

# ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq<sup>1</sup>

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Michael D. Danti, Allison Cuneo, Marina Gabriel, Susan Penacho,  
Kyra Kaercher, LeeAnn Barnes Gordon, Emily Ham, and John O'Neill

## Executive Summary

During the reporting period in Syria, reported cultural heritage incidents remained elevated due to the release of new data on archaeological looting from in-country sources as well as the release of new satellite imagery. Russian airstrikes on militarized archaeological sites held by Syrian Opposition and Islamist extremist groups have markedly elevated the risk of combat damage over a wide area of northern and western Syria.

The Jihadi-Salafi extremist group Daesh (ISIS, ISIL, IS) continued its campaign of performative deliberate destructions in Syria at the site of Palmyra, where the Arch of Triumph was destroyed with explosives, and in Iraq where Daesh deliberately destroyed/demolished the Abdullah ibn Mubarak Mosque and Shrine in Hit.

## Key Points

- Satellite imagery shows ongoing looting at the site of Tell Bezzam near Hama, Syria ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0135](#)).
- The DGAM reports ongoing looting in the Dier ez-Zor region of Syria ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0136](#)).
- Russian airstrikes allegedly struck multiple sites in the Dead Cities region ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0137](#)). **The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative** has produced a brief, illustrated report of the damage to the site of Shinshara in Syria.
- ISIL advances into rebel held areas of Syria in the wake of the Russian air campaign in support of SARG forces.
- ISIL intentionally destroys the Arch of Triumph in Palmyra, Syria ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0138](#)).
- ISIL supporters demolish the Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque in Hit, Iraq ([ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0096](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> This report is based on research conducted by the “Cultural Preservation Initiative: Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq.” 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.

## Heritage Timeline

October 13, 2015

**The Center for Art Law** published an article titled, “**The International Criminal Court Takes on Attacks on Cultural Heritage, But is it Enough?**” (By Timur Tisuray). On September 26, 2015 Nigerian authorities surrendered Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi to the International Criminal Court. Al Mahdi is charged with war crimes linked to his alleged involvement in the destruction of historic and religious monuments in Mali in 2012. The trial underscores such acts of heritage and cultural destruction will not be tolerated by the international community.

<http://itsartlaw.com/2015/10/13/the-international-criminal-court-takes-on-attacks-on-cultural-heritage-but-is-it-enough/>

October 9, 2015

**DGAM** published an article entitled “**Arch of Triumph Upon Destruction [by] ISIS.**” This article confirms the destruction with additional photographs and references to films that were released of the explosion. It further confirms that ISIL takes full responsibility regarding the destruction.

<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1823>

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*Sputnik International* published an article titled “**Russian Airstrikes in Syria Could Be Palmyra’s Only Chance to Survive.**” This article attempts to rally support behind Russian military action in Syria by asserting that Russia not only bombed ISIL headquarters 40 miles from Palmyra, but their air campaign could save the city from ISIL as well.

<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20151009/1028251339/russia-palmyra-isis-arch-heritage-syria.html>

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**The Global Heritage Fund** announced their initiative “**AMAL in Heritage,**” a non-profit response to emergency management of cultural heritage. The project aims to develop a mobile and web application that can be used to offer supplementary training and emergency management tools for cultural heritage professionals and communities in times of crisis, enabling them to undertake survey, salvage, and stabilization measures when international help and assistance are unavailable. The pilot initiative will create the first component of AMAL’s App, which will assist participants in carrying out rapid initial assessments of damage.

October 8, 2015

**APSA** published a video titled “**Palmyra: Daesh blows up Arch of Triumph 01.10.2015.**” This video shows the aftermath of the destruction of the Arch of Triumph in Palmyra.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhX1Rw2rlbs>

