

## Rock Art Sites in Southern Provinces Recognition, Preservation and Development Conference

**R**ock carvings and cave paintings are by essence the manifestation of artistic works of humanity in its infancy. This art, which demonstrates cultural representations and activities of prehistoric and proto-historic man on rocky substrates, constitutes an inestimable inheritance.

Rock art is a universal art. Its geographical area covers the Scandinavian countries, North Africa, the Great Sahara, the extreme south of Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australia, etc...

Morocco, especially in its Southern Provinces, is home to many rock art sites, which are of two types:

1. A very expressive and concrete heritage: mounds, prehistoric and proto-historic settlements, tools, bones, etc.
2. A support which offers a tangible heritage while artistic features, such as rock paintings and engravings, are abstract designs, and constitute an immaterial heritage.

Morocco is also one of the few countries where rock drawings illustrate a period of the Bronze Age. Therefore, the presence of an ancient civilization on its territory is obvious.

However, the importance of this heritage, which dates back to several thousand years, is underestimated by people and authorities, including local ones. The lack of awareness and interest have therefore resulted into an alarming condition of the rock art heritage in Morocco. In addition, the following elements have exacerbated its poor conditions:

- The scarcity of excavations and study due to inadequate resources.
- ■ Vandalism and illicit trafficking in rock carvings, and the destruction of outdoor sites and tumuli.
- ■ ■ The lack of a complete and accurate dating of periods.

Against this background, a collective and voluntary action is required in order to (i) draw up an inventory of rock art and tumuli in the Southern Provinces, (ii) identify actions that would preserve and transmit this heritage and hold local stakeholders (territorial leaders, elected officials, associations, public opinion, etc..) accountable for the preservation of cultural, historic, aesthetic, identity and economic values linked to this heritage and (iii) take concrete measures for its integration into a global development project.

Therefore, the Centre of Saharan Studies and the regional commissions of the CNDH (Tan-Tan-Guelmim, Laayoune-Es-Semara and Dakhla-Aousserd) are organizing a day of presentation and awareness. The principal goals of the meeting are to contribute to the preservation of rock art's heritage in the region, and strengthen the role of local actors in this matter, in relation to issues raised by the inclusion of cultural components in development processes.

### The event will address three areas:

- 1 - Definitions and presentation of an inventory of rock art and associated sites in the Southern Provinces;
- 2 - Legal aspects and prospects for development of this heritage;
- 3 - Contribution of rock heritage to local development.

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## Conference - Program

### 8:30 : Arrival of participants

### 9:00 - 9:30 : Opening

**Chair of the panel: Mr. Omar Dkhil, President of the Justice Commission, Laws and Human Rights from the Chamber of Councilors**

Mr. Taoufik Berdiji, President of the Regional Human Rights Commission of Tan-Tan-Guelmim

Mr. Abdelfettah Lebjoui, Wali of Guelmim-Es-Semara, Governor of Guelmim Province

Mr. Abdellah Alaoui, Director of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture

Mr. Lahbib Nazoumi, President of the Regional Council

Mr. Abdelouahaab Belfqih, Member of Parliament and President of the City Council of Guelmim

### 9:30 : Break

### 10:00 - 11:30 : First Session: Inventory and legal framework

**Chair of the panel: Mrs. Sallam Tairouze, Member of the Regional Human Rights Commission of Tan-Tan Guelmim**

Mr. Abdelhak Lmjidi, Researcher and Professor, National Center of Rock Art Heritage, Agadir  
*Rock art in Southern Provinces: Study and inventory*

Mr. Youssef Bokbot, Professor, National Institute of Archeological and Heritage Sciences, Rabat  
*Tumuli and archeological sites in Sahara*

Mr. Mustapha Jlok, Advisor to the President of the National Human Rights Council, Rabat  
*National and international human rights laws for the preservation of rock art and archeological sites*

### 11:30 - 12:00 : Open discussion

### 12:00 - 13:00 : Second session: Preservation, actors and initiatives

**Chair of the panel: Mrs Maimouna Essayed, Member of the Regional Human Rights Commission of Dakhla-Aousserd**

Mr. Ahmed Ousmouss, Director of the National Center of Rock Art Heritage, Direction of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture

*Actions of the National Center of Rock Art Heritage for the preservation of rock art and archeological sites in Southern Provinces*

Mr. Mohamed Houmymid, National Coordinator of Southern Oases Programme, Agency of Economic and Social Development in Southern Provinces  
*Cultural heritage, vector of development in Moroccan Sahara: experience of the South Agency*

Mr. Mohammed Mouloud Baiba, Researcher and Professor, Secretary-General of the association Mirane, Es-Semara

*Preservation and enhancement of the rock art heritage in Southern Provinces: the case of Asli bou kerch's site in Es-Smara*

Mr. Mahfoud Asmhri, Researcher, Secretary-General of the Moroccan Association of the Rock Art (AMAR)

*The House of Rock Art in Icht : Local initiative for the preservation of rock art in Southern Provinces*

### 13:00 - 14:30 : Lunch

### 14:30 - 15:30 : Second session - continued

### 15:30 - 16:00 : Open discussion

### 16:00 - 17:30 : Third session: Round Table

**Chair of the panel: Mrs Oum El Fadl Maalainin, Member of the Regional Human Rights Commission of Laayoune-Es-Semara**

*Preservation policies and roles of actors in the matter: Ministry of Culture, public institutions, organizations, local authorities associations, etc...*

### 17:30 - 18:00 : Closing remarks