

Update on the current state of antiquities

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Dr. Zahi Hawass, Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs, announced today that a committee of archaeologists completed a preliminary search of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo and its grounds. The missing Heart Scarab of Yuya was recovered on the west side of the museum gardens, near the new bookshop. Wooden fragments belonging to the damaged New Kingdom coffin, still on the second floor of the museum, were also found in this area. The search team also found one of the eleven missing shabtis of Yuya and Thuya underneath a showcase. Fragments belonging to the statue of Tutankhamun being carried by the goddess Menkaret have been found; all the located fragments belong to the figure of Menkaret. The small figure of the king has not yet been found.



Archive photo of Tutankhamun carried by Menkaret. (Photo courtesy of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

Dr. Hawass said it seems the looters dropped objects as they fled, and every inch of the museum must be searched before the Registration, Collections Management, and Documentation Department, which is overseeing the inventory, can produce a complete and final report of exactly what is missing. The museum staff is not yet able to move freely within the museum, and has, until now, had to walk in groups of 10-15 people, accompanied by soldiers. Unfortunately, this has slowed down the search, and made it very difficult to carry out a final inventory. The army is allowing very few people into the museum, and the first time the museum's office staff was allowed in was on 6 February 2011. The list announced in the press release of 12 February, 2011 is preliminary, and will continue to be updated as new information comes to light.

As Dr. Hawass has previously stated, until a full and thorough search of the museum and its grounds has been completed and all of the damaged vitrines inventoried, a list of missing objects cannot be finalized.

Dr. Hawass would like to clarify earlier statements in which he announced that nothing was missing. During the first pass of the search committee through the museum, objects that were at first thought to be missing were found thrown into trash cans and corners far from their original locations, and he had been led to believe that a full sweep of the museum might well succeed in locating all of the missing objects. Professionals out to steal would normally be careful not to damage the objects they were planning to take, so the initial impression was that the attackers were vandals rather than thieves. He was also misinformed by one of the museum staff about the statue of Akhenaten as an offering bearer; he was told that this was only damaged when it was, in fact, missing. In addition to expressing what he then firmly believed, which was that museum staff would continue to locate the missing objects, his intent in these earlier statements was to reassure the world that the damage at the museum, while tragic, was far less widespread than originally feared, and to make clear that the museum's most major masterpieces, such as the Golden Mask of Tutankhamun, were safe.



Archive photo of one of the eleven missing shabti's belonging to Yuya. (Photo courtesy of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo)

AFP (not, as reported in the Egyptian press, CNN) has reported that the famous golden mask of Tutankhamun was stolen. This is completely untrue. Last week, Dr. Hawass took several representatives of the press, including ABC World News, NBC, Associated Press, and Reuters, among others, to the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. All of the reporters and journalists were able to see, photograph, and film the mask still safely in its gallery, which is behind an iron gate that the looters were not able to penetrate. In addition, the two gold coffins

and the items Howard Carter found on the mummy in 1925, all of which are in the same gallery, are safe as well. Dr. Hawass expressed his disappointment in AFP for announcing such a sensationalized story without first checking the facts. At 1:30 pm yesterday, Dr. Hawass received a call from Mr. Riad Abu Awad, the head of the AFP office in Egypt. He denied that his agency broke the story. However, many online newspapers seem to have quoted the AFP directly ([North Korean News](#), [Caribbean News](#), [All Voices](#), [Nvision UG Monitr](#), [Nevada State News](#)) Today, Dr. Hawass took members of the press to the museum to show them that the mask is safe.

On Sunday, Dr. Hawass received the report prepared by the committee he had sent to check the De Morgan magazine in Dahshur; according to this report, all of the large and small blocks are safe. The only missing items appear to be small amulets. Archaeologists at the site had previously installed an iron gate and ensured that guards were on duty guarding the magazine. Despite these precautions, Dr. Hawass announced that the magazine was attacked for a second time Monday night, and the thieves were able to overpower and tie up the guards. Dr. Hawass has appointed a new committee to determine the current state of the magazine.

A committee to review the magazine at Qantara East in the Sinai, has also been appointed by Dr. Hawass. This magazine suffered a break-in on the night of 28 January, 2011; looters stole boxes full of objects, of which, to date, 298 have been returned. The committee will take a full inventory and compare it to earlier inventories to determine whether or not everything has been returned.

Dr. Hawass said the most important news for today was that the Heart Scarab and the shabti were found on the museum grounds. He hopes that the committee still searching the museum will be able to locate more of the missing objects.

<http://www.drhawass.com/blog/update-current-state-antiquities>