

ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq¹

NEA-PSHSS-14-001

Weekly Report 51-52 — August 4, 2015

Michael D. Danti, Cheikhmous Ali, Allison Cuneo, Kyra Kaercher, Katherine Burge,
LeeAnn Barnes Gordon, and Erin Van Gessel

Executive Summary

During the reporting period, cultural heritage incidents in Syria and Iraq remained at lower levels relative to previous months. The Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums reported damage occurring on July 26 to the German Expedition Headquarters at the site of Tell Chuera in Raqqa Province. According to a later edited version of the web post, damage was allegedly caused by a coalition airstrike against ISIL militants. Independent sources and additional data are required to corroborate this claim. On July 28, Syrian rebels allegedly detonated tunnel bombs near the Old City of Aleppo. Additional details are needed to assess the damage and pinpoint the locations of the latest incidents, the most recent in a long sequence of highly destructive tunnel bombings in the area.

Key Points

- On or just prior to July 26, an alleged airstrike damaged the German Expedition headquarters at Tell Chuera according to the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0113](#)).
- On July 28, Syrian rebels detonated tunnel bombs near the Old City of Aleppo.

Heritage Timeline

August 4, 2015

Atlas Obscura published an article titled “**The Bizarre Tale of ‘ISIS Book Club’**” (by Damaris Colhoun). This article discusses ISIL’s collection of books about coins and archaeology from the Abu Sayeef Raid.

<http://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-bizarre-tale-of-isis-book-club>

¹ This report is based on research conducted by the “Syria Preservation Initiative: Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria.” Weekly reports reflect reporting from a variety of sources and may contain unverified material. As such, they should be treated as preliminary and subject to change.

- **APSA** published an album of photos titled “**Old Aleppo: State of the Oglebk (Bab al-Ahmar) Mosque**”
<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/old-alepoo-state-of-the-oglebk-bab-a-l-ahmar-mosque/>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1hu1N_MbBE
<http://www.al3shaq.com/vb/t9738/?t-9738.html=&langid=1>
 - **APSA** published an album of photos titled “**Old Aleppo: State of the Hammam El-Nahasin**”
<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/old-alepoo-state-of-the-hammam-el-nahasin/>
 - *AsiaSociety* published an article titled “**Forum to Address Destruction, Looting of Antiquities Across Middle East**”
<http://asiasociety.org/media/our-news/forum-address-destruction-and-looting-antiquities-across-middle-east>
 - *The Independent* published an article titled “**Iraq Building a Digital Library to Stop ISIS Destroying Thousands of Years of Human Learning**” (by Samuel Osborne).
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraq-building-a-digital-library-to-stop-isis-destroying-thousands-of-years-of-human-learning-10437812.html>
 - *Business Insider* and *US News* published an article titled “**Iraq is rushing to digitize its national library under the threat of ISIS**” (Vivian Salama)
<http://www.businessinsider.com/iraq-is-rushing-to-digitize-its-national-library-under-the-threat-of-isis-2015-8>
<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/08/04/facing-islamic-state-threat-iraq-digitizes-national-library>
- August 3, 2015 *Buzzfeed News* published an article titled “**Exclusive Video Shows Illicit Archaeological Dig in ISIS Stronghold**” (by Mike Giglio).
- August 2, 2015 *International Business Times* published an article titled “**Germany Introduces Legislation to Curb Sale of Stolen Antiquities from Mosul**” (by Johnee Varghese).
<http://ibtimes.co.in/germany-introduces-legislation-curb-sale-stolen-antiques-mosul-641337>
- July 31, 2015 **DGAM** published an article titled “**General-Director of Antiquities & Museums visits archaeological sites at NE of Syria**”
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1755>

