

## **Examining Israel's Attacks on Abrahamic Heritages in Palestine: Theological and Legal Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

The Palestine-Israel conflict is one of the most complex humanitarian conflicts in modern history. Israel's attacks on Palestine have caused devastating impact not only on human lives but also on historical, cultural, and religious heritages, including Abrahamic heritages, which have precious value to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. This article explores the doctrines of Abrahamic religions toward the protection of cultural and religious heritage and how it aligns with the human rights principle and international humanitarian law regulations regarding the protection of cultural and religious heritage during armed conflicts. By integrating theological and legal analyses, this article offers a unique perspective on the necessity of safeguarding cultural and religious heritage. The research is significant due to its interdisciplinary approach, which combines theological and legal perspectives, contributing to the broader discourse on cultural and religious heritage protection in conflict areas. The literature study method is used to understand the theological and legal foundations underlying the importance of safeguarding and preserving cultural and religious heritage, as well as finding solutions and practical recommendations for the preservation of cultural and religious heritage in conflict areas.

**Keywords:** Palestine; Cultural Heritage; Religious Heritage; International Humanitarian Law

### **Introduction**

The Palestine-Israel conflict is one of the most complex and heartbreaking issues in modern history. Historical records indicate that the roots of the conflict go back long Before the Common Era.<sup>1</sup> In the early 20th century, the rising tensions under the British Mandate for Palestine fueled strife between Jews and Arab factions.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 triggered the first Palestinian-Israeli war, which expanded as Arab-Israeli War—resulting in significant territorial gains for Israel and the displacement of thousands of Palestinians.<sup>3</sup> Between 1948–1967, there was a decrease in violence, but Palestinian fedayeen groups—often supported

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<sup>1</sup> K.P. Fabian, “The Israeli-Palestine Conflict: How to Cut the Gordian Knot?” *India Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2002): 39-42, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45073398>.

<sup>2</sup> Baruch Kimmerling & Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Harvard University Press, 2003): 28-30 & 183-184; See also: United Nations, “Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem: 1917-1947 (Part I),” <https://www.un.org/unispal/history2/origins-and-evolution-of-the-palestine-problem/>.

<sup>3</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *ibid*, 156-161; See also: Eska Dwipayana Pulungan, “Arab-Israeli Conflict: Its Roots and Future,” *Maslahah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (2022): 68-69, <https://jurnalsains.id/index.php/maslahah/article/view/29/25>.

by Egypt, continued attacks against Israel as a form of reprisal.<sup>4</sup> This was followed by the Six-Day War in 1967, during which Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip further intensified the conflict.<sup>5</sup> The war led to the displacement of more Palestinians and the beginning of Israeli settlements in these territories. In the late 20th century, the First Intifada began in 1987, a significant uprising by Palestinians against the Israeli occupation marked by widespread violence.<sup>6</sup> Then, in the early 21st century, the Second Intifada or Al-Aqsa Intifada took place.<sup>7</sup> The conflict between Palestine and Israel escalated further, marked by numerous conflicts in Gaza and the Gaza War of 2008-2009.<sup>8</sup> The escalating conflict between Palestine and Israel has resulted in a high number of civilian casualties, undermining peace efforts.<sup>9</sup> The conflict has intensified over time, and one of the peaks that has attracted international attention occurred on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a large-scale counterattack on Israel—resulting in many casualties.<sup>10</sup> The subsequent Israeli military attacks in Gaza caused widespread damage and major humanitarian crisis, drawing condemnation from the international community.<sup>11</sup>

The Israeli attacks on Palestine have not only caused deaths but have also destroyed various cultural and religious heritage sites in Palestine that are rich in history and national identity, including the Abrahamic heritage. Palestine holds an important place for cultural and religious heritages of the three main Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the history.<sup>12</sup> Hebron, one of historical city in Palestine, is closely linked to religious narratives and historical events that are central to these religions.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Palestine is also home to many UNESCO World Heritage Sites and other important religious landmarks.<sup>14</sup> The complex history of the Palestinian region, marked by periods of coexistence and continuous conflict, has influenced the formation of its cultural landscape. The social and cultural history of Palestine under Ottoman and British rule, as well as the legacy of architectural styles from the Roman-Byzantine, Islamic, and Ottoman eras—has highlighted the diverse and multi-ethnic nature of Palestinian society, and is an invaluable national treasure of Palestine.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *ibid*, 229; See also: John B. Wolf, “The Palestinian Resistance Movement,” *Current History* 60, no. 353 (1971): 29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45314057>.

<sup>5</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *ibid*, 240-241; See also: Bill Bowring, “Palestine-Israel: A century-long struggle,” *Socialist Lawyer*, no. 94 (2024): 26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48774231>.

<sup>6</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *ibid*, 296-316; See also: Maher Al-Charif, “Palestine. A History Punctuated By the Intifadas,” *Orient XXI*, September 29, 2020, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/palestine-a-history-punctuated-by-the-intifadas,4166>.

<sup>7</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *ibid*, 391-398; Maher Al-Charif, *ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> Camille Mansour, “Reflections on the War on Gaza,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38, no. 4 (2009): 91-95, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2009.38.4.91>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Wesy Oktavina et al, “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict After Hamas Attacks October 7, 2023 (Framing Voa Indonesia and Deutsche Welle Indonesia)” *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Teknologi* 5, no. 3 (2024): 939, <https://doi.org/10.59141/jist.v5i3.944>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Rami K. Isaac, “Cultural heritage in Palestine: challenges and opportunities,” in Siamak Seyfi & C. Michael Hall (eds), *Cultural and Heritage Tourism in the Middle East and North Africa: Complexities, Management and Practices* (London: Routledge, 2020): chapter 8.

