

## **SAFE AND DONNY GEORGE HOLD SECOND ANNUAL GLOBAL CANDLELIGHT VIGIL FOR THE IRAQ MUSEUM**

New York---March 10, 2008---The nonprofit organization SAFE/Saving antiquities for Everyone, Inc., today announced its plans to organize, promote and help facilitate a three-day Global Candlelight Vigil on April 10-12, 2008 to mark the fifth anniversary of the looting of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. The Vigil, endorsed by the Iraq Museum's former Director General Dr. Donny George, aims to draw attention to the thousands of priceless artifacts still missing from the Museum and the ongoing looting and destruction of Iraq's more than 10,000 registered archaeological sites.

SAFE is promoting the Global Candlelight Vigil at <http://www.savingantiquities.org/candlelightvigils.php>. SAFE is also supplying schools, universities, museums, and organizations with a downloadable Vigil tools including announcement flyers, videos and a brochure prepared in cooperation with The Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

During the three-day Vigil period—April 10, 11 and 12—groups from California to Baghdad will gather, light a candle, pause for a moment of silence and discuss the serious issues of museum security, the looting of ancient sites and global trade in illicit antiquities.

As Dr. George has said: "On the 13th of April, when I went back to the Museum, it was as if a hurricane had hit. What they could not take, they smashed... But the main problem was the looting of the archaeological sites" because whenever objects are looted from the ground, the cultural and historical information that proper excavation would have yielded is lost forever. "It is not something we are losing and tomorrow we can buy again. It is the memory of the Iraqi people, the memories of mankind."

Last year, SAFE President Cindy Ho conceived of the Global Candlelight Vigil for the Iraq Museum as a way to call attention to an ongoing cultural heritage crisis. "Heightened public awareness does increase pressure on governments to enforce existing laws and treaties, which can help to curb the trade in illicit antiquities from Iraq and looted archaeological sites around the world," says Ms. Ho. "By working with Dr. George and groups around the world, SAFE hopes to again focus the world's attention on these issues."

After the Global Candlelight Vigil concludes, SAFE plans to compile photographs and videos from the various gatherings in a video memorial.

As Vigil events are confirmed, information for those who wish to attend an event in their vicinity will be available at <http://www.savingantiquities.org/attendvigil.php>.

### **About SAFE**

SAFE/Saving Antiquities for Everyone, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, creates educational programs and media campaigns to raise public awareness regarding the importance of preserving cultural heritage worldwide. SAFE is a coalition of professionals in communications, media, and advertising working alongside experts in the academic, legal and law enforcement communities. SAFE has no political affiliations.