- *Counterpunch* published an article titled “**Return to Ma’loula, Syria**” (by Franklin Lamb). This article chronicles the return of Christians and Jewish populations to the town of Ma’loula, Syria.
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/07/31/return-to-maloula-syria/>
- July 30, 2015 *Cultural Heritage Lawyer* published an article titled, “**Steering Clear of ISIS Loot: Don't Buy, Apply Strict Due Diligence**” (by Rick St. Hilaire)
<http://culturalheritagelawyer.blogspot.com/2015/07/steering-clear-of-isis-loot-dont-buy.html>
- *Dalje.com* published an article titled “**Looted in Mosul, sold in Munich? Germany's clampdown on illicit trade**”
<http://dalje.com/en-world/looted-in-mosul-sold-in-munich-germanys-clampdown-on-illicit-trade/551803>
- *Al Monitor* published an article titled “**Looters find path to export antiquities via Lebanon**” (by May Abboud Abi Aki, trans. by Cynthia Milan). Original Link: [اقرأ المقال الأصلي باللغة العربية](#) English Link: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2015/07/middle-east-s-muggling-antiquities-lebanon.html#>
- *The Telegraph* published an article titled “**£500,000 project to save 1,200-year-old mosque threatened by Islamic State**” (by Lizzie Porter). Brief description.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/middleeast/iraq/11772875/500000-project-to-save-1000-year-old-mosque-threatened-by-Islamic-State.html>
- *Buzzfeed News* published an article titled “**Inside the Underground Trade to Sell Off Syria’s History**” (by Mike Giglio and Munzer al-Awad)
- *DGAM* published an article titled “**Daraa, New Damage to the Museum**”
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1753>
- *Conflict Antiquities* Published an article titled “**The Smuggler Had Been Smoking a Cigarette When He Pulled Into An ISIS Checkpoint**” (by Donna Yates)
<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/07/31/syria-turkey-lebanon-antiquities-policing/>
- July 29, 2015 *UNESCO* published an article titled “**UNESCO and Iraq launch project for conservation of World Heritage site of Samarra**”
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1330>

- *The Hill* published an article titled “**Senators unveil bill to block ISIS from profiting off antiquities**” (by Rebecca Shabad).
<http://thehill.com/policy/finance/249641-senators-unveil-measure-to-block-isis-from-profiting-from-sale-of-antiquities>
 - DGAM published an article titled “**Palmyra: Damage to the Museum Building**” ‘
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1751>
 - *The Gazette* published an article titled “**Grassley Sponsoring Bill to Restrict ISIS Profiting from Sale of Antiquities**” (by James Q. Lynch).
<http://thegazette.com/subject/news/nation-and-world/grassley-sponsoring-bill-to-restrict-isis-profiting-from-sale-of-antiquities-20150729>
- July 28, 2015
- The Irish Times* published an article titled “**Spirit survives as Syrian city of Maaloula clears away the rubble**” (by Michael Jansen). The important 4th century Church of St. Sergius was reportedly restored, including repairs to the vaulted roof of the church and cleaning of the courtyard, which was scattered with damaged books and religious items. Items such as books and icons from within the convent of St. Sergius were reportedly stolen or destroyed. The convent of St. Thecla is currently in the process of being rehabilitated following war-related damage.
<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/spirit-survives-as-syrian-city-of-maaloula-clears-away-the-rubble-1.2299987>
- July 27, 2015
- DGAM published an album of photos titled “**Bosra Ancient city: Current state of the Roman theatre**”
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1749>
- *BBC* published an article titled “**Palmyra: Ruins that inspired the architecture of power**” (by Jane O'Brien).
<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33659376>
 - *Ancient History Et Cetera* published an article titled “**Assessing the Destruction at Hatra**” (by Christopher Jones).
<http://etc.ancient.eu/2015/07/27/assessing-the-destruction-at-hatra/>
 - *Heritage for Peace* published a newsletter titled “**Damage to Syria's Heritage**” which groups together multiple articles about damage to Syria’s heritage.
<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syria-heritage-11-june-2015/>

- *Breitbart* published an article titled “**How ISIS Makes Money from the Black Market.**” (by The Investigative Project on Terrorism).
<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/07/27/how-isis-makes-money-from-the-black-market/>
- July 26, 2015 *DGAM* published an article titled “**Air strikes of coalition forces hit the residence of the archaeological mission at Tell Chuera**”
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1748>
- *Al Wasat* published an article titled “**Antiques from Syria homes sold by auction in Beirut .. and promotes networking sites**” (by Paula Ostih)
<http://aawsat.com/home/article/415901/>
[تحف-من-بيوت-سورية-تباع-بالمزاد-العلني-في-بيروت-ومواقع-التواصل-تروج](http://www.alwasat.com/home/article/415901/)
- *Syrian News and TV* published an article titled “**Arts vs. terrorism... Syrian musical heritage performed on sidelines of Int'l Media Conference Against Terrorism.**”
<http://www.syriaonline.sy/?f=Details&pageid=17586&catid=27>
- July 24, 2015 *APSA* published an album of photos titled “**Bosra: State of several historical monuments.**”
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qPVFHe4VGoc_dLpv-rn7cbv01ns3PCydfDFTgDFHG4M/edit
- July 23, 2015 *Hors-Serie-Histoire* published an article titled “**Dans le Chaos Syrien**” (by Annie Sarte-Faulat)
- *The Telegraph* published an article titled “**Destruction of Middle East's heritage is 'cultural genocide.'**” (by Lizzie Porter).
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/middleeast/11756540/Destruction-of-Middle-East-heritage-is-cultural-genocide.html>
- *The Daily Pennsylvanian* published an article titled “**Penn Museum Works to Document, Preserve Syrian Cultural Sites**” (by Lavi Ben Dor).
<http://www.thedp.com/article/2015/07/penn-museum-works-to-document-preserve-syrian-cultural-sites>
- *Newsweek* published an article titled “**Drone Images Show Destruction of Aleppo, Syria.**” (by Lucy Westcott).
<http://www.newsweek.com/drone-images-show-destruction-aleppo-syria-356796>