- *ABC News* released a video titled “**2,000-Year-Old Arch ISIS Destroyed in Palmyra, Syria,**” which shows ISIL destroying the Arch of Triumph in Palmyra.  
<http://abcnews.go.com/International/video-shows-2000-year-arch-isis-destroyed-palmyra/story?id=34338007>
- *The Paideia Institute* published a blog titled “**Back from the Future: ISIS and the Impact of the Present on the Past in the Present**” (by Simon Oswald). <https://medium.com/eidolon/back-from-the-future-fdf55441ba64>
- *Time Magazine* published an article titled “**Why ISIS Wants to Destroy Syria’s Cultural Heritage**” (by Amr Al-Azm). The author asserts that ISIL destroys sites heritage to attempt to rewrite the history of the region and of Islam for ideological purposes, as well as to show the world that they can operate without consequences and act with impunity  
<http://time.com/4065290/syria-cultural-heritage/>
- *Sputnik News* released an article titled “**Why is City Palmyra So Important to Millions of Russians?**” This article discusses the sadness expressed via Russian social media when internet posts of Palmyra’s capture and destruction by ISIL went viral.  
<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20151008/1028230752/syrian-palmyra-important-for-millions-russians.html>
- *HyperAllergic Media* published an article titled “**New Guidelines Help Museums Safeguard Works Threatened by War and Disaster**” (by Claire Voon). The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) has released a list of protocols to help protect at-risk archeological items..  
<http://hyperallergic.com/241613/new-guidelines-help-museums-safeguard-works-threatened-by-war-and-disaster/>
- **The Archeological Institute of America** published an article titled, “**AIA and ASOR Receive Grant for Two-Day Syrian Cultural Heritage Summit.**” This article announces the award of the Chairman’s Grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities to the AIA and ASOR.  
<https://www.archaeological.org/news/aianews/20271>
- *Aleteia* released an interview with Maria Saadeh, Syrian Member of Parliament, titled, “**Syrian Legislator’s Message to the West: You Are Destroying Our State, Our History, and Our Heritage**” (by Arthur Herlin).  
<http://aleteia.org/2015/10/08/syrian-legislators-message-to-the-west-you-are-destroying-our-state-our-history-and-our-heritage/>

- The New York Times* produced an editorial entitled “**Cultural Destruction as a War Crime**”. The International Criminal Court started its legal proceedings one week ago against Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi who was charged with the destruction of 10 religious sites in Timbuktu, Mali.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/09/opinion/cultural-destruction-as-a-war-crime.htm>
- October 7, 2015

**DGAM** published an article entitled “**In photos: major damages at Shinsharah in Djebel el-Zawyé.**” The DGAM received information about destruction at the ruins at Shinsharah in Djebel el-Zawyé, and presents the evidence. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0137.**  
<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1821>
- Elan* published an article titled “**3D Mapping history: Can these modern-day Monuments Men ‘save’ ancient sites in the Middle East?**” (by Yara Boraie). This article is an update of the Institute for Digital Archaeology’s launch of “The Million Image Database,” a project sponsored by UNESCO World Heritage, New York University’s Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, and Oxford University. The goal is to “flood the Middle East with 3D cameras” to digitally document historical buildings, sculptures, and artifacts that are at risk of destruction.  
<http://www.elanthemag.com/3d-mapping-history-can-modern-day-monuments-men-save-ancient-sites-middle-east/>
- The **DGAM** published an article entitled “**Conclusion of workshop: Cultural heritage site management.**” The DGAM held a workshop to improve upon human resources, legal support, and management for site preservation with participants from throughout Syria.  
<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1819>
- October 6, 2015

**The Department of State** released a blog post titled “**Cultural Heritage Defines Us and Must Be Preserved.**” The UN General Assembly and the US Department of State held a symposium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to provide “new and irrefutable evidence” showing that ISIL is looting for profit, and released a plan to make stronger efforts to combat the market of conflict antiquities.  
<https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2015/10/06/cultural-heritage-defines-us-and-must-be-preserved>

- *Newsweek* published an article titled “**Syrian Director of Antiquities Welcomes Russian Bombing of Palmyra**”. The article states that DGAM Director, Maamoun Abdulkarim, supports Russia running air raids over Palmyra in order to combat ISIL. However, Russia strictly denies these reports, saying, “[Russian] aviation in Syria does not operate over populated settlements nor on the architectural monuments situated there.”  
<http://europe.newsweek.com/exclusive-syrian-director-antiquities-welcomes-russian-bombing-palmyra-334176>

October 5, 2015

DGAM published an article entitled “**ISIS destroys the Arch of Triumph in Palmyra.**” The DGAM confirms the destruction of the Arch of Triumph in Palmyra. Multiple news outlets continued to publish similar reports regarding the destruction. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0138.**

<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1817>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/palmyra-isis-destroys-roman-triumphal-arch-in-ancient-syrian-city-a6679526.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/world/middleeast/isis-syria-arch-triumph-palmyra.html>

<http://news.yahoo.com/blows-arch-triumph-syrias-palmyra-activist-monitor-010604769.html>

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/10/151005-palmyra-arch-destruction-isis-syria-archaeology/>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/04/us-mideast-crisis-palmyra-idUSKCNORYOYN20151004>

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/10/the-islamic-state-detonate-antique-arches-in-palmyra-and-shelling-on-several-areas-at-the-northern-countryside-of-homs/>

- DGAM began its multi-week training course in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Damascus entitled ***First Aid to Built Cultural Heritage in Syria.***  
<https://www.facebook.com/First-Aid-to-Built-Cultural-Heritage-in-Syria-Course-1660926204143551/>

