

# ICOMOS



## International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage

The Prime Minister of Norway  
Ms Erna Solberg  
P.O. Box 8001 Dep, NO-0030  
Oslo, Norway

### **INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE ALERT regarding the Planned Demolition of Y-block, Government Quarter in Oslo, Norway, damaged in bombing July 22, 2011**

By email: [postmottak@smk.dep.no](mailto:postmottak@smk.dep.no)

September 28, 2016

Dear Ms Solberg,

We refer to our letter of June 1, 2015 and are dismayed to state that we are now issuing an International Heritage Alert regarding the planned demolition of the Y-block of the Government Quarter in Oslo.

On Monday, February 15, 2016, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) had a meeting with the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Administration. Present at the meeting were State Secretary Paul Chaffey, representatives from the Department for Central Government Building, Security and Administrative Services and a representative from the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Department for Cultural Heritage Management. ICOMOS was represented by Marianne Knutsen, President of ICOMOS Norway, Olaf Steen, ICOMOS ISC20C (International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage), and Gunny Harboe, ICOMOS ISC20C Vice President (on telephone line from Chicago). Before the meeting, there was a tour of the H- and Y-blocks, where also the Directorate of Cultural Heritage was present.

Gunny Harboe had prepared a video which was uploaded to YouTube and had already been seen by all present, and by the representative from the Directorate of Cultural Heritage. In the video, Gunny Harboe stated clearly the views of the ICOMOS ISC20C.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgZwbuDWa\\_4&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgZwbuDWa_4&feature=youtu.be)

The State Secretary was very clear on the point, that the decision to demolish the Y-block was already made on a governmental level, and was hardly approachable. The main argument is security, since a thoroughfare runs in a tunnel beneath the short, northern wing of the building. The security claim is seen by ICOMOS as questionable, as the government has up to today not shown any documentation as to the necessity of demolishing the Y-block. Besides, parts of the building, amongst which the

**President: 78 George Street Redfern, NSW AUSTRALIA 2016** [isc20c@icomos-isc20c.org](mailto:isc20c@icomos-isc20c.org)



northern wing, are actually today in full use by government employees, who are very happy to work in the building.

The government wishes to place a small park above the thoroughfare, but still they have to secure the tunnel better by lowering it. The zoning plan suggested for the area presupposes a new, high building in place of most of the Y-block, except the area of the northern wing which will be substituted by a green belt over the thoroughfare tunnel.

The conclusion of the ICOMOS ISC20C is that demolishing the Y-block has been a presupposition for all planning work and zoning plans for the area, excluding an informed discussion on possible and sustainable use of the Y-block. All feasibility studies that were presented in April 2015 were made on this basis, with the exception of that of a group of architecture students at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. Their study was rejected as part of the official competition, as it deviated from the official programme. No consideration was given to the inherent artistic qualities of the Y-block and its possible reuse as part of a rebuilding project. It was excluded as point of departure. These political decisions have been made in spite of clear, well founded studies and recommendations made by the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage in 2013, and repeated in 2016. These are decisions that will seem incomprehensible a few years from now.

In the meeting, ICOMOS confirmed the inherent qualities of the H- and Y-blocks as an ensemble of international and national importance. ICOMOS stressed that these values have not been appreciated sufficiently by the Norwegian government. ICOMOS also stressed, that the international scientific community is following the matter, and will not cease to follow it up.

As a result, ICOMOS Norway and the ICOMOS ISC20C is now releasing an International Heritage Alert, communication to the whole international cultural heritage community that the Norwegian government is intent on demolishing an important part of our common cultural heritage, in spite of professional assessments and advice.

Kind regards,

Sheridan Burke

President International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ISC20C) of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) [Sheridanb@gml.com.au](mailto:Sheridanb@gml.com.au)

Phone +61 418216168



Contact:

Gunny Harboe, Vice President International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ISC20C) of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), [Gunny@harboearch.com](mailto:Gunny@harboearch.com)

Phone: +1 773-742-3574

Olaf Steen, Norwegian member International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ISC20C) of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), [olaf.steen@me.com](mailto:olaf.steen@me.com)

Phone: +47 958 69 066

Marianne Knutsen, ICOMOS Norway president [marianne.knutsen@icomos.no](mailto:marianne.knutsen@icomos.no)

Phone: +47 993 57 747

Copies to:

The Minister of Local Government and Administration, Mr Jan Tore Sanner, P.O.Box 8004 Dep, NO 0030 Oslo, Norway ([postmottak@kmd.dep.no](mailto:postmottak@kmd.dep.no))

The Minister of Environment, Mr Vidar Helgesen, P.O.Box 8013 Dep, NO-0030 Oslo, Norway ([postmottak@kld.dep.no](mailto:postmottak@kld.dep.no))

Mr Gustavo Araoz, President ICOMOS 11 rue du Séminaire de Conflans Charenton-le-Pont 94220, France

Ms Kirsti Kovanen, Secretary General, ICOMOS 11 rue du Séminaire de Conflans Charenton-le-Pont 94220, France

Ms Gaia Jungleblodt, ICOMOS Secretariat ICOMOS 11 rue du Séminaire de Conflans Charenton-le-Pont 94220, France