July 22, 2015

Al Jazeera published an article and video titled “**The Fate of Arab Antiquities Amid Cases of Looting and Destruction.**”

<http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/arab-present-situation/2015/7/22/مصير-الآثار-العربية-وسط-حالات-النهب-والتدمير>

- *WGBH* published an article titled “**Attack on Culture: Why ISIS is Destroying Artifacts Across The Middle East**” (by Kate Wilkinson) featuring an interview with Doctor Joan Branham, a professor of art history and the associate dean of the school of Arts and Sciences at Providence College.
<http://wgbhnews.org/post/attack-culture-why-isis-destroying-artifacts-across-middle-east>
- **Certainty Media** (يقين) Published a photo showing the bombardment of Sheikh Tell Hasan in Deraa.
<https://www.facebook.com/daraayaqeen/photos/a.1560211440906005.1073741828.1560172927576523/1605352979725184/?type=1&theater>

July 21, 2015

APSA published an album of photos titled “**Idlib – Limestone Massif: report on the site of Benabil**”.

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-limestone-massif-report-on-the-site-of-benabil/>

Military and Political Context

The main theaters of military operations during the reporting period in Syria were:

1. Rif Dimashq Governorate
 - During the reporting period, the Syrian government attacked the town of Zabadani, an area in the Qalamoun mountains northwest of Damascus and close to the Lebanese border that is the last significant town held by rebel forces in the region. The Syrian army and fighters from Lebanon's Hezbollah movement had previously launched an offensive to drive rebels out of the town on July 3; a new barrel bomb attack on Tuesday, July 21 by the Syrian air force wrought unprecedented destruction, however. Rebel groups attempted to fight back, resulting in casualties on both sides.²
2. Damascus Governorate
 - On Saturday, July 25, President Bashar al-Assad announced that he would grant general amnesty for military deserters who violated the country's compulsory military conscription law. Assad contends that army deserters in and outside of Syria will no longer face legal penalties. Many doubt the validity of this pledge, however, as Assad has issued amnesties in the past without releasing the affected political prisoners. In a separate speech on Sunday, July 26 in Damascus, Assad admitted that Syria's army faces a manpower shortage and has lost many areas to insurgent control.³
3. Idlib Governorate
 - By Wednesday, July 29, rebel groups and the al Qaeda affiliated al-Nusra front reportedly retook Idlib from the Syrian government forces after a campaign that started on Monday. Early reports stated that the opposition forces pushed Syrian government troops out of several villages in the Idlib countryside, finally gaining majority control of the region after reclaiming Frikka. Jaish al-Fatah, or the Army of Conquest, an army made of Syrian Islamist rebel factions, was reported to have led the offensive.⁴
 - A U.S. coalition-led airstrike hit an ISIL tactical unit and vehicle near Idlib on Wednesday, July 29.⁵
 - On Monday, August 3, the Syrian government staged air raids on the town of Ariha amid clashes throughout Idlib between government forces and anti-government rebels. A government warplane crashed in the town, killing and injuring a number of people at a marketplace.⁶

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33624215>

³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/25/us-mideast-crisis-army-idUSKCN0PZ07020150725> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/27/world/middleeast/assad-in-rare-admission-says-syrias-army-lacks-manpower.html>

⁴ <http://www.albawaba.com/loop/syrian-rebels-took-last-idlib-province-government-forces-today-heres-how-it-happened-724288>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3CjGTUHM0> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ipjHuznBU0> ; <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/video/rebels-claim-capture-zayzoun-power-151232844.html>

