

June 8, 2023

We, the undersigned, with this letter express our strong opposition to the Albanian government's unilateral plan to dissolve the Academy of Albanological Studies (AAS), including the Institute of Archaeology, and reconstitute it within the Academy of Sciences.

We are archaeologists who work at universities in the United States of America or at institutions affiliated with the United States of America. We have conducted collaborative archaeological research in Albania, working with archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology, some of us for many decades. We thus feel qualified to judge this plan and its potential effects on the practice of archaeological research in Albania generally, and in collaboration with American archaeologists specifically.

We are particularly concerned:

THAT archaeologists at the Institute of Archaeology have not been fully consulted regarding this plan, which will strongly affect them and their ability to do their jobs;

THAT moving the AAS and the Institute of Archaeology into the Academy of Sciences without mutual agreement will add an additional layer of bureaucracy and oversight, stifling academic freedom and innovative research; and

THAT the effects of this plan on the Institute of Archaeology's resources, budgets, and staffing have not been fully disclosed.

For these reasons, we strongly encourage the Albanian government to reconsider its unilateral plan regarding the future of the AAS and, instead, to engage its members in open discussion about how best to support them, so that Albanological studies in Albania, including archaeology, can reach its full potential.

In the past several years, Albanian archaeology, led by archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology, has finally taken its rightful place on the international stage. We are concerned that moving the AAS into the Academy of Sciences will derail this new-found sense of momentum.

In 2021 a [Cultural Property Agreement](#) protecting Albanian archaeological heritage was signed with the United States. This memorandum will lead to more not less interest and investment in Albanian archaeology on the part of American archaeologists. In response, the Albanian government should be expanding opportunities for collaboration between American and Albanian archaeologists, within the context of an independent institute dedicated to pure archaeological research, not restricting such opportunities.

Indeed, when opportunities for open collaboration between American and Albanian archaeologists are realized, good things happen. For example, Albanian artifacts are featured

prominently in the [First Kings of Europe](#), an international exhibition that recently opened at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, Illinois. Every nation in the Balkans is participating in this exhibit, including Albania, and Albania's participation would not have happened without the connections forged between American and Albanian archaeologists at the Institute of Archaeology. In our opinion, given the success of this exhibition, the Institute of Archaeology's staff should have been commended for their hard work and dedication, not subjected to a plan for dissolution and reorganization that they themselves never agreed to.

To close, we wrote this letter because we remain excited about and committed to Albanian archaeology. Our colleagues at the Albanian Institute of Archaeology have shared with us Albania's remarkable archaeological heritage, allowing us to participate in its study, an honor and privilege we can never fully repay. We hope that the plan to move the AAS into the Albanian Academy of Sciences will be reconsidered and an honest dialogue about the future of Albanian archaeology, including archaeologists from the Institute of Archaeology, will be pursued instead.

Sincerely,

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