<sup>13</sup> Antonio Basallote Marín, “Al Jalil Al Rahmān y el Castillo de San Abraham. Una aproximación a Palestina medieval desde la microhistoria y la historia local,” *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 34, no. 2 (2023): 253, <https://doi.org/10.5209/anqe.87310>.

<sup>14</sup> See: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “World Heritage List,” <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list>.

<sup>15</sup> Mumen Abuarkub & Faiq M. S. Al-Zwainy, “Architectural and Historical Development in Palestine,” *International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology* 9, no. 9 (2018): 1217-1233, [https://iaeme.com/Home/article\\_id/IJCIET\\_09\\_09\\_118](https://iaeme.com/Home/article_id/IJCIET_09_09_118).

According to reports from various sources, many cultural and religious heritage sites in Palestine have been damaged and even destroyed by Israel. Previously, Gaza City suffered significant damage due to the wars in 2008-2009, 2012, and 2014—which greatly affected historic buildings and urban landscapes.<sup>16</sup> The Israeli military offensive has destroyed more than 300,000 buildings that have been partially or completely destroyed after October 7, 2023—which also includes historical and archaeological sites.<sup>17</sup> According to the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 226 of the 316 archaeological sites in Gaza have been damaged by direct Israeli attacks.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Old City of Nablus, an important part of Palestinian cultural heritage, suffered severe damage during the Israeli military operation from 2002 to 2005.<sup>19</sup> This destruction extends beyond physical damage—affecting spatial and human experiences, as well as collective memory.

Religious sites of great importance to the Abrahamic communities have also been damaged. The Tomb of the Patriarchs in the Old City of Hebron, which is an important site for Jews and Muslims, is considered “in danger” by UNESCO.<sup>20</sup> The site is important for Muslims and Jews because it is believed to be the burial place of the Prophet Abraham, his wife Sarah, their son Isaac, their grandson Jacob, and their wives.<sup>21</sup> The Jabalia Byzantine Church, the Saint Hilarion Monastery, the Saint Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church, the Church of Saint Porfirio, and the Holy Family Church, which are very valuable to Christians, were also destroyed and damaged by Israeli attacks.<sup>22</sup> Then, the Mosque of Othman bin Qashqar, the Mosque of Sayed al-Hashim, and the Great Omari Mosque, which houses rare manuscripts—were among the mosques that suffered damage and destruction.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, although not completely destroyed, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is one of the valuable sites for Muslims, has been the center of tension and conflict since

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, “Environmental impact of the conflict in Gaza: Preliminary assessment of environmental impacts,” [https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/environmental\\_impact\\_conflict\\_Gaza.pdf](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/environmental_impact_conflict_Gaza.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Dian Kencana, “95 Percent Gaza’s Cultural Heritage Crumbles Under Israeli Attacks,” *SEA Today*, February 6, 2025, <https://news.seatoday.com/dian-kencana/12481/95-percent-gaza%E2%80%99s-cultural-heritage-crumbles-under-israeli-attacks>.

<sup>18</sup> Middle East Monitor, “Report: Israel destroyed 226 archaeological sites in Gaza,” February 7, 2025, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250207-report-israel-destroyed-226-archaeological-sites-in-gaza>.

<sup>19</sup> Nurhan Abujidi, “Weaponised Heritage: Urbicide by Construction and Destruction in Nablus, Palestine,” in José Antonio González Zarandona et al (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Heritage Destruction* (London: Routledge, 2023): chapter 28.

<sup>20</sup> Deutsche Welle, “UNESCO puts Hebron on its danger list,” July 07, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/unesco-puts-hebron-on-its-world-heritage-in-danger-list/a-39601093>.

<sup>21</sup> Eric F. F. Bishop, “Hebron, City of Abraham, the Friend of God,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 16, no. 2 (1948): 94-99, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1457287>; Rabab Alshweiky & Zeynep Gül Ünal, “An approach to risk management and preservation of cultural heritage in multi identity and multi managed sites: Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi/Abraham's Tombs of the Patriarchs in Al-Khalil/Hebron,” *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 20 (2016) 709-714, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2016.02.014>.

<sup>22</sup> Indlieb Farazi Saber, “A ‘cultural genocide’: Which of Gaza’s heritage sites have been destroyed?” *Al Jazeera*, January 14, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/14/a-cultural-genocide-which-of-gazas-heritage-sites-have-been-destroyed>; Middle East Monitor, “Israel targeting Gaza's history, destroying ancient mosques, churches,” December 8, 2023, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20231208-israel-targeting-gazas-history-destroying-ancient-mosques-churches>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Israel controlled East Jerusalem in 1967.<sup>24</sup> Provocative visits by Israeli figures and restrictions on Muslim congregations have contributed to ongoing tensions.<sup>25</sup>

The list highlights various Abrahamic and historical heritage sites in Palestine that have been affected by Israeli attacks. The damage ranges from partial damage to total destruction and includes sites important to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. These actions not only threaten physical artifacts and structures but also the cultural and religious heritage, as well as the identity of the Palestinian people and Abrahamic communities around the world. This raises fundamental questions about the importance of these heritages, as well as the responsibility of various parties to protect them both based on theological teachings and based on positive law. Hence, this article will further examine (1) how the teachings of the Abrahamic religions view the protection of cultural and religious heritage, (2) how international humanitarian law regulates the protection of historical, cultural, and religious heritage during armed conflict, and (3) what efforts can be made to restore damaged cultural and religious heritage. The aim of this article is to understand the theological and legal foundations underlying the importance of preserving and conserving cultural and religious heritage, as well as to seek practical solutions and recommendations for the preservation of cultural and religious heritage in conflict areas.