- *Seattle Times* published an article entitled “**Palmyra: the ancient city that must be saved from ISIS.**” The article stresses the frustration UNESCO has felt from the slowness from the world community to react to the destruction of Palmyra.  
<http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/palmyra-the-ancient-city-that-must-be-saved-from-the-islamic-state/>

- *Independent* published an article titled “**ISIS guilty of ‘cultural cleansing’ across Syria and Iraq, Unesco chief Irina Bokova says**” (by Alexander Sehmer). Bokova stresses that ISIL and other militant groups are guilty of “cultural cleansing” in the Middle East.  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/unesco-chief-irina-bokova-accuses-islamist-groups-of-cultural-cleansing-isis-a6679761.html>
  - *Hypothesis.org* released an article entitled, “**Bel est bien mort.**” This article is an obituary-esque account of the Temple Bel that was destroyed by ISIL.  
<http://ifpo.hypotheses.org/7020>
- October 4, 2015
- NOW* published an article entitled “**How Russia Bombed A UN Heritage Site in Syria**” (by Ana Maria Luca and Myra Abdallah). Russian airstrikes hit the Dead Cities near the modern town of Kafranbel.  
<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/565993-how-russia-bombed-a-un-heritage-site-in-syria>
- October 3, 2015
- The Huffington Post* published an article entitled “**Timbuktu, ISIS and the Long Arm of Justice**” (by Mark V. Vlasic). The article discusses the surrender of Ahmad Al Mahdi Al Faqi to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the first international case specifically related to the destruction of religious and historical monuments.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-v-vlasic/timbuktu-and-the-long-arm\\_b\\_8239050.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-v-vlasic/timbuktu-and-the-long-arm_b_8239050.html)
- *The Wellesley News* published an article entitled “**Erasing the Past: Da’Esh and the Crisis of Antiquity Destruction**” (by Zarina Patwa). The article provides an overview of the “Erasing the Past: Daesh and the Crisis of Antiquities Destruction” conference held on September 24, 2015.  
<http://thewellesleynews.com/2015/10/03/daeshs-destruction-of-antiquities-sparks-interdisciplinary-conference/>
- October 2, 2015
- Counter Punch* published an article entitled “**Confronting ‘Looting to Order’ and ‘Cultural Racketeering’ in Syria**” (by Franklin Lamb). This article provides a review of ISIL’s cultural cleansing and the roles of various organizations in documenting destruction of cultural heritage.  
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/10/02/confronting-looting-to-order-and-cultural-racketeering-in-syria/>

October 1, 2015

The **Association of Art Museum Directors** published an press release “**AAMD Issues Protocols to Protect Works of Cultural Significance in Danger of Damage or Destruction**” (contacts: Christine Anagnos and Elizabeth Chapman).

<https://www.aamd.org/for-the-media/press-release/aamd-issues-protocols-to-protect-works-of-cultural-significance-in>

- *The Globe Mail* published an article titled “**The Sack of Palmyra: A Modern History of Destroying History.**” This collection of articles details the destruction of Syria’s cultural heritage due to ongoing civil war and recent ISIL involvement. Several experts are featured, describing what has been lost thus far and the efforts that are being made to prevent future destruction and looting, with particular focus on Palmyra.  
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/the-sack-of-palmyra-a-modern-history-of-destroyinghistory/article26610572/>
- *ARTslanT* published an article titled “**Fighting ISIL Iconoclasm with Art and 3D Printers**” (by Danna Lorch). This article reviews Oxford and Harvard’s project *The Million Image Database Project* through which 5,000 cameras will be distributed to “relatively unskilled volunteers who are based in conflict zones.”  
<http://motherboard.vice.com/read/where-do-isis-looted-antiquities-go>
- *F3 Magazine* published an article titled “**ISIS and illicit trafficking in cultural property: Funding terrorism through art**” (by Annelies Pauwels). This article stresses the importance of stopping terrorist financing through looting and antiquities trafficking. The article posits stories dealing with cultural property crimes are potentially overlooked amongst other stories regarding atrocities in the conflict zone, but the author argues antiquities trafficking should not be ignored given ISIL’s focus on the trade as a significant source of terrorist finance.  
<http://f3magazine.unicri.it/?p=1098>

September 30, 2015

The **Department of State** published an article titled “**United Against Threats to Cultural Heritage in Iraq and Syria**” (by the Office of the Spokesperson). Documents and items recovered during a U.S. Special Operations Forces raid on the compound of ISIL leader Abu Sayyaf in May 2014 prove there is a system in place under senior ISIL leadership to loot and market antiquities from Syria and Iraq. ASOR CHI is cited for its effort to document damage, spread awareness, and plan post-war responses in Syria and Iraq.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/09/247616.htm>

