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The Taliban blew up the statues using dynamite

Dramatic pictures of the Taliban's destruction of ancient statues of Buddha in Afghanistan have been released.

Qatar's Al-Jazeera satellite television channel showed footage of Taliban forces blowing up the smaller of two massive statues carved into a cliff in the central province of Bamiyan.

Despite an international outcry, the Taliban destroyed several Buddhist artefacts around the country, arguing that they were un-Islamic.

Bamiyan's Buddhas were part of a rich cultural heritage dating back nearly 2,000 years and were considered among the finest examples of Greco-Indian art.

**Gaping hole**

Television pictures showed a massive explosion which shook the ground, followed by plumes of dust and smoke.

Unidentified voices could be heard crying "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great) and "Ma Sha'Allah" (Whatever God Wills).

As the smoke cleared, it was evident that where the giant Buddhas had once stood, there was now a gaping big hole.

Taliban officials scrambled up into the crevice where the 125-foot figure once stood and the camera panned around to show a panoramic view of snow-capped mountains and terraced



Television pictures show a massive explosion...

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▶ The BBC's James Helm "This was the moment when nearly 2,000 years of history was reduced to rubble"

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plains around a river bed.

### Ritual slaughter

It took the Taleban nearly two weeks to act on an edict to destroy the giant statues.

On Monday the authorities began the ritual slaughter of 100 cows to atone for the delay - an order passed last week by the Taleban's reclusive supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar.



...and then a hole where the statues once stood

“  
The slaughtered meat will be distributed to the poor residents of Kabul  
”  
Taleban official

Twelve cows were sacrificed in the capital Kabul - the rest will be slaughtered around the country.

A Taleban official told journalists: "Based on the order, the slaughtered meat will be distributed to the poor residents of Kabul and other areas.

"This is an atonement for the delay in destroying the Buddhas."

### Outcry

The destruction of the Buddhas came in for strong criticism, especially from its neighbours, including India and Pakistan.

Several Muslim countries condemned the move, saying the Taleban's action was un-Islamic.

The Taleban also expelled the BBC correspondent in Kabul, Kate Clark, for broadcasting what it described as "biased" reports of the Bamiyan statues destruction.

Ms Clark said she believed the main reason for her expulsion was her filing of a report in which she said most Afghans opposed the statues' demolition.

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