This research is socio-legal research by integrating theological and legal perspectives in analyzing the protection of Abrahamic heritages in Palestine, employing a literature study method that includes international legal documents, academic literature, organizational reports, and real case studies. Through this interdisciplinary approach, this research examines the relationship between Abrahamic theological perspectives, human rights principles, and international humanitarian law while proposing concrete solutions based on these frameworks, including community-based restoration strategies to safeguard cultural and religious heritages in conflict areas, specifically Abrahamic heritages in Palestine.

### **A. Abrahamic Perspectives on the Protection of Cultural and Religious Heritage**

Abrahamic religions refer to the group of monotheistic faiths that trace their spiritual lineage to the patriarch Abraham—including Judaism (Jews), Christianity (Christians), and Islam (Muslims).<sup>26</sup> These religions share a common value in the figure of Abraham, considered their founding patriarch, a shared lineage that is a vital aspect binding these faiths together. Abrahamic religions adhere to monotheism, with each believing in one God who is singular and omnipotent.<sup>27</sup> This belief in one God is the central tenet distinguishing them from polytheistic religions.<sup>28</sup> Despite differences in doctrine and practice, Abrahamic religions share similar ethical and moral teachings, emphasizing values such as justice, charity, and individual dignity.<sup>29</sup> As time progressed, the development of Abrahamic religions has been influenced by various collaborations and conflicts.

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<sup>24</sup> Al Jazeera, "Al-Aqsa Mosque: Five things you need to know," May 29, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/12/6/al-aqsa-mosque-five-things-you-need-to-know>.

<sup>25</sup> Al Jazeera, "Israeli forces attack Palestinian worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque," September 17, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/17/israeli-forces-attack-palestinian-worshippers-at-al-aqsa-mosque>.

<sup>26</sup> Terence Lovat & Robert Crotty, *Reconciling Islam, Christianity and Judaism: Islam's Special Role in Restoring Convivencia* (Springer, 2015): 3-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> See: David L. Miller, "Polytheism and Archetypal Theology: A Discussion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no. 4 (1972): 513-520, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1460899>.

<sup>29</sup> Georges Tamer & Catharina Rachik, "Epilogue," in Catharina Rachik & Georges Tamer (eds), *The Concept of Human Rights in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, 2023): 177-178.

Historical interactions have shaped their theological and cultural landscapes, influencing how they view each other and themselves.

Cultural and religious heritage plays a crucial role in shaping the religious identity and practices of Abrahamic communities. The heritage encompasses tangible and intangible elements, including religious sites, rituals, traditions, and social practices, which collectively contribute to a sense of belonging and community identity.<sup>30</sup> In this regard, religious sites and practices are not merely historical remnants but living traditions that continue to shape their collective identity and spiritual lives. Religious heritage, in this sense, has a dual significance, representing both the cultural history and the spiritual essence of a community.<sup>31</sup> This duality can be seen through various religious sites that function as both cultural landmarks and places of worship. The preservation and celebration of cultural and religious heritage help maintain a community's connection with its historical roots and spiritual beliefs, thus strengthening its identity in the modern world. The transmission of cultural and religious heritage from one generation to the next generation is also essential for the continuity of the community's identity. Therefore, it is crucial to examine further how the respective theologies of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam view and value the importance of cultural and religious heritage.

First, the protection of cultural and religious heritage according to Judaism theology. Judaism theology places significant importance on the protection and preservation of cultural and religious heritage—which is evident through various practices and historical contexts. Jews cultural and religious heritage includes tangible assets such as synagogues, cemeteries, and ritual objects, as well as intangible elements like oral traditions and religious rituals.<sup>32</sup> The protection of Jews heritage often involves both Jews and non-Jews communities. For example, the restoration of the Jews cemetery in Apc, Hungary, was a collaborative effort between local volunteers and Jews organizations, highlighting the communal responsibility in cultural and religious heritage preservation.<sup>33</sup> In this regard, Judaism theology recognizes the concept of “Bal Tashchit” (do not destroy)—which originally comes from Deuteronomy 20:19-20 which reads as follows:

*(19) When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees people, that you should besiege them? (20) However, you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls.*

The concept of Bal Tashchit prohibits the unnecessary destruction of natural resources and can also be extended to include cultural and religious heritage.<sup>34</sup> This concept reflects the value of respecting and preserving the world created by God.

Second, the protection of cultural and religious heritage according to Christian theology. Conservation in Christian theology encompasses intangible and tangible dimensions.<sup>35</sup> On the

<sup>30</sup> Ar. Vandana Balakrishnan & Narayana K.A., “Establishing the Cultural Significance of Heritage Places Through Value Assessment,” *SSRG International Journal of Civil Engineering* 11 (2024), no. 12: 53, <https://doi.org/10.14445/23488352/IJCE-V11I12P105>.

<sup>31</sup> Óscar Fernández-Álvarez et al, “Religious Heritage: Reconciliation between Spirituality and Cultural Concerns,” *Rupkatha Journal* 14, no. 4 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n4.29>.

<sup>32</sup> Katalin Balogné Tóth, “The Jewish Cemetery as Jewish and Non-Jewish Local Cultural Heritage in a Rural Hungarian Settlement,” *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 68, no. 2 (2024): 441, <https://doi.org/10.1556/022.2023.00024>.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 447-448.