- *The Hill* published an article titled **“US offers \$5 million reward to stop ISIS from plundering antiquities”** (by Rebecca Kheel). The United States government is now offering a \$5 million reward to anyone who might have information that disrupts looting and selling Syrian antiquities. <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/255442-us-offers-5-million-reward-to-stop-isis-from-plundering-antiquities>
  - **DGAM** posted photos of the site of **Tell al-Kasra/ Tell as-Sin** in Der Ez-Zor. The site is reportedly seeing more illegal looting activity in recent months. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0136**. <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1814>
  - *Motherboard* published an article titled **“Where do ISIS-looted Antiquities Go?”**. This article provides a brief overview on the trafficking routes for antiquities and the difficulty involved in tracing illegal items back to their source. [http://motherboard.vice.com/en\\_ca/read/where-do-isis-looted-antiquities-go](http://motherboard.vice.com/en_ca/read/where-do-isis-looted-antiquities-go)
  - Rick St. Hilaire of the *Cultural Heritage Lawyer* blog published a post titled **“Newly Obtained Documents Reveal Suspected Ties to Terrorism and Money Laundering in Antiquities Trafficking Investigation; “Seize and Send” Outcome Flags Urgent Need for Specially Designated Prosecutors to Bring Criminals to Justice.”** Article summarizes a report from The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detailing an investigation of a suspicious shipping of cultural heritage objects that came to the U.S. in March 2011. <http://culturalheritagelawyer.blogspot.com/2015/09/newly-obtained-documents-reveal.html>
- September 29, 2015
- **The White House** published an article titled **“Leaders’ Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism”** (from the Office of the Press Secretary). Report from the White House on the conference in New York City on September 29, 2015 for world leaders to assess the state of affairs in regards to countering ISIL threats. The report announcement the development of an informal Public-Public Partnership to protect antiquities in Syria and Iraq. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/29/leaders-summit-countering-isil-and-violent-extremism>
  - **DGAM** published an article titled **“Latest news about Palmyra”**. Tells of how local forces are still trying to rebuild and restore Palmyra from the hands of ISIL. . <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1810>



- Hamrin News* published an online post titled “ داعش يهدم ضريح وجامع عبد الله “ ابن المبارك في الأنبار discussing the destruction of the Shrine and Mosque Abdullah bin Mubarak in the town of Hit located near Anbar.  
<http://hamrinnews.net/i/103474.html>
  - The Guardian* published an article titled “**They are barbarians’: meet the man defending Syria’s heritage from ISIS**” (by Ian Black). Features background information on and direct commentary from Syria’s director-general of antiquities and museums, Maamoun Abdulkarim.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/29/they-are-barbarians-meet-the-man-maamoun-abdulkarim-defending-syrias-heritage-from-isis>
  - Avenire* published an article titled “**Anche EBLA nel mirino dell’Is: parla il direttore delle Antichità della Siria**” (by Giovanni Verga). Another review of commentary from the director-general of antiquities and museums, Maamoun Abdulkarim.  
<http://www.avvenire.it/Cultura/Pagine/EBLA-.aspx>
  - Elite Daily* published an article titled “**American Is Ignoring A Way To Hurt ISIS and Protect World History.**” (by Alexandra Skovos). This past spring, US Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY) introduced a bill that could curb the looting and selling of Syrian antiquities by imposing import restrictions on cultural artifacts and organizing the various government programs working to protect cultural heritage. The bill has passed through the House of Representative but still awaits to be voted on in Congress.  
<http://elitedaily.com/news/politics/america-ignoring-hurt-isis/1219631/>
  - DGAM** published an article titled “**The French Parliament Offering support to DGAM is one important reason for our visit to Syria**”. During their visit to Syria, three members of the French Parliament visited DGAM headquarters in Damascus to show their support to the effort in preserving Syrian cultural heritage during these “exceptional circumstances.”  
<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1812>
- September 28, 2015
- Bas News* published an online post titled “ داعش يفجر مزاراً دينياً في “ الأنبار.” The article has several photos showing the destruction of the Shrine and Mosque of Abdullah bin Mubarak in the town of Hit by ISIL militants. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0096.**  
<http://www.basnews.com/ar/news/2015/09/28/بفجر-داعش-بالصور/الأفي-دينياً-مزارا/>
- September 27, 2015
- The Independent* published an article titled “**What’s Russia up to in**

**Syria? I would wager they're after something big--retaking Palmyra**" (by Robert Fisk). The author speculates that recapturing Palmyra would be a symbol for Russia's new ambitions to establish a particular military and political presence in the Middle East, and predicts that, despite ever-changing operational details, the Syrian army is being primed to recapture Palmyra from ISIL within the next three weeks, thereby establishing Russia as a reliable world leader to Middle Eastern countries.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/what-s-russia-up-to-in-syria-i-would-wager-theyre-after-something-big-retaking-palmyra-a6669446.html>