⁵ <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129369>

⁶ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/05a49d8eb2dc4c76b36080319af19dbe/activists-syria-warplane-crashes-killing-and-wounding-many> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33757846>

4. Aleppo Governorate

- On Tuesday, July 28, Syrian rebels detonated explosive-packed tunnels, also known as tunnel bombs, under buildings near the Old City of Aleppo. The blasts killed and injured a number of people; one went off under a police building that likely had troops in it. Extremists had previously used tunnel bombs to attack the Syrian army earlier in the year.⁷
- After the tunnel bombings, fighting between rebel groups ensued in the Aleppo area. On Thursday, July 30, the al Qaeda affiliated al-Nusra front kidnapped Nadim al-Hassan, the leader of a U.S.-backed Syrian rebel group known as Division 30, near Azaz, north of Aleppo. At least six other fighters were kidnapped as well, but Pentagon officials stated that none were American trained fighters.⁸
- On Friday, July 31, the al-Nusra front continued their offensive against Division 30 and attacked the U.S. backed Syrian rebel group west of Azaz. A number of people were killed and many injured in the firefight. U.S. coalition aircrafts came to defend Division 30, as did the coalition, Jaysh Al-Thuwar. The al-Nusra front stated that they staged the attack to eliminate Division 30 in Syria as it is "aiming to advance the projects and interests of America."⁹
- On Sunday, August 2, U.S. officials confirmed a new American policy to defend Syrian rebels trained by the U.S. military from any attackers, such as the al-Nusra Front, even if the attackers are associated with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.¹⁰

5. Hasakah Governorate

- Syrian watchdog groups announced that Kurdish YPG fighters and Syrian regime forces drove ISIL out of Hasakah on Tuesday, July 28 after reclaiming Zuhur, the final disputed neighborhood.¹¹
- U.S. coalition-led airstrikes continued throughout the reporting period near Hasakah, continuing an offensive in the region.¹²

Other key points:

- During the reporting period, a combination of public and international pressure along with military events caused Turkey to increase its efforts to fight ISIL alongside the United States. On Monday, July 20 a suicide bomber suspected of having ties to the Islamic State struck a cultural center in the Turkish border town of Suruc, killing and injuring many people, and

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Vlqw6nFYvU> ;
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/syrian-soldiers-killed-rebel-tunnel-bombs-20147291993231487.html>

⁸ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/commander-of-us-backed-rebels-captured-by-al-qaeda-militants-in-syria/2015/07/30/d90aef92-36f4-11e5-9739-170df8af8eb9_story.html ;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/31/world/middleeast/us-trained-islamic-state-opponents-reported-kidnapped-in-syria.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/30/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kidnapping-idUSKCN0Q400G20150730>

⁹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-33738961> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/01/world/middleeast/nusra-front-attacks-us-backed-syrian-rebel-group.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/03/us-mideast-crisis-syria-usa-idUSKCN0Q803Y20150803>

¹¹ <http://europe.newsweek.com/report-isis-ousted-syrian-city-hasakah-330957> ;
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/07/28/Syria-regime-Kurds-push-ISIS-from-Hasakah.html>

¹² http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

prompting Turkish demonstrators to accuse the Turkish government of tacitly cooperating with ISIL.

- A few days later on Thursday, July 23, ISIL fighters opened fire on a Turkish border outpost in the Kilis region, killing at least one Turkish soldier and wounding others in the first act of direct combat between Turkish forces and ISIL. Following these two events, the United States announced on Thursday that it had reached an agreement with Turkey for manned and unmanned American warplanes to use two of Turkey's air bases, Incirlik and Diyarbakir, to launch aerial attacks on ISIL targets in Syria. Previously, Turkey had only allowed unmanned flights from Incirlik and the U.S. had to conduct any manned bombing raids out of the Gulf.
- Following the announcement of the agreement, Turkish fighter jets began a campaign of airstrikes on Friday, July 24 against ISIL targets in Syria (primarily across the border from Kilis in southern Turkey) and also against camps of the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party, the PKK, in northern Iraq. The air campaign continued through Sunday, July 26 and it elicited retributive attacks from Kurdish militants within Turkey and expressed concern from the Kurdish YPG in Syria. Additionally, on Friday, July 24 the Turkish government began arresting hundreds of people in Turkey suspected of having ties to terrorist organizations.
- On Monday, July 27, Turkey and the United States announced an additional agreement to create an "Islamic State-free zone" in northern Syria. The two countries continue to work out the details of the plan, but so far state that American warplanes, Syrian insurgents, and Turkish forces will work together to sweep ISIL from a 60-mile strip of land in Syria along the Turkish border. The Turks contend that this would ideally create a "safe zone" for displaced Syrians; American officials hold that this does not mean a buffer or no-fly zone.¹³
- On Tuesday, July 28 NATO ambassadors held an emergency meeting under Article 4 of the NATO treaty during which the allied nations pledged their full political support to Turkey as it begins to fight militants in Syria and Iraq. Turkey did not request military aid from its 27 allies in NATO, however, and many of the allied nations – especially those in Europe where Turkey seeks admission to the E.U. – warned Turkey not to meddle with the Kurdish peace process. These nations, which included Germany and the Netherlands, emphasized that while they believe Turkey was justified in striking Kurdistan Workers Party camps in Iraq, the Kurdish peace and reconciliation process should continue.¹⁴

