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PRESS RELEASE

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

Subject: Another day and the Sphinx is still sad.

Contact: The Press Office: sca3press@gmail.com or +20 (0)2 2735 3964; Also visit: www.sca-egypt.org/eng/MR_PR.htm.

After a complete review of the seventy broken objects that are being restored in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, there are twenty or twenty-five objects that are being restored right now.

Today I went to the Sanctuary of the Sphinx at Giza with reporters from ABC News, from Washington, D.C., in America; a television news crew from Italy; and a journalist from Croatia. Upon entering, I remembered two events: when I was appointed as First Inspector to Giza in 1974 after working at Abu Simbel, and when I returned to Giza from receiving my PhD at University of Pennsylvania in 1987 to find the Sphinx being badly restored with cement! I put an immediate stop to these restorations; the team had removed all the ancient stones and did not seem concerned with keeping the original proportions. Fixing this botched restoration project was very important to the Egyptian people, and it took ten years to return the Great Sphinx to life.

I remember the first time I descended the steps to the Sphinx as First Inspector of Giza in 1974, the first time I descended the steps as Chief Inspector of Giza in 1980, the first time I descended the steps as Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities in 2002, and today I descended the steps to the Sphinx as the new Minister of Antiquities. Throughout these periods of my life, the Sphinx has been witness to all I have done and all that the Egyptian people have done. Today, I was very pleased to see the current conservation work underway on the chest of the Sphinx; this is one of the only parts of the Sphinx not encased in stones. Every year the wind blows away the conservation material, and every year a team adds a new protective layer back on. I am so happy that we have a proper conservation plan in place now.

When I saw the pyramids today with reporters from all over the world, I decided that I would begin to make the necessary arrangements to reopen Giza to tourists.

Finally, I would once again like to say that the rumors claiming that the tombs of Maya, Nefer, and the Two Brothers in Saqqara were recently damaged are not true. The Imhotep Museum and the storage magazines of Saqqara are also safe.



Scene of Maya and his wife from his tomb in Saqqara. (Photo: M. Megahed)



Tomb of Two Brothers in Saqqara. (Photo: M. Megahed)



Daily Life scene from the tomb of Nefer in Saqqara. (Photo: M. Megahed)