- **DGAM** posted photos of the site of **Nabi Hour/Cyrrhus** in Aleppo Governorate. The site is reportedly in good condition due to safeguarding by the local community.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1808>

## Military and Political Context

**The most significant political and military events during the reporting period in Syria were:**

1. Homs:
  - On September 30, Russia began conducting its first airstrikes against rebel-controlled areas of Homs. According to the Syrian opposition activist network known as the Local Coordination Committee, Russian warplanes hit five towns in Homs: Zafaraneh, Rastan, Talbiseh, Makarmia, and Ghanto. According to the activists, none of the towns targeted by Russian forces were under ISIL control. The Syrian civil defense group known as The White Helmets reported the death toll at 33 civilians including 3 children and 1 Syrian Civil Defense volunteer. The group's Twitter account posted images of the destruction. A report later stated that the attacks on Rastan and Zafaraneh killed 17 civilians.<sup>2</sup>
  - On September 30, The White Helmets reported via the group's Twitter account that a Russian airstrike in Talbiseh "hit the bread distribution depot-also home to the Local civilian council (sic)". Talbiseh is occupied by several rebel and Islamist groups including al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, Islamist group Ahrar al-Sham, and local opposition units. A report later stated that at least 17 civilians had been killed in the airstrike.<sup>3</sup>
  - On September 30, a "moderate Western-backed Syrian rebel group" announced that one of its leading officers, Iyad al-Deek, was killed during a Russian airstrike. Al-Deek was reportedly a First Lieutenant in the Free Syrian Army. His death was first reported by the Tahreer Homs brigade via their website. An announcement of "martyrdom" was posted on a Twitter account associated with Jabhat al-Nusra.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34399164> ;

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/09/syria-apparent-russian-airstrikes-kill-civilians>

<sup>3</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/09/russias-first-reported-air-strikes-in.html> ;

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/09/syria-apparent-russian-airstrikes-kill-civilians>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/russia-launches-first-air-strikes-in-syria-live->

- On October 2, Russian warplanes struck the ISIL-held town of Qaryatain. ISIL forces first took control of the town in August 2015.<sup>5</sup>
- On October 5, ISIL militants partially destroyed a set of second century AD triumphal arches in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra. Opposition activist Khaled Al-Homsi reported 40 air raids near Palmyra via his Twitter account. Al-Homsi is the nephew of the late Khaled al-Assad, the longtime director of the Palmyra site who was beheaded by ISIL militants in August. Al-Homsi was also the first to report on the ISIL destruction of the triumphal arch in Palmyra.<sup>6</sup>
- On October 5, Russian airstrikes destroyed 20 ISIL tanks near Palmyra according to Syrian state television and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. However, Russia denied striking any targets in Palmyra due to concerns of civilian populations and historical sites. The Russian defense ministry released a video of its airstrikes in Homs, reportedly targeting an ISIL munitions depot.<sup>7</sup>
- On October 5, the Palmyra branch of the Local Coordination Committees listed the damage, both human and structural, for the month of September as: “222 air raids, using rockets as well as naval mines, gas cylinders and barrel bombs, that killed 97 people and destroyed 239 houses and three ancient structures.”<sup>8</sup>
- On October 11, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that in the past 24 hours it had hit 53 ISIL positions including some within the governorate of Homs. The ministry stated that its targets were ISIL bunkers, a weapons depot, and an ISIL transportation convoy.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Hama:

- On September 30, Russia began conducting airstrikes against rebel-controlled areas of Hama. Casualties were reported but exact numbers remain unknown. Syrian activist groups reported that Russian airstrikes hit rebel targets in the town of Ltamenah.<sup>10</sup>
- Beginning October 5, Syrian planes dropped pamphlets to people in the last opposition-held neighborhood of the city of Homs, al Waer, promising “safe passage through army checkpoints”. The pamphlets also promised safety and family reunification to opposition fighters who “give themselves up” to Syrian forces. Images of such pamphlets have surfaced online via activists on the ground in Syria. Some sources have claimed the pamphlets were dropped by Russian planes.<sup>11</sup>
- On October 7, Syrian government forces launched a ground offensive against front-line, opposition-held villages as part of a new campaign to regain strategic territory