<sup>34</sup> K.A. Wolff, “Bal Tashchit: the Jewish prohibition against needless destruction” (Doctoral Thesis, Leiden University, 2009): 9-11.

<sup>35</sup> Pieter de Jong, *Theology in Conservation* (University of York, 2020): 25.

intangible dimension, there is the “preservation” of the oral tradition taught in Deuteronomy 11:19 (Old Testament) which reads as follows:

*Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

This Bible verse demonstrates the importance of preserving religious narratives through generations. These traditions reinforce spiritual identity by connecting contemporary Christian communities with their historical roots.<sup>36</sup> In the tangible dimension, the importance of building and maintaining structures for the tabernacle, temple, or synagogue stipulates at the 1 Kings, 6:16, 20-21 which reads as follows:<sup>37</sup>

*(16) Then he built the twenty-cubit room at the rear of the temple, from floor to ceiling, with cedar boards; he built it inside as the inner sanctuary, as the Most Holy Place. (20) The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high. He overlaid it with pure gold, and overlaid the altar of cedar. (21) So Solomon overlaid the inside of the temple with pure gold. He stretched gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold.*

These constructions reflect reverence for God and highlight how physical elements gain value through their spiritual connection, not solely from their material.<sup>38</sup> Christian theology also ascribes meaning to buildings through their religious function. A church, for example, is considered significant not only because of its physical structure but also because of its role in supporting worship and community.<sup>39</sup> This understanding offers a different approach to conservation compared to a materialistic view, focusing on the spiritual and functional value of buildings in religious life. In practice, Christian communities have carried out various conservation actions, such as the restoration of the Tomb of Christ in Jerusalem, the conservation of Saint Bartholomew's Church in Nigeria, and the preservation of ancient rock churches in Ethiopia.<sup>40</sup>

Third, the protection of cultural and religious heritage according to Islamic theology. Islamic theology is based on the concept of tawhid, the oneness of God, and emphasizes the responsibility of humans as caliphs on earth to care for His creation.<sup>41</sup> The Qur'an teaches that humans have a duty to protect the environment and man-made assets as part of a divine mandate—as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah 2:30 which reads as follows:

*Remember when your Lord said to the angels 'I am going to place a successive human authority on earth.' They asked Allah, 'Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?' Allah responded, 'I know what you do not know.'*

In the Islamic view, this duty reflects the human relationship with God as guardians and protectors of the world. Intangible conservation in Islam includes the preservation of spiritual and cultural traditions through methods such as oral teaching, the collection of hadiths, and ritual practices such as prayer and pilgrimage which aim to strengthen the identity of the Muslim community.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Pieter de Jong, *op.cit.* 27.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

<sup>40</sup> Mary Pelletier, “Jesus’s tomb has been restored in Jerusalem,” *Apollo*, March 28, 2017, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/jesuss-tomb-has-been-restored-in-jerusalem>; ICOMOS Secretariat, “Research and Conservation of St. Bartholomew Old Anglican Church Building, Wusasa, Zaria, Nigeria,” April 26, 2024, <https://icomos.ng/research-and-conservation-of-st-bartholomew-old-anglican-church-building-wusasa-zaria-nigeria/>; Independent Catholic News, “Ethiopia: Restoration to begin on Lalibela Rock Churches,” February 25, 2018, <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/34406>.

<sup>41</sup> Pieter de Jong, *op.cit.* 39.

<sup>42</sup> Pieter de Jong, *op.cit.* 40-42.

Meanwhile, tangible conservation in Islam can be seen from the attention to sacred buildings such as the Ka'bah, as well as mosques which are the center of the Muslim community.<sup>43</sup> The participation of the Prophet Muhammad in the construction of the Nabawi Mosque shows that physical conservation is considered important in the Islamic tradition.<sup>44</sup> In Islamic theology, the value of a building does not only depend on its material but also on its spiritual and social function. A mosque, for example, is considered significant because of its role in supporting worship and the Muslim community—not solely because of its physical structure.<sup>45</sup> This perspective affirms Islam's priority on the relationship between material elements and spiritual values.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—highly uphold cultural and religious heritage, both tangible and intangible. Abrahamic religions recognize that cultural and religious heritage is not merely a collection of objects or practices, but a living testament to faith, history, and communal identity—passed down through generations. Protecting this heritage is thus considered a sacred duty, essential for maintaining continuity with the past and fostering a sense of belonging in the present. In this case, Israel's actions of attacking numerous Abrahamic heritages in Palestine have certainly violated the values upheld by Abrahamic religions. The attacks carried out by Israel not only damaged physical sites, but also damaged the collective memory and identity of the communities associated with those heritages. The destruction of these heritages can be categorized as an act that deprives religious communities of their right to remember, access, and appreciate their cultural and religious heritage, which is a fundamental aspect of the right to take part in cultural life as guaranteed under Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),<sup>46</sup> Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),<sup>47</sup> and Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, these attacks fuel interreligious tension and undermine efforts towards peaceful coexistence, contradicting the fundamental principles of respect and understanding that lie at the core of all Abrahamic religions.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>46</sup> Article 27 of UDHR: (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

<sup>47</sup> Article 27 of ICCPR: In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

<sup>48</sup> Article 15 of ICESCR: (1) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone: (a) To take part in cultural life; (b) To enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications; (c) To benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author. (2) The steps to be taken by the States Parties to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include those necessary for the conservation, the development and the diffusion of science and culture. (3) The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to respect the freedom indispensable for scientific research and creative activity. (4) The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the benefits to be derived from the encouragement and development of international contacts and co-operation in the scientific and cultural fields.