¹³<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/24/world/europe/turkey-isis-us-airstrikes-syria.htm> ;
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/07/turkish-army-hits-isis-syria-shooting-150723140621321.html> ;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/25/world/europe/turkey-isis-syria-airstrikes.html> ;
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33663005> ;
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/26/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-idUSKCN0PZ03I20150726> ;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/26/world/middleeast/turkey-attacks-kurdish-militant-camps-in-northern-iraq.html>; Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/07/26/world/europe/26reuters-mideast-crisis-turkey.html> ;
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/27/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-arrests-idUSKCN0Q10NH20150727> ;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/28/world/middleeast/turkey-and-us-agree-on-plan-to-clear-isis-from-s-trip-of-northern-syria.html>

¹⁴ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/07/28/uk-mideast-crisis-turkey-nato-idUKKCN0Q20R020150728> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/29/world/middleeast/turkey-wins-nato-support-as-it-steps-up-isis-fight-in-syria.html>

- The chairman of Turkey's pro-Kurdish HDP party echoed that sentiment, saying that Turkey and the PKK should continue a peace process, but that the Turkish-American "safe zone" plan in northern Syria is an attempt by Ankara to stop Kurds from forming their own autonomous territory. Statistics support this claim – as of Wednesday, July 29, of the 1,302 people arrested by Turkish officials for terrorism, 847 were accused of links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and just 137 to ISIL. Additionally, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said such a peace process with Kurdish militants was impossible, furthering the conflict between Turkey and the region's Kurds.¹⁵

The main theaters of military operations during the reporting period in Iraq were:

1. Anbar Governorate

- On Tuesday, July 21 Iraqi security forces and Sunni tribal fighters attacked Albu-Hayat, east of Haditha, from three sides in an effort to keep the city out of ISIL's control. U.S. coalition-led airstrikes were conducted on Wednesday, July 22 and Thursday, July 23 "near Haditha" as well.¹⁶
- On Thursday, July 23 the first contingent of American-trained Iraqi soldiers was deployed to Ramadi, the capital of Anbar governorate, to join the effort to encircle and retake the city. In the previous week, Iraqi troops successfully surrounded Ramadi and cut off supply lines to ISIL forces there. 3,000 Iraqi soldiers were sent on the mission along with 500 Sunni tribal fighters, who will help to safeguard the city once ISIL is removed. U.S. Colonel Steve Warren estimated there to be between 1,000 and 2,000 ISIL fighters in Ramadi.¹⁷
- On Sunday, July 26 Iraqi security forces retook the University of Anbar, a complex located 5 kilometers/3 miles south of Ramadi that ISIL had been using as a command base. A number of buildings in and around the complex were damaged during the clashes, which were supported by U.S. coalition-led airstrikes.¹⁸
- After reclaiming the University of Anbar last week, Iraqi Security Forces consolidated control over Ramadi during the reporting period. The Anbar Operations Command forces advanced north of Ramadi from July 28-29 and the Counter Terrorism Service retook areas south of Ramadi near the university. The U.S. coalition continued to conduct airstrikes near Ramadi during the reporting period as well.¹⁹

2. Baghdad Governorate

- On Wednesday, July 22 car bombs exploded in al-Bayaa in southwestern Baghdad and al-Shaab in northeastern Baghdad. The attacks in the predominantly Shi'ite