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[a6673751.html](http://a6673751.html) ; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-latest-russian-airstrikes-hit-islamic-state-in-syria/2015/09/30/a8b2b4de-6777-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-latest-russian-airstrikes-hit-islamic-state-in-syria/2015/09/30/a8b2b4de-6777-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205_story.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/qaryatain-russia-bombs-syrian-city-where-isis-asked-christians-convert-pay-tax-leave-648908> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/02/us-mideast-crisis-syria-qaryatain-idUSKCN0RWOLK20151002>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/world/middleeast/isis-syria-arch-triumph-palmyra.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.rt.com/news/317715-russian-jets-isis-syria/> ;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/06/us-mideast-crisis-syria-strikes-idUSKCN0S011E20151006>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/world/middleeast/isis-syria-arch-triumph-palmyra.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=164373>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34399164> ; <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/russia-syria-putin-launches-first-air-strikes-country-although-targets-remain-disputed-1521834> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-30.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/07/us-mideast-crisis-syria-homs-idUSKCN0S11K520151007>

between Idlib and Hama. This ground attack was part of a joint land, air, and sea campaign launched by Russia and Syria.<sup>12</sup>

- On October 11, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that in the past 24 hours it had hit 53 ISIL targets, including within the governorate of Hama. The ministry stated that its targets were ISIL bunkers, a weapons depot, and an ISIL transportation convoy.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Aleppo:

- On September 30, U.S. forces carried out strikes against ISIL targets in the city of Aleppo despite Russian requests that the U.S. remain clear of Syrian airspace.<sup>14</sup>
- On October 2, Russian officials reported that their latest airstrikes destroyed a command post near Daret Azzeah.<sup>15</sup>
- On September 30, U.S. forces carried out strikes against ISIL targets in the city of Aleppo despite Russian requests that the U.S. remain clear of Syrian airspace.<sup>16</sup>
- On October 4, New York-based Human Rights Watch reported that an “advanced type of Russian cluster munition” was deployed in an airstrike near the village of Kafr Halab, southwest of Aleppo. No casualties were reported and it remains unknown whether Syrian or Russian aircrafts carried out the attacks.<sup>17</sup>
- On October 8, General Hossein Hamedani of the Iranian National Guard was killed near Kweires Airbase, approximately 20 miles east of Aleppo. According to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hamedani was in Syria for a special mission that included “protect(ing) the Shrine of Zaynab and strengthen(ing) the Islamic resistance front in Syria’s fights against terrorists (sic).” Hamedani was a veteran of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war and in command of the IRGC unit in Tehran. Since 2011, Hamedani had been subjected to international sanctions for violating human rights. According to Iranian news sources, Hamedani was an expert on Syria and had spent time in the region over the past few years as an advisor to the Syrian military in their fight against ISIL militants.<sup>18</sup>
- On October 9, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it had killed over 300 anti-Assad insurgents in “nearly 70 sorties” in the last 24 hours. According to the RIA news agency, 100 were killed in Aleppo. According to Russia, two ISIL field commanders were among the casualties. However, there is no independent confirmation of the death toll.<sup>19</sup>
- On October 9, Rami Abdulrahman, the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, reported that ISIL militants had captured several Syrian villages near Aleppo. The villages captured included Tel Suseen and Tel Qarah, which had been previously held by other rebel groups. ISIL’s capture of these villages places them under 2 miles from a “government-held industrial zone” located in the very north of Aleppo.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/world/middleeast/russia-syria-conflict.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/syrian-regime-starts-ground-offensive.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=164373>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-middle-east-34404438>

<sup>15</sup> <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/858d94a0f4fe47e8a0c004c4e860bf65/latest-russia-carries-out-further-18-sorties-syria>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-middle-east-34404438>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/10/syria-new-russian-made-cluster-munition-reported>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/09/us-mideast-crisis-syria-iran-idUSKCN0S30R020151009> ; <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/10/iran-general-killed-syria.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/09/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0S30J220151009>

According to Abdulrahman, this is the closest ISIL has ever been to the city of Aleppo.<sup>20</sup>

4. Idlib:

- On October 1, Russian warplanes reportedly conducted strikes in the Ghab Plain, striking targets in Jisr al-Shughour.<sup>21</sup>
- On October 2, Russian officials reported that their latest airstrikes destroyed a field camp, arms depot, and temporary warehouse near Maaret al-Numan.<sup>22</sup>
- On October 3, an airstrike in the Ihsim region carried out by unknown forces killed a family of five and a member of the White Helmet's rescue operations team. The airstrikes hit a poultry farm that had been used as a shelter for civilians who had fled their homes.<sup>23</sup>
- On October 4, Syrian military forces launched an "offensive" attack against opposition-held areas in Idlib.<sup>24</sup>
- On October 6, The Syrian Coalition reported that Russian airstrikes had hit the town of Serjilla, the site of a preserved "dead city" which dates back to the 1st century AD.<sup>25</sup>
- On October 7, Syrian government forces launched a ground offensive against front-line opposition-held villages. The offensive is part of a new campaign to regain the strategic territory of Jabal al-Zawiyah. This ground attack was part of a joint land, air, and sea campaign launched by Russia and Syria.<sup>26</sup>
- On October 11, a senior Hezbollah commander was killed while fighting against opposition rivals in a coordinated effort with the Russian air force to reclaim the highland area of Tal Skik. Later reports by Syrian state news announced that the Syrian army was now in control of Tal Skik, which had been under the control of the opposition fighting alliance known as the Army of Conquest.<sup>27</sup>
- On October 11, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that in the past 24 hours it had hit 53 ISIL positions including in the governorate of Idlib. The ministry stated that its targets were ISIL bunkers, a weapons depot, and an ISIL transportation convoy.<sup>28</sup>