## **B. The Protection of Cultural and Religious Heritage during Armed Conflicts under International Humanitarian Law**

International humanitarian law is a set of rules aimed at limiting the impact of armed conflicts for humanitarian reasons.<sup>49</sup> International humanitarian law also includes various legal instruments designed to protect cultural and religious heritage during armed conflict—as regulated in various international conventions.<sup>50</sup> Cultural heritage also includes religious heritage—because religion is often closely linked to the traditions, rituals, art, and values of a society.<sup>51</sup> As previously explained, the protection of cultural and religious heritage is closely related to human rights—therefore, the destruction of cultural and religious heritage can be seen as a violation of human rights.<sup>52</sup> The destruction of cultural and religious heritage not only erases physical structures but also has the potential to erase the intangible cultural connections and memories associated with it. Hence, the destruction of Abrahamic heritage can sever the connection between the past, present, and future of Abrahamic communities.

The principles of international humanitarian law are deeply connected to religious teachings, which have historically influenced and continue to reinforce many of its core tenets.<sup>53</sup> Religious traditions, such as Abrahamic traditions, emphasize the sanctity of human life, the duty to protect the vulnerable, and the preservation of cultural and religious heritage. Through their ethical and legal frameworks, these traditions uphold fundamental humanitarian values, such as respect for human dignity and the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, aligning with the overarching objectives of international humanitarian law. As previously explained, Abrahamic religions advocate for the safeguarding of places of worship, historical sites, and artifacts as essential components of faith and communal identity. The theological principle of stewardship in Abrahamic traditions underscores the responsibility of individuals and societies to protect and preserve cultural and religious heritage as a divine trust. This foundational perspective aligns with the core humanitarian principles of international law, which seek to minimize suffering and protect civilian life and property during armed conflicts.

International humanitarian law recognizes the principle of distinction which requires the separation of military targets from civilian objects to minimize harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure during armed conflict.<sup>54</sup> The principle of distinction is crucial for protecting cultural and religious heritage, which includes tangible and intangible assets. This principle aims to minimize harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure, recognizing their protected status under international law. Despite the protection, there are exceptions where cultural property may be targeted if it is used for military purposes or if there is a higher military necessity.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, there

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<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Crowe & Kylie Weston-Scheuber, *Principles of International Humanitarian Law* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013): 1; Jean-Marie Henckaerts & Louise Doswald-Beck, *Customary International Humanitarian Law Volume I: Rules* (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2005): xxxi.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid* Jean-Marie Henckaerts & Louise Doswald-Beck, chapter 12.

<sup>51</sup> Ar. Vandana Balakrishnan & Narayana K.A., *op.cit.* 53 & 58-60.

<sup>52</sup> See: Article 22 & 27 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 1 & 27 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and Article 1(1), 3, 15(1) & 15(2) of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

<sup>53</sup> Andrew Bartles-Smith, “Religion and international humanitarian law,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 104 (2022): 1736, <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/religion-and-ihl-920>; See also: Carolyn Evans, “The Double-Edged Sword: Religious Influences on International Humanitarian Law,” *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 6, no. 1 (2005): 8-12, [https://law.unimelb.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/1681140/Evans.pdf](https://law.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1681140/Evans.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> Jean-Marie Henckaerts & Louise Doswald-Beck, *op.cit.* 25-26 & 32.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 127.



is a principle of proportionality to ensure that any incidental damage to cultural property is not excessive compared to the military advantage gained.<sup>56</sup> Failure to adhere to the principles of distinction and proportionality can constitute a war crime, underscoring the importance of protecting cultural and religious heritage during armed conflict. This happened in the case of Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, who was found guilty by International Criminal Court of attacking and destroying historic monuments and buildings dedicated to religion, including nine mausoleums and one mosque in Timbuktu, Mali, during the 2012 conflict.<sup>57</sup>

The protection of cultural and religious heritage during war period has been regulated in various international conventions, such as the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions. In the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions, there is the Declaration from Brussels which contains the initial arrangements—in codified form—regarding the protection of cultural objects, although it does not specifically regulate the protection of cultural and religious heritage.<sup>58</sup> The Declaration of Brussels became the basis for the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions—which then marked the beginning of international efforts to protect civilian property, including cultural and religious objects, from destruction or looting.<sup>59</sup> This general protection is a precursor to more specific regulations introduced later. Despite these initial efforts, the provisions of the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions were not sufficient to prevent widespread destruction of cultural and religious heritages during subsequent conflicts, especially during World War II.<sup>60</sup> The rapid evolution of warfare and the large scale of destruction have surpassed the existing legal protection.

The inadequacy of the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions led to the development of more comprehensive legal instruments, such as the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954 Hague Convention). The 1954 Hague Convention was established to provide a legal framework for the protection of cultural property and to define what constitutes “cultural property”.<sup>61</sup> According to Article 1(a) of the 1954 Hague Convention, “cultural property” is defined as “movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives or of reproductions of the property defined above.”<sup>62</sup> The 1954 Hague Convention provides a comprehensive legal basis for the protection of cultural property during armed conflict, including provisions for the safeguarding and respect of cultural property, both in peacetime and during armed conflict.<sup>63</sup> The 1954 Hague Convention also introduced the concept of “special protection” for cultural property, which includes the establishment of shelters for movable cultural property and centers containing monuments and other immovable cultural property of great

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 46-47.