¹⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/29/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-idUSKCN0Q300F20150729> ; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/28/turkey-erdogan-not-possible-peace-process-kurdish-militants> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33698659> ;

¹⁶ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html ; <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129330> ; http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-EGfvKheYO9c/VbFwLFfacI/AAAAAAAADuA/IM0TZ4Ce_qw/s1600/iraq%2BSITREP%2B2015-7-23%2Bhigh.png ; <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-iraqis-launch-offensive-against-islamic-state-near-anbar-military-base-2015-7>

¹⁷ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/ash-carter-visits-baghdad-to-discuss-isis-campaign-1437638794>

¹⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/26/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-anbar-idUSKCN0Q006420150726> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33669345> ;

¹⁹ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html ; <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/>

neighborhoods both killed and wounded a number of people. ISIL later claimed responsibility for the attacks.²⁰

- On Thursday, July 23 U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter met with Iraqi leaders in a surprise visit to Baghdad. He urged the Iraqis to increase their resistance to ISIL, saying that the U.S. would be prepared to play a more active role in the campaign once Iraqi forces show increased capability and motivation, and showed his support for the Ramadi offensive, which began that same day.²¹
- On Friday, July 31, several thousand people protested in Tahrir Square at the center of Baghdad over the lack of electricity and therefore air conditioning during a period of unusual summer heat; they blamed the government for corruption in dealing with the matter.²²
- In response, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared a four-day weekend to keep people out of the sun; he consulted an electricity minister; and he applied the daily power cuts that all Iraqis had been enduring to government offices and homes. Abadi told Parliament last week that the government would bring the electricity grid up to 11,000 megawatt capacity, although that still would not meet the summer's peak demand of 22,000 megawatts. The lack of access to electricity poses an especially grave problem in combination with ISIL's presence in Iraq – many Iraqis displaced from their homes do not have shelter to stay out of the sun and some citizens have been killed by stray gunfire while trying to cool off outside during the night.²³
- On Friday, July 31, several thousand people protested in Tahrir Square at the center of Baghdad over the lack of electricity and therefore air conditioning during a period of unusual summer heat; they blamed the government for corruption in dealing with the matter.²⁴
- In response, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared a four-day weekend to keep people out of the sun; he consulted an electricity minister; and he applied the daily power cuts that all Iraqis had been enduring to government offices and homes. Abadi told Parliament last week that the government would bring the electricity grid up to 11,000 megawatt capacity, although that still would not meet the summer's peak demand of 22,000 megawatts. The lack of access to electricity poses an especially grave problem in combination with ISIL's presence in Iraq – many Iraqis displaced from their homes do not have shelter to stay out of the sun and some citizens have been killed by stray gunfire while trying to cool off outside during the night.²⁵

²⁰ <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/07/22/iraqi-officials-say-baghdad-market-bombing-kills-18-people> ;

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/07/23/ISIS-claims-Baghdad-car-blast-that-killed-20.html> ; Reuters, <http://news.yahoo.com/islamic-state-claims-baghdad-car-blast-killed-20-074408289.html> ;

²¹ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/ash-carter-visits-baghdad-to-discuss-isis-campaign-1437638794>

²²<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/world/middleeast/iraqis-protest-electricity-shortage-during-heat-wave.html>

²³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/world/middleeast/iraqis-protest-electricity-shortage-during-heat-wave.html>

²⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/world/middleeast/iraqis-protest-electricity-shortage-during-heat-wave.html>

²⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/world/middleeast/iraqis-protest-electricity-shortage-during-heat-wave.html>

3. Diyala Governorate

- During the reporting period, the Diyala provincial government convened to discuss the security situation there after issuing multiple unanswered calls for Iraqi security forces to return to support the region against ISIL. The deteriorating security in Diyala presents an opportunity for ISIL to assert control over the region, counteracting other efforts to remove the group from Iraq.²⁶

4. Basrah Governorate

- On Saturday, August 1, residents of Basrah demonstrated in front of the governor's office over the escalating electricity crisis and also protested the salty tap water in that region. According to Iran's state-run Press TV, however, an Iranian company recently signed a deal to add 3,000 megawatts to the Iraqi grid by building a \$2.5 billion power plant in Rumaila, Al Basrah. The reported deal would be between the Iraqi-Jordanian Shamara Group and Iran's MAPNA Group.²⁷

5. Karbala Governorate

- On Saturday, August 1, residents of Karbala also protested the government's inability to provide electricity and other resources to its citizens, marching from the neighborhood housing Imam Hussein's shrine to the governor's office.²⁸

