



African Studies Association of the United Kingdom

STATEMENT ON THE FIRE AT THE MUSEU NACIONAL, RIO DE JANEIRO

"The African Studies Association of the United Kingdom wishes to extend its unconditional support and solidarity to the academic and museological community of Brazil, in the wake of the fire which destroyed the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro on September 2nd.

The ASAUK is aware that the devastating incineration of this priceless collection will take decades to recover from in terms of the lost intellectual capital of the country — if indeed such a recovery is ever possible.

We also note with great sadness the destruction of hundreds of priceless African artefacts, including the early 19th century throne of King Adandozan of Dahomey, and 19th century ivory carvings from Kongo. And we can only be but painfully aware that this is just the tip of the iceberg of such a monumental loss as Brazil has experienced.

The ASAUK is also deeply aware that this loss forms part of a wider governmental programme of austerity and cultural evisceration which has been deliberately targetted at the poorest and most disadvantaged communities of Brazil. In the context of Brazilian history, this government action has over and undertones which is anathema to everything that the ASAUK and progressive scholars stand for.

The ASAUK is aware that the Museum's collections formed an important research body for fields ranging from the Human and Social Sciences to Botany and Medicine. Consequently, the ASAUK is keen to work as closely as possible with colleagues in Brazil, to assist in any way that may be relevant. We hope for instance to support and work with the Museum to source digital copies of any relevant Africa-related material which can be accessed through our own networks, and which might help with the creation of a post fire collection. We also note that a group of concerned activists and scholars are considering next steps, and urge those interested to contact them at falecomdiretor@mn.ufrj.br".