



PRESS RELEASE

April 18, 2017

Marking the International Day of Monuments and Sites, and in continuity to an earlier press release issued on 5th January 2017, ICOMOS Pakistan registers its displeasure at the continuing delay by the Government in processing and issuing of visas to members of UNESCO's Reactive Monitoring Mission enabling them to visit the World Heritage Site/s being affected by the Orange Line Metro Train Project in Lahore.

In the 40th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee held in Istanbul, Turkey in July 2016, the World Heritage Committee expressed its serious concern about the development of the Orange Line Metro Train Project (OLMTP) in front of the Shalamar Gardens. Furthermore, the World Heritage Committee requested the Government of Pakistan to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission to examine the OLMTP, and review whether there was a potential danger to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Shalamar Gardens and to make recommendations for design changes if necessary, thereby providing assistance to the Government.

While the Reactive Monitoring mission has been requesting dates and visas from Pakistan since January 2017 and has written at least 10 letters in this regard, the Government **has not issued them visas.**

Reactive Monitoring Missions are part of the statutory reporting by the Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee on the State of Conservation of specific properties under threat. By not issuing visas, the Government of Pakistan is shying away from its commitment as a signatory to the World Heritage Convention. This lack of action by Government of Pakistan puts at risks the World Heritage Site (WHS) status of Shalamar Gardens and the Lahore Fort. Any consequential delisting or removal from WH designation might result in withdrawal of UNESCO's financial and/ or technical support extended to Pakistan's 6 WH Sites – jeopardizing the future of these sites as well the 26 properties on tentative list for world heritage designation.

ICOMOS Pakistan strongly objects to this continuing disregard of the World Heritage Convention by the Government of Pakistan, and requests the Government to comply with its international obligations so that UNESCO can ensure that there is no danger to the Shalamar Gardens from OLMTP.

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