

Mosul in Chambord

26 June 2019



Programme

Background

This gathering at the Château de Chambord (Wednesday, 26 June), organized jointly by the United Nations University and UNESCO, builds on previous conferences in 2014 (on “Wars in the 21st Century, 2001 - 2014” and on “Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage during Armed Conflict”) on “Migrations” in 2015, and on “The Human Face of Migration: Historical Perspectives, Testimonies and Policy Considerations” in 2017.

The United Nations University (UNU) is a global think tank and postgraduate teaching organization headquartered in Japan. The mission of the UN University is to contribute, through collaborative research and education, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems of

Note on the Event

In 1519, King Francis I decided to build the Château de Chambord, which quickly became the new “wonder of the world”. Located at the heart of Europe’s largest forest park, surrounded by a 32-kilometre long wall, this gem of French heritage, on UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 2000, is part of the site *The Loire Valley* between *Sully-sur-Loire* and *Chalennes*, and celebrates the 500th anniversary of its founding this year. It is, still today, an architectural creation of impressive beauty, miraculously spared by the passage of time.

On the occasion of this anniversary, UNESCO, the National Estate of Chambord and the United Nations University, joined forces and gather in Chambord – the preserved gem of King Francis’ castle – the men and women that in Mosul (the ancient Nineveh) are struggling to rebuild the monuments and libraries destroyed by the Islamic State, to comfort the wounded and to bring back their country’s freedom. *Mesopotamia*, the country between rivers, is where the Sumerians “founded their

human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations and its Member States.

Ambassador Daniel Rondeau, writer, publisher, journalist, diplomat, former Permanent Delegate of France to UNESCO and former Ambassador of France to Malta, member of the *Académie française*, is UNU’s representative in France and to UNESCO.

This year, the Château de Chambord is celebrating the 500th anniversary of the beginning of construction works of the castle in 1519 and commemorating the death of Leonardo da Vinci on 2 May 1519, with celebrations led by the President of the French and Italian Republics at the castle on 2 May 2019.

cities on the sites of ancient villages buried under feet of silt, and developed what was perhaps the world’s first civilization”, Wilfred Thesiger wrote.

Mosul in Chambord is in line with the appeal launched by UNESCO for Nubia in 1960. At that time, André Malraux highlighted the symbolic importance of saving the temples of Upper Egypt by declaring that through the appeal, “the first world civilization publicly proclaims the world’s art as its indivisible heritage”. This heritage sustains the ancient forces of freedom and spirit to our present day, forces that inspired UNESCO’s flagship initiative *Revive the Spirit of Mosul* (and in particular the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Al-Nuri Mosque, a monument which symbolizes both the role of Mosul as a historical and cultural crossroad, as well as its destruction at the hands of the Islamic State).

The event will give the floor to Iraqi actors of Mosul’s spirit (politicians, academics, everyday militants), but also to writers, diplomats and important witnesses.

Agenda

8.00 – 10.30 *Travelling from UNESCO to Château de Chambord (buses provided by UNESCO)*

11.00 – 11.20 **Opening remarks**

- **Audrey Azoulay**, Director-General of UNESCO
- **Jean d’Haussonville**, Director-General of the National Estate of Chambord
- **David Malone**, Rector of the United Nations University

11.20 – 12.30 **Presentations and Debate**

Presentations:

- *The Destruction of Mosul seen from the Sky (video)*
- **Daniel Rondeau**, Member of the Académie française
- **Najeeb Michael**, Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul and Aqrah
- **Susana AbdulMajid**, NTGent stadstheater

Questions & Answers

12.30 – 13.30 *Lunch*

13.30 – 14.30 **Presentations and Debate**

Presentations:

- *Education under Attack (video)*
- **Omar Mohammed**, Mosul Eye
- *Books for Resilience (video testimony from the Mosul Book Forum)*
- **Dominique Charpin**, Collège de France

Questions & Answers

Musical Performance:

- **Ali Sabah**, Oud musician

14.30 – 14.40 **Closing remarks**

- **Ernesto Ottone R.**, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture

14.40 – 16.00 **Private visit of the Château and of exhibition Chambord 1519-2016, Utopia at work**

16.00 – 18.00 *Return to Paris – Buses provided by UNESCO*

Speakers

Daniel Rondeau (Mesnil-sur-Oger, France 1948)



Representative of the United Nations University in France. He is a French writer, publisher, journalist and diplomat. He is the author of thirty books including autobiographical books, novels, city portraits, and texts on literature and history. His books are translated into several languages. He received the 1998 Paul Morand Literature Grand Prize for all of his work. The Grand Prix of the French Academy's novel was awarded in 2017 for *Mécaniques du chaos*. He was elected to Académie française on 6 June 2019.

Najeeb Michael (Mosul, Iraq 1955)



Archbishop of Mosul and Aqrah since 2018. He has preserved and protected ancient manuscripts from destruction by extremist groups since 2007, and continues to digitalize them in a center in northern Iraq which focuses on the impact of war on Mosul's culture, particularly on its various communities.

Susana Abdulmajid (1990)



After her acting studies, she first performed street theatre across Germany, taught at the Goethe Institute and worked in various asylum centres. Susana is co-founder of the cultural format "Poetry Nights Berlin", where, together with the gallery owner Anahita Sadighi, she presents Near Eastern poetry with live music. She writes short texts and poetry and her first book "Babylon In Blau" will be published at the end of 2019. In 2018 she starred in the film "JIBRIL" (Berlinale 18) by Henrika Kull, for which she was nominated for the Götz George Nachwuchspreis as best actress. She acted in the play "Orest in Mosul", which rehearsed in Mosul earlier this year, produced by the National Theatre in Gent (NTGent).

Dominique Charpin (Neuilly-sur-Seine, France 1954)



French Assyriologist, professor at the Collège de France, corresponding member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, specialized in the "Old-Babylonian" period. He is also director of the "Revue d'assyriologie", president of the Society for the Study of the Ancient Near East, co-director of the "Archives Royales de Mari" collection, deputy director of the UMR 7192 "Near East - Caucasus: languages, archaeology, cultures".

Omar Mohammed (Mosul, Iraq 1986)



A historian from Mosul, known until recently only as the anonymous blogger 'Mosul Eye'. Through Mosul Eye, Omar set out to inform the world about life under the Islamic State in his city. His focus has now shifted to advocacy of social initiatives for the people of Mosul including the international effort to re-supply Central Library of the University of Mosul. At the intersection of media, academia and civil society, Omar is motivated to develop new networks of collaboration and innovations in humanitarian action.

Ali Sabah (Baghdad, Iraq 1983)



He grew up in Baghdad and came, via the Netherlands and Germany, to Sweden in 2008. In 2006 he moved to the Netherlands, where he joined the Arab World Orchestra – a project that included eight representatives from various Arabic countries playing with the Netherlands' National Symphony Orchestra. From there, he continued to Germany, where he worked as a music teacher and played with the award-winning Iraqi group Sidare, to finally – two years later – end up in Malmö, Sweden.



The **Mosul Book Forum** is a cultural centre and literary café in Mosul, which has been opened by two young Moslawi, **Fahad S. Mansoor al-Gburi** (Mosul, Iraq, 1988) and **Harith Yaseen Abdulqader** (Mosul, Iraq, 1988) on 30 December 2017, after the liberation of the city. Mosul's literary café has established itself as an important intellectual hub of the city, a space of freedom where young Iraqis meet to discuss literature, arts, and music and where youth from Mosul can resume a cultural and social life, which had been banned under occupation. It is also one of the few places where women and men can meet to discuss freely.