5. Raqqa:

- On October 1, activist groups on the ground in Raqqa reported air raids that killed 9 'extremists'. It was unknown which forces were responsible for the attacks.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/10/09/ISIS-advances-in-Aleppo-outskirts.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/09/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0S30J220151009> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34488087>

<sup>21</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-30.html>

<sup>22</sup> <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/858d94a0f4fe47e8a0c004c4e860bf65/latest-russia-carries-out-further-18-sorties-syria>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/04/world/middleeast/airstrikes-kill-rescue-worker-and-family-of-5-in-syria.html>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/world/middleeast/russia-syria-conflict.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/syrian-regime-starts-ground-offensive.html>

<sup>25</sup> <https://alsharir.wordpress.com/2015/10/06/russia-airstrikes-hit-2000-years-old-serjila-town/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/world/middleeast/russia-syria-conflict.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/syrian-regime-starts-ground-offensive.html>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/r-syrian-army-advances-in-west-after-russian-strikes-monitor-2015-10> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Oct-12/318535-senior-hezbollah-commander-killed-in-idlib.ashx>

<sup>28</sup> <http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=164373>

However, on the same day U.S. officials reported that Russian airstrikes had struck two locations in Raqqa.<sup>29</sup>

- On October 2, activist groups on the ground in Raqqa reported a drone strike on an ISIL camp. No casualties were reported. Activists in Raqqa reported that ISIL had cancelled Friday prayers due to ongoing Russian airstrikes.<sup>30</sup>
- On October 8, the activist group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently recorded 22 airstrikes in the city of Raqqa.<sup>31</sup>
- On October 9, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian announced via Twitter that the French military had carried out airstrikes overnight against ISIL targets in Raqqa.<sup>32</sup>
- On October 9, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it had killed over 300 anti-Assad insurgents in “nearly 70 sorties” in the last 24 hours. According to the RIA news agency, 200 insurgents from the Islamist opposition group Liwa al-Haqq in Raqqa governorate were killed in the attack.<sup>33</sup>
- On October 13, the US-led coalition “struck two [ISIL] tactical units, a vehicle, and a building near the cities of Al Hawl and Raqqa”.<sup>34</sup>

#### 6. Latakia:

- On September 30, Russia reportedly began conducting airstrikes in Latakia. Casualties and the extent of the damage is unknown.<sup>35</sup>
- On October 3, an airstrike occurred near a hospital in rural Latakia causing damage to the building. No casualties or injuries were reported.<sup>36</sup>
- On October 11, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that in the past 24 hours it had hit 53 ISIL positions including in the governorates of Latakia. The ministry stated that its targets were ISIL bunkers, a weapons depot, and an ISIL transportation convoy.<sup>37</sup>

#### 7. Deir ez-Zor:

- On October 2, ISIL forces attacked Syrian government-controlled areas in the city of Deir ez-Zor as well as a Syrian airbase. Syrian warplanes struck parts of the city and areas surrounding the airbase. Syrian activists reported clashes in the area between ISIL militants and pro-Assad forces.<sup>38</sup>

#### 8. Tartus:

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<sup>29</sup> [hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/S/SYRIA THE LATEST](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/S/SYRIA_THE_LATEST) ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-30.html>

<sup>30</sup> [hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/S/SYRIA THE LATEST](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/S/SYRIA_THE_LATEST)

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.raqqa-sl.com/en/?p=1484>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/09/world/syria-isis/>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/09/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0S30J220151009>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Oct-14/318890-isis-hit-by-18-us-led-airstrikes-statement.ashx>

<sup>35</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/09/30/Russia-launches-airstrikes-against-ISIS-in-Syria.html>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/04/world/middleeast/airstrikes-kill-rescue-worker-and-family-of-5-in-syria.html>

<sup>37</sup> <http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=164373>

<sup>38</sup> <http://news.yahoo.com/islamic-state-attacks-syrian-government-held-areas-eastern-134406596.html> ; [hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/S/SYRIA THE LATEST?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/S/SYRIA_THE_LATEST?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT)

