**Qatar Museums and University of Wales Trinity Saint David Carry Out Excavation in North Qatar**

***‘Landscapes of Faith’ Project Undertakes New Archaeological investigations***

**Doha, Qatar – 26 November 2022:** Joint excavations by Qatar Museums (QM) and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) have begun at two archaeological sites in the north of Qatar. The *Landscapes of Faith* project is working at Ain Muhammad and Mesaika, both dating to the early Islamic period, and occupied during between the7th and 9th centuries CE. They archaeological sites are close to Qatar’s UNESCO World Heritage Site, Al Zubarah.

Qatar Museums is organising three public open days on 3 and 10 December between 8am and 12pm, when the archaeological team welcomes visitors to two archaeological sites. For registration or questions, please contact infoheritage@qm.org.qa.

Qatar has an unusually high number of sites of the early Islamic period, mostly scattered throughout the deserts of the north, but also found in central and southern Qatar. According to Qatar Museums’ Head of Excavation and Site Management, Dr Ferhan Sakal: “There are at least 20 such sites, and the number is probably higher as we continue to discover more of them. Murwab is the most well-known among them, but there are many others, some of which are and extremely well preserved”.

The director of the project, Qatar Museums’ Dr. Robert Carter, noted that “No other country in the region has as many sites of this period in such a concentrated area, and we know very little about how the inhabitants lived. The project is called *Landscapes of Faith* because before the acceptance of Islam, Qatar was well-known as a centre for Christianity, and the sites we are targeting may show the final process of conversion from one faith to the other. At least one appears to show a mosque, and others may contain churches.”

Director of the UWTSD team, Dr. Andrew Petersen, said: “This is a unique opportunity to investigate daily life and belief in the Arabian peninsula during the first centuries of Islam. Qatar has the potential to show the lives of the first Muslims in amazing detail.”

Several questions will be tackled by the project, including why Qatar has such a high concentration of such sites, what were the lifestyles and economic activities of the people who occupied them, how were they connected to the outside world, and how inhabitants survived in the harsh environment of the Qatari desert?

Excavations will continue until 17 December with the team returning for further work in 2023. The *Landscapes of Faith* is expected to be a five-year project involving several other institutions.

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**About Qatar Museums**Qatar Museums (QM), the nation's preeminent institution for art and culture, provides authentic and inspiring cultural experiences through a growing network of museums, heritage sites, festivals, public art installations, and programmes. QM preserves, restores, and expands the nation's cultural offerings and historical sites, sharing art and culture from Qatar, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia (MENASA) region with the world and enriching the lives of citizens, residents, and visitors.

Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and led by its Chairperson, Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, QM has made Qatar a vibrant centre for the arts, culture, and education in the Middle East and beyond. QM is integral to the goal of developing an innovative, diverse, and progressive nation, bringing people together to ignite new thinking, spark critical cultural conversations, educate and encourage environmental stewardship and sustainable practices, and amplify the voices of Qatar's people. Since its founding in 2005, QM has overseen the Museum of Islamic Art and MIA Park, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, the National Museum of Qatar, QM Gallery Al Riwaq, QM Gallery Katara, 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, and Dadu, Children's Museum of Qatar.

Through its newly created Creative Hub, QM also initiates and supports projects—such as the Fire Station Artist in Residence, the Tasweer Qatar Photo Festival and the creative hub for innovation, fashion and design M7—that nurture artistic talent and create opportunities to build a strong and sustainable cultural infrastructure.

Animating everything that Qatar Museums does is an authentic connection to Qatar and its heritage, a steadfast commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, and a belief in creating value through invention.