



Mausoleum Alpha Moya destroyed in Timbuktu

The Cultural Heritage Sites of Mali

Mali's rich trove of architectural traditions and historic sites has recently become emblematic of the plight of cultural heritage in times of civil strife. While international conventions help to protect heritage when conflict crosses geopolitical borders, there are limited options when the conflict is within national boundaries. As important symbols of cultural identity and history, the impact of heritage loss is even greater in such times of crises because of societal vulnerabilities.

Armed conflict has affected the northern regions of Mali since April 2012, and historic sites in Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal have suffered significant destruction. The Great Toguna in the city of Douenza was ruined. Nine of the sixteen mausoleums within the World Heritage Site boundaries of Timbuktu were destroyed by rebel forces between May and July of 2012, and even those sites not directly impacted by the fighting have been negatively impacted. Rebel forces have occupied parts of the Land of Dogons, encroaching on the Bandiagara Escarpment. Tourism—a major source of local income—has dramatically diminished, and the national crisis has drained government coffers. The conditions are dire and resources scarce for cultural heritage conservation throughout the country.

By including the entirety of Mali's cultural heritage on the Watch, WMF declares its commitment to advocating for the protection of the country's many significant sites, and raises a call to action by the global community.