Other key points:

- On Wednesday, July 29 Turkey carried out its most aggressive airstrikes yet against the Kurdistan Workers' Party in northern Iraq.²⁹ In response, the head of foreign relations for Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, Falah Mustafa, called for a negotiated settlement to the conflict and urged Turkey to stop its airstrikes against PKK guerrilla bases.³⁰

[wave.html](#)

²⁶ <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/07/the-resurgence-of-isis-in-diyala-and.html>

²⁷ AFP, <http://news.yahoo.com/iraqis-protest-over-poor-services-salty-tap-water-000016757.html> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/world/middleeast/iraqis-protest-electricity-shortage-during-heat-wave.html> ; [http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/07/27/422086/iran-iraq-power-plant-basra-mapna-gas- ;](http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/07/27/422086/iran-iraq-power-plant-basra-mapna-gas-) <http://www.technicalreviewmiddleeast.com/power-a-water/power-generation/iran-s-mapna-group-to-build-3-000mw-power-plant-in-iraq> ; https://www.zawya.com/story/Iranian_company_builds_electric_power_plant_in_Basra-ZAWYA20150731063755/

²⁸ AFP, <http://news.yahoo.com/iraqis-protest-over-poor-services-salty-tap-water-000016757.html>

²⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/29/turkey-launches-biggest-attack-kurdish-militants> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/29/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-idUSKCN0Q300F20150729>

³⁰ AFP, <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/iraqi-kurdistan-urges-turkey-halt-pkk-bombardment-193530031.html>

Key Heritage Recommendations and Actions

- ASOR CHI has contacted in-country sources to investigate airstrike damage to the German excavation houses at Tell Chuera and to ascertain the general cultural heritage situations in Raqqa and Tadmor.
- ASOR CHI is moving forward with multiple mitigation/preservation projects in Syria — the specifics of these projects will remain confidential in the interests of protecting cultural heritage staff and preserving these sites from deliberate targeting.
- ASOR CHI will be investigating recent tunnel bomb damage in Aleppo and possible damage to heritage sites in northern Syria and Iraq linked to the numerous airstrikes recently conducted by the Turkish Air Force.

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0106

Report Date: July 5, 2015

Site Name: Deraa National Museum

Date of Incident: July 3, 2015; updated July 30, 2015

Location: Deraa, Deraa Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Regional museum that houses archaeological finds from the area; regional headquarters for the DGAM were also located in this facility.

Site Date: Museum building dates to the 20th century

Incident Summary: On July 3, 2015 the DGAM reported combat damage to the museum. On July 30, 2015, the DGAM reported additional minor damage to the museum from military activity.

Incident Source and Description: On July 3, 2015 the Directorate General of Museums and Antiquities stated that museum suffered non-structural to the building and garden due to nearby military operations. Windows and doors in the museum were blown out and cracks appeared in walls, and the pool on the garden grounds was damaged. The Deraa antiquities department was able reach the museum and temporarily close the damaged areas. The DGAM reported that the museum's collection had been recently relocated prior to the damage, and exhibit cases appear empty in photographs following the incident. Large stone artifacts (i.e. dark basalt sarcophagi and fragments of column capitals) do appear present in the background of images of the museum's garden.

On July 30, 2015, the Director General of Museums and Antiquities stated that the museum suffered new minor damage to the building and the outer wall of the garden.

Pattern: Combat-related damage.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is monitoring the condition of the Deraa Museum, given its significance as a cultural repository.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM (July 3, 2015): <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1735>

DGAM (July 30, 2015): <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1753>



Museum of Deraa, interior damage (July 3, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, interior damage (July 3, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, interior damage (July 3, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, interior damage (July 3, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, exterior damage (July 3, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, exterior damage (July 3, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, exterior damage, (July 3, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, interior damage (July 30, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, exterior damage to the garden wall (July 30, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, exterior damage (July 30, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Deraa, exterior damage (July 30, 2015; DGAM)

SHI 15-0113

Report Date: July 27th, 2015

Site Name: Tell Chuera Dig House (Tell Khouira)

Date of Incident: July 26th, 2015

Location: Tell Chuera, Raqqa Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Originally occupied during the 4th millennium BCE, Tell Chuera became a major site in the 3rd millennium during the Early Dynastic Period. It reached its peak around 2350 BCE and was then abandoned for reasons as yet unknown. A small settlement was built on the location by the Assyrians during the 2nd millennium BCE. While the early name for the city is unknown, during Middle Assyrian times it was known as Harbe. The site was first described by Max von Oppenheim in 1913. Excavations began in 1958 by the Free University of Berlin led by Anton Moortgat. Excavations occurred under Ursula Moortgat-Correns in the 1970s, and came under the direction of Winfried Orthmann of the University of Halle until 1998. Excavation was then continued under Jan-Waalke Meyer from the Goethe University Frankfurt.³¹

Site Date: Archaeological site dates 4th millennium-2nd millennium BCE; German excavation house dates to 20th century.