<sup>57</sup> International Criminal Court, “Situation in the Republic of Mali,” *The Prosecutor v. Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi*, ICC-01/12-01/15, January, 2022, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CaseInformationSheets/Al-MahdiEng.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> Gherghina Boda, “One Hundred Years of Protecting the Cultural Heritage: The Leber Code (1854) – The Hague Convention (1954)” *Plural* 8, no. 1 (2020): 12, <https://www.scopus.com/record/display.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85091380907&origin=scopusAI#>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Alice Lopes Fabris, “Military Necessity under the 1954 Hague Convention,” *Santander Art and Culture Law Review* 2, no. 1 (2015): 277-278, <https://doi.org/10.4467/2450050XSR.15.023.4521>.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>62</sup> Article 1(a) of the 1954 Hague Convention.

<sup>63</sup> Preamble & Article 3 of the 1954 Hague Convention.

importance, as contained in Article 8.<sup>64</sup> This Convention also established the Blue Shield as a symbol to mark cultural property that should be protected from the effects of armed conflict.<sup>65</sup> This Convention has also been supplemented by two protocols, the first in 1954 and the second in 1999, which further elaborate protection measures and address issues such as the illicit export of cultural property during conflict. In this context, the 1954 Hague Convention is legally binding and has even served as the legal basis for imposing sanctions against individual, Miodrag Jokic, who conducted an attack on the Old City of Dubrovnik—a UNESCO World Heritage site—during the Yugoslavia war in 1991.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, there are the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 (1949 Geneva Convention), specifically Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)—which were adopted to enhance the protection of victims in international and non-international armed conflicts. These protocols supplement the 1949 Geneva Conventions and include provisions aimed at protecting civilian objects, including cultural heritage, from the effects of hostilities.<sup>67</sup> The 1977 Additional Protocols also incorporate principles from previous conventions, such as the 1954 Hague Convention, one of which is the principle of distinction.<sup>68</sup> The 1977 Additional Protocols are considered subsidiary to the 1954 Hague Convention, meaning that they complement and strengthen the protection established by the Hague Convention. This integration ensures a comprehensive legal framework that cultural heritage—as well as religious heritage—receives protection during armed conflict.

Additionally, Article 8(2)(b)(ix) of the Rome Statute, in conjunction with the Geneva Conventions, categorizes the deliberate targeting of buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science, or charitable purposes, as well as historic monuments, as a war crime.<sup>69</sup> This provision is further elaborated in the Elements of Crimes of the Rome Statute, which ties such acts to violations of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.<sup>70</sup> Rome Statute also explicitly recognizes individual criminal responsibility for the intentional destruction of cultural and religious heritage.<sup>71</sup> The case of Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi serves as a significant precedent, as he was convicted under this provision for his role in the destruction of cultural and religious heritage in Timbuktu.<sup>72</sup> This

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<sup>64</sup> Article 8 of the 1954 Hague Convention.

<sup>65</sup> Article 6, 10, and 16 of the 1954 Hague Convention.

<sup>66</sup> See: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, “Sentencing Judgement,” *Prosecutor v. Miodrag Jokic*, IT-01-42/1-S, March 18, 2004, [https://www.icty.org/x/cases/miodrag\\_jokic/tjug/en/jok-sj040318e.pdf](https://www.icty.org/x/cases/miodrag_jokic/tjug/en/jok-sj040318e.pdf).

<sup>67</sup> Article 38 of Protocol I; Article 13 & 16 of Protocol II.

<sup>68</sup> Article 16 of Protocol II.

<sup>69</sup> Article 8(2)(b)(ix) of the Rome Statute: “War crime of attacking protected objects”: (1) The perpetrator directed an attack. (2) The object of the attack was one or more buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals or places where the sick and wounded are collected, which were not military objectives. (3) The perpetrator intended such building or buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals or places where the sick and wounded are collected, which were not military objectives, to be the object of the attack. (4) The conduct took place in the context of and was associated with an international armed conflict. (5) The perpetrator was aware of factual circumstances that established the existence of an armed conflict.

<sup>70</sup> See: Rome Statute, “Elements of Crime,” p.15, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Elements-of-Crimes.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> See: Article 25 & 28 of the Rome Statute.

<sup>72</sup> International Criminal Court, *loc.cit.*

highlights the growing recognition of cultural destruction as an egregious violation of international law, reinforcing accountability at the individual level alongside state obligations.

Furthermore, there is the 1972 UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention) which is an important international agreement aimed at protecting sites of outstanding universal value.<sup>73</sup> This Convention uniquely combines the protection of cultural, religious, and natural heritage in a single framework, recognizing the interdependence of these elements. This Convention has been widely ratified and accepted by countries around the world. This convention has also recognized 1,000 sites worldwide, including the Old City of Hebron and the Saint Hilarion Monastery which are Abrahamic heritages in Palestine that were attacked by Israel.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the imposition of sanctions under World Heritage Convention is left to the state parties, and there is no legal sanction mechanism for states that fail to fulfill their responsibilities.<sup>75</sup> UNESCO is tasked with creating the List of World Heritage in Danger, which enables the World Heritage Committee to allocate direct aid funds to endangered properties.<sup>76</sup>

These international legal instruments place a dual burden on states regarding the protection of cultural and religious heritage—imposing positive obligations (to protect) and negative obligations (to refrain from targeting) on states. As a ratifying state of the 1954 Hague Convention and a signatory to the World Heritage Convention, Israel certainly has an obligation to comply with the provisions contained in these conventions.<sup>77</sup> These conventions obligate signatory states to take all feasible measures to preserve cultural and religious heritage and to abstain from any acts of hostility directed against cultural and religious heritage. Despite these clear legal obligations, Israel's act of attacking numerous Abrahamic heritages in Palestine shows that Israel has violated the principles and provisions contained in these conventions. Israel's actions not only damage the physicality of cultural and religious heritages, but also destroy the collective memory and identity of Abrahamic communities in Palestine and around the world—therefore, it not only violates international humanitarian law but is also an attack on human rights to enjoy and preserve their cultural and religious heritage.

