where a committee reported that, although outlaws did open the padlocks of tombs there, they did not enter the tombs or cause any damage; everything is safe. The Egyptian Museum, Cairo, is fine too. A total of seventy objects have been broken, but the museum was dark and the nine robbers did not recognize the value of what was in the vitrines. They opened thirteen cases, threw the seventy objects on the ground and broke them, including one Tutankhamun case, from which they broke the statue of the king on a panther. However, the broken objects can all be restored, and we will begin the restoration process this week.

The commanders of the army are now protecting the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, and all of the major sites of Egypt (Luxor, Aswan, Saqqara, and the pyramids of Giza) are safe. The twenty-four museums in Egypt, including the Coptic and Islamic Museums in Cairo, are all safe as well. I would like to say that I am very happy to see that the Egyptian people, young and old, stood as one person against the escaped prisoners to protect monuments all over the country. The monuments are safe because of both the army and the ordinary people.

Some foreigners think Egypt is not interested in protecting our monuments and museums, but that is not true at all. Egypt has 5000 years of civilization, and we love our heritage. I want to send a message to the people of Egypt: all of you are responsible, to ultimately be judged by your own

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history, to protect your monuments, and should not permit ignorance or outlaws to damage our history- it is the most important thing we own. I am sure the bells from the churches are ringing now, and the voices from the minarets of mosques are calling, to say that Egypt is a safe place to live.

We all believe Egypt will be safe.