

## **PRESERVATION ADVOCATES ASK UNESCO TO INTERVENE IN DEMOLITION OF KASHGAR, CHINA**

New York, N.Y. and Phnom Penh, (July 21, 2009)--A coalition of cultural heritage organizations, archaeologists and art historians led by SAFE/Saving Antiquities for Everyone (New York, N.Y.) and Heritage Watch (Phnom Penh, Cambodia) have asked Francesco Bandarin, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris, to intervene to halt the demolition of ancient buildings of Kashgar. More than 2,000 years old, the city was an important stop on the Silk Road in what is today Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Province, China, where ethnic and religious tensions have flared in recent weeks.

The letter's 25 signatories included representatives of the Society for American Archaeology and the Uyghur American Association. The full text of their letter is available at [safecorner.savingantiquities.org/2009/07/statement-of-concern-and-appeal-for.html](http://safecorner.savingantiquities.org/2009/07/statement-of-concern-and-appeal-for.html).

Chinese authorities have stated that Old Kashgar must be demolished to make way for earthquake-resistant structures. The coalition told Bandarin that while they applaud the authorities' concern for residents' well-being, they believe this goal could have been accomplished without the loss to tangible and intangible cultural heritage that has resulted from the ongoing demolition work. Reportedly, 85% of the old city-- a major center of Islamic and Uyghur culture and architecture -- already has come down.

"China is proud of its heritage and has wanted to showcase it to the world," said Cindy Ho, President, SAFE/Saving Antiquities for Everyone. "But demolishing the old city poses an irreversible threat to the Uyghurs' cultural heritage. We believe the seemingly competing goals of safety and preservation can be achieved."

"Kashgar is a nationally-registered historic district, as are many other important heritage sites, yet they have been disappearing one by one over the past decade," said Dr. Dougald O'Reilly, Director, Heritage Watch.

In the letter, the coalition asked Bandarin to try to persuade the Chinese government to preserve what remains of Kashgar and to include it in UNESCO's designation of the Silk Road as part of the World Heritage List. "Kashgar's historic and aesthetic attributes clearly qualify it for inclusion," said Ho.

### **About SAFE**

SAFE/Saving Antiquities for Everyone is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving cultural heritage worldwide. Our mission is to raise public awareness about the irreversible damage that results from looting, smuggling and trading illicit antiquities. Learn more at [www.savingantiquities.org](http://www.savingantiquities.org).

### **About Heritage Watch**

Heritage Watch is a non-profit organization working to preserve the world's cultural heritage with a focus on Southeast Asia. Our mission is to educate people about the value of the world's heritage resources. Learn more at [www.heritagewatchinternational.org](http://www.heritagewatchinternational.org).