# **FOREWORD**

On April 21, 2019, three churches were attacked in Sri Lanka in a series of coordinated terrorist suicide bombings. ISIS, which was said to have been “totally defeated” just two months earlier, claimed credit for the bombings and released a video of its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, calling on his jihadist followers to rally around his vision for ISIS. “Our battle today,” he said, “is a battle of attrition, and we will prolong it for the enemy, and they must know that the jihad will continue until Judgment Day.”

The Sri Lankan Islamist group, Jammiyathul Millathu Ibrahim, recruited for ISIS and joined forces with the Islamist preacher Zahran Hashim, the alleged organizer of the Easter Sunday attacks. Days before, he is said to have organized attacks on Buddhist sculptures. As a result of those earlier attacks, police in Mawanella arrested thirteen people.

The question many journalists have asked is what relationship there might be between attacks on cultural heritage and attacks on the lives of those who profess a cultural identity with them and what they represent. The prime minister of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe, noted a few days after the suicide bombings, “We know that before the Buddhist images there were attacks on Sufi mosques. So they seem to be going step by step. First their own Muslims [Sufis], then the Buddhists, and there was something in a small church near Kandy [Kandekurry], information that they wanted to damage the church.”

It is a thesis of the previous two J. Paul Getty Trust Occasional Papers in Cultural Heritage Policy that there is a direct connection between brutal attacks on cultural heritage and human lives. Not everyone agrees, of course. Helen Frowe and Derek Matravers, authors of this Occasional Paper, for example, argue, “At the time our newspapers were filled with the destruction of Palmyra, there were also thousands of refugees fleeing the war in Syria. There is, undeniably, something morally uncomfortable about stressing the need to protect heritage in the face of such widespread human suffering.” Do they mean to argue that it is never moral to protect heritage in the face of widespread human suffering? Of course not. Their thesis, instead, is that attacks on cultural heritage do not *necessarily* precede attacks on human beings, and that protecting cultural heritage can sometimes conflict with protecting people. Frowe and Matravers force us to clarify our arguments. It is in this spirit that we publish this issue of our Occasional Papers.

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**James Cuno**

President and CEO

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