### **C. The Strategies of Restoring Abrahamic Heritages in Palestine**

The destruction of Abrahamic heritages in Palestine has an impact on symbolic violence, where not only physical structures are affected but also the cultural and religious identity of the Abrahamic communities. The restoration of Abrahamic heritages is essential to maintain and strengthen the identity of Abrahamic communities in Palestine and around the world. Palestine is a land of great importance to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—making it a symbolic and physical

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<sup>73</sup> 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, see at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext>.

<sup>74</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *loc.cit.*

<sup>75</sup> See: Article 8 of World Heritage Convention: “The States Parties to this Convention undertake to impose penalties or administrative sanctions on any person responsible for infringing the prohibitions referred to under Articles 6(b) and 7(b) above.”

<sup>76</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention,” (2012): 1, <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide12-en.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> See: United Nations Treaty Collection, “Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,” at <https://treaties.un.org/pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=08000002800fece0> & “Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict,” at <https://treaties.un.org/pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=0800000280145bac>.

space with immense cultural and religious value.<sup>78</sup> The conservation of cultural and religious heritage sites is not just about preserving history but also about maintaining the identity of its communities. The restoration of Abrahamic heritages serve as a symbol of their historical and religious significance, supports economic and social development, and empowers communities to defend their heritage in the future. In this case, of course, the reconstruction of the Abrahamic heritages that has been damaged or destroyed is very necessary. Israel bears responsibility for the attacks it has perpetrated against Abrahamic heritages in Palestine. It is imperative that the international community engage in concerted action to impose sanctions on Israel and to pursue restitution for the extensive damage incurred.

UNESCO plays a crucial role in the preservation and protection of historical, cultural, religious, and natural heritages around the world, including the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, which aims to protect sites with outstanding universal value, such as those found in Palestine.<sup>79</sup> In this regard, UNESCO needs to encourage the involvement of local communities in the planning and management of historical, cultural, religious, and natural heritage sites to ensure sustainable conservation. Moreover, UNESCO also plays a crucial role in fostering international cooperation to address the challenges facing historical, cultural, religious, and natural heritages, including armed conflict, natural disasters, and unsustainable development. Maintenance, reinstallation, and renewal of infrastructure are forms of restoration that need to be carried out by to ensure the preservation of the cultural and religious essence of buildings and their long-term viability.

There have been several restoration projects on some historical heritage sites in Palestine carried out by UNESCO, such as the restoration of historic buildings on the al-Khader building in Gaza, which was transformed into a children's library.<sup>80</sup> This project faced challenges such as a lack of experienced conservation workers, but ultimately made a positive contribution to heritage preservation and community development.<sup>81</sup> Then, there is also the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project which involved the excavation, restoration, and development of the site into a modern archaeological park.<sup>82</sup> In terms of training and capacity building, UNESCO has been involved in training programs aimed at building local capacity in heritage conservation—one of which is through the Tell Balata project which also included training site staff and organizing educational and awareness programs for the community.<sup>83</sup> In addition, there is also the establishment of archeology programs in Palestinian universities, supported by UNESCO—which has helped train professionals dedicated to the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage.<sup>84</sup>

These projects not only restore physical structures but also raise awareness of the cultural and religious value of those heritage sites among local residents. Collaborative academic projects

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<sup>78</sup> Rami K. Isaac, *loc.cit.*

<sup>79</sup> Aidan Stennett, "The Role of UNESCO in the Designation of World Heritage Sites, with Particular Reference to the Giant's Causeway," Research Paper, Northern Ireland Assembly (2007): 5, <https://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/environment/2007mandate/Research/0710UNESCO.pdf>.

<sup>80</sup> Dana Khalid Amro & Suheir Ammar, "Rehabilitation of Heritage Buildings in Conflict Zones: A Case Study of Al-Khader Library in Gaza Strip and Its Impact on Sustainable Development," *Buildings* 14, no. 9 (2024): 1-23, <https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings14092759>.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>82</sup> Hamdan Taha & Gerrit van der Kooij, "Community Archaeology at Tell Balata, Palestine," in Rick Bonnie et al (eds), *Living Communities and Their Archaeologies in the Middle East* (Helsinki University Press, 2023): 122-123.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>84</sup> Salah H. Al-Houdalieh (1), "Archaeology Programs at the Palestinian Universities: Reality and Challenges," *Archaeologies* 5, no. 1 (2009): 161-183, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11759-009-9097-9>.

also contribute to a deeper understanding and appreciation of shared heritage, which fosters the foundation for civil coexistence and mutual respect. Reflecting on previous restoration efforts, restoration actions need to be carried out again on the Abrahamic heritages in Palestine that was attacked by Israel. However, such restoration will not be easy to achieve due to several challenges that must be faced, both politically and economically. The Israeli occupation significantly hinders the restoration of Palestinian heritage sites. In “Area C”—which is under full Israeli control, the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage has no authority to monitor and protect these sites.<sup>85</sup> As a result, many archaeological features have been damaged, looted, or destroyed. In addition, the ongoing political conflict between Palestine and Israel exacerbates the situation, leading to neglect and destruction of cultural and religious heritage. The Israeli military occupation and the limited autonomy granted to Palestine create a state of political liminality, which complicates the preservation and management of the Abrahamic heritage. This is especially evident in Hebron, where the transformation of heritage sites is used to legitimize Israeli settlements, which further complicates Palestinian access and preservation efforts.<sup>86</sup> In addition, Israeli civil and military authorities do not provide the necessary protection for cultural and religious heritage resources in the areas under their control, leading to further damage and limited access for Palestinian restoration projects.<sup>87</sup>