Incident Summary: The German dig house at Tell Chuera was damaged in an alleged airstrike.

Incident Source and Description: According to the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums of Syria, the dig house at Tell Chuera was bombed. This site had most recently been excavated by a German team from Goethe University, Frankfurt.³² The DGAM reports that the local community has moved artifacts from the dig house to safe places since the area was retaken from ISIL, adding that no artifacts were damaged.

Pattern: Military Activity: Explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports via in-country sources and is continuing to monitor the condition of ancient cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1748>

³¹ Winfried Orthmann et al., *Ausgrabungen in Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien I Vorbericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1986 bis 1992*, Saarbrucker Druckerei und Verlag – SDV, 1995.

³² <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1748>

Scholarly:

Anton Moortgat, Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufiger Bericht über die Grabung 1958, Köln und Opladen, 1960

Anton Moortgat, Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufiger Bericht über die dritte Grabungskampagne 1960, Köln und Opladen, 1962

Anton Moortgat, Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Bericht über die vierte Grabungskampagne 1963, Köln und Opladen, 1965

Anton Moortgat, Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufiger Bericht über die fünfte Grabungskampagne 1964, Köln und Opladen, 1967

Anton Moortgat and Ursula Moortgat-Correns, Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufiger Bericht über die sechste Grabungskampagne 1973, Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 1975

Anton Moortgat and Ursula Moortgat-Correns, Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufiger Bericht über die siebte Grabungskampagne 1974, Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 1976

Anton Moortgat & Ursula Moortgat-Correns: Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufiger Bericht über die achte Grabungskampagne 1976, Mann, 1978

Winfried Orthmann et al., Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufiger Bericht über die neunte und zehnte Grabungskampagne 1982 und 1983, Mann, 1998

Winfried Orthmann et al., Ausgrabungen in Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien I Vorbericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1986 bis 1992, Saarbrucker Druckerei und Verlag – SDV, 1995

Michael Zick: *Tell Chuera – Stadtplanung vor 5000 Jahren*. in: *Bild der Wissenschaft*. Leinefelden-Echterdingen 1/2005,1, S. 72–76.

Stefan Jakob, Die mittelassyrischen Texte aus Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009,

Jan-Waalke Meyer, Ausgrabungen in Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien Band 2: II: Vorbericht zu den Grabungskampagnen 1998 bis 2005, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010,

Winfried Orthmann, L'architecture religieuse de Tell Chuera, *Akkadica*, vol. 69, pp. 1–18, 1990



Tell Chueira Dig House, Raqqa Governorate (July 26, 2015; DGAM)

SHI 15-0114

Report Date: August 4, 2015

Site Name: Palmyra Museum

Date of Incident: July 29, 2015

Location: Palmyra Museum, Tadmor, Homs Governorate, Syria

Site Description: The Museum at Palmyra, built to house artifacts from Palmyra and the surrounding area.

Site Date: Modern

Incident Summary: On July 29, 2015, the DGAM posted photographs from an unknown previous date showing minor damages to the Palmyra Museum from military clashes in the area.

Incident Source and Description: On July 29, 2015, the DGAM posted photos of damage at the Palmyra Museum. The date of these photographs is unknown. The explosive damage, caused by recent military clashes in the area, destroyed the NE part of the museum's garden wall. The museum building suffered damage to the windows, which were blown out, and the suspended ceilings were knocked down.³³ For previous reporting on the Palmyra Museum within the context of the situation at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra see Weekly Reports 50, 46, 42-43, and 41.

Pattern: Military Activity: Explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is monitoring the condition of the Palmyra Museum, given its significance as a cultural repository.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1751>

³³ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1751>



Museum of Palmyra, exterior damage (July 29, 2015; DGAM)



Museum of Palmyra, exterior damage (July 29, 2015; DGAM)