In economic terms, financial constraints can hinder the sustainability of Abrahamic heritages restoration projects. There is a need for NGOs to function independently of donor agendas—and for governments to effectively regulate the civil society sector. According to a report from Riwaq, the scarcity of human resources and the lack of funding support make long-term restoration projects difficult to maintain.<sup>88</sup> The deteriorating economic status of Palestine also further limits the availability of funds for cultural and religious heritage preservation.<sup>89</sup> In addition, the lack of skilled workers and engineers in cultural and religious heritage restoration projects also requires training and capacity building efforts which of course require considerable funds.<sup>90</sup> The complex political landscape and economic instability are certainly facing significant challenges to restore the Abrahamic heritage in Palestine.

Nevertheless, these challenges should not stop efforts to protect and restore Palestinian cultural and religious heritage. Several strategies can be implemented to address these challenges, such as: (1) raising awareness of the importance of cultural and religious heritage among the Palestinian and international communities so as to encourage greater political support for restoration efforts; (2) increasing international cooperation between international organizations, governments, and NGOs, especially in terms of providing technical and non-technical support; (3) increasing the participation of local communities to ensure that restoration efforts are in accordance with their needs and aspirations; (4) providing training and increasing the capacity of workers involved in restoration projects to ensure that these projects are carried out optimally; (5)

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<sup>85</sup> Salah H. Al-Houdalieh (2), “Political Crisis and Palestine's Cultural Heritage: A Case Study from the Khirbet el-Lauz Site in Area C,” *Journal of Field Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (2009): 338, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25608590>.

<sup>86</sup> Feras Hammami, “Heritage Necropolitics and the Capture of Hebron: The logic of closure, fear, humiliation and elimination,” in Mirjana Ristic & Sybille Frank (eds), *Urban Heritage in Divided Cities Contested Pasts* (London: Routledge, 2019): 15-34.

<sup>87</sup> Salah H. Al-Houdalieh (2), *loc.cit.*

<sup>88</sup> Suad Amiry & Farhat Muhawi, “The Rehabilitation of Historic Centers and Buildings in the occupied Palestinian territories,” Riwaq: Center for Architectural Conservation (2008): 7-8, <https://www.riwaq.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/RIWAQ%27s%20Policy%20Document.pdf>.

<sup>89</sup> Salah H. Al-Houdalieh (2), *loc.cit.*

<sup>90</sup> Suad Amiry & Farhat Muhawi, *op.cit.* 10-11.

establishing sustainable funding mechanisms through grants and public-private partnerships; and (6) amplifying the call upon the international community to take decisive and collective action, including the imposition of sanctions, to hold Israel accountable for the attacks on Abrahamic heritages in Palestine and all actions that violate international law. These strategies certainly aim to ensure that the Abrahamic heritages in Palestine are protected and restored for the benefit of the Palestinian people and all of humanity. Efforts to restore the Abrahamic heritages in Palestine must also be part of the reconciliation and peacebuilding process. Cultural and religious heritage sites can become symbols of unity and shared identity—which can help heal the wounds of conflict and build bridges between different communities. Thus, restoring cultural and religious heritage not only preserves the past but also builds a better future for human civilization.

## Conclusion

Abrahamic heritage has a pivotal role and value to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The Abrahamic religions place a high value on the protection of cultural and religious heritage, both physical and non-physical. In Judaism theology, the concept of “Bal Tashchit” prohibits unnecessary destruction, including cultural, religious, and natural heritage. Christian theology emphasizes conservation through intangible dimensions such as oral tradition and tangible dimensions such as the construction and maintenance of places of worship. Meanwhile, Islamic theology emphasizes the human responsibility as caliphs on earth to care for His creation, including cultural, religious, and natural heritage. For Abrahamic religions, cultural and religious heritage has dual significance, representing the cultural history and spiritual essence of a community. Hence, the destruction of Abrahamic heritages in Palestine is a violation of the values upheld by these religions. The protection of Abrahamic heritage is not only a theological duty, but also a fundamental human right and a core principle of international humanitarian law, which align and stipulate in several international legal frameworks. The destruction of Abrahamic heritage in Palestine not only erases physical structures but also has the potential to erase intangible cultural and religious connections and memories for Abrahamic communities. Hence, its destruction can be seen as a violation of human rights and constitutes a war crime according to international humanitarian law.

Efforts to restore cultural and religious heritages damaged by conflict require a comprehensive and collaborative approach. International cooperation between international organizations such as UNESCO, government agencies, and NGOs in providing technical and financial support is crucial to support recovery efforts. It is also important to involve local communities in the restoration process to ensure that their cultural, historical, and religious values are respected and preserved. Training for local workers in conservation techniques can also empower communities to participate actively in the preservation of their heritage. Furthermore, the international community must act decisively and collectively to hold Israel accountable for attacks on Abrahamic heritage in Palestine. Hence, a holistic approach that combines physical preservation with cultural revitalization is essential. This includes efforts to revive traditions, rituals, and cultural practices associated with damaged sites. Thus, the restoration of cultural and religious heritage is not only about rebuilding physical structures but also about restoring the identity and collective memory of communities affected by conflict.

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