- On September 30, The Institute for the Study of War reported that Russia “intends to upgrade its naval facility in the Port of Tartus.” This includes Russia sending at least two “repair and supply vessels” and an anti-terror escort made up of naval infantry personnel to the port.<sup>39</sup>
9. Hasakah:
- On October 11, U.S. forces dropped 50 tons of ammunition to Syrian rebel groups. According to a U.S. official, ammunition was dropped via 112 pallets and was successfully recovered by “friendly forces”.<sup>40</sup>
  - On October 13, the US-led coalition “struck two [ISIL] tactical units, a vehicle, and a building near the cities of Al Hawl and Raqqa.”<sup>41</sup>
10. Damascus:
- On September 30, Syrian state TV quoted the country’s foreign minister as praising the new coordination methods between Damascus, Russia, Iran, and Iraq in combating terrorism.<sup>42</sup>
  - On October 12, Russia said that two shells were fired at the Russian embassy in Damascus during a demonstration in support of Russia’s military action in Syria. The damage and casualties from the attack remain unknown. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov described the action as an act of terror.<sup>43</sup>

Other Key Points:

- On September 30, Russia’s Defense Ministry was quoted by the BBC as stating that Russian jets flew approximately 20 missions over Syria, striking eight ISIL targets. According to Russian media, the ministry claimed an ISIL command post and operations center were “destroyed” and that civilian areas were not hit. Khaled Khoja of the Syrian National Coalition, the main Western-backed Syrian opposition group, condemned “Russia’s military aggression in Syria” on its first day of airstrikes in the country. Khoja accused Russian forces of targeting civilians instead of ISIL militants and using its military to support the Assad regime.<sup>44</sup>
- On September 28, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced in a speech in front of the UN General Assembly his intentions to combat ISIL terrorism in Syria. According to the New York Times, “Mr. Putin called for a grand international coalition to fight the Islamic State, saying in his speech at the United Nations that the world needed to support Mr. Assad and Kurdish forces fighting on the ground in order to defeat the Islamic State, much as the world fought Hitler during World War II.”<sup>45</sup>
- On September 29, U.S. officials announced a suspension of their efforts to train and equip Syrian rebels. The Pentagon’s \$500 million dollar program has faced extreme criticism as

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<sup>39</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/09/warning-update-russia-expanding.html>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/12/politics/syria-rebel-groups-ammunition-50-tons/>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Oct-14/318890-isis-hit-by-18-us-led-airstrikes-statement.ashx>

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-latest-russian-airstrikes-hit-islamic-state-in-syria/2015/09/30/a8b2b4de-6777-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-latest-russian-airstrikes-hit-islamic-state-in-syria/2015/09/30/a8b2b4de-6777-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205_story.html)

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/13/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-idUSKCN0S714220151013>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-middle-east-34404438> ;

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-latest-russian-airstrikes-hit-islamic-state-in-syria/2015/09/30/a8b2b4de-6777-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-latest-russian-airstrikes-hit-islamic-state-in-syria/2015/09/30/a8b2b4de-6777-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205_story.html)

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/world/europe/russia-airstrikes-syria.html>

the Syrian fighters trained have largely failed as fighting units, suffered heavy casualties, and most recently handing over weapons to Islamist forces in Syria.<sup>46</sup>

- On September 30, Russian President Vladimir Putin pushed a measure through the upper house of parliament authorizing the use of Russian military forces abroad. Only hours after Mr. Putin gained authorization, Russian forces began conducting their first airstrikes in Syria. France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius expressed his concern for the Russian airstrikes targeting non-ISIL forces during a meeting at the United Nations General Assembly. British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond spoke out at the UN Security Council against any efforts to leave President Assad in a position of power in Syria.<sup>47</sup>
- On September 30, France introduced the world's first criminal inquiry into acts of torture linked to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. According to a spokeswoman from the Paris prosecutor's office, the investigation is still in its early stages and any steps forward must begin with the "discovery of French victims, or the arrest of a Syrian official".<sup>48</sup>
- On September 30, US Secretary of State John Kerry announced, via his Twitter account, that the US-led coalition would continue to operate air operations in Syria despite Russian military efforts in Syria. US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter relayed concerns that Russia's airstrikes were not attacking ISIL targets in Syria. This statement, at a Pentagon news conference, came hours after Russia began launching its first airstrikes in Syria.<sup>49</sup>
- On September 30, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told reporters at the UN General Assembly in New York, that President Assad must step-down or face military action. It was unclear whether Mr. al-Jubeir was stating Saudi Arabia's willingness to put troops on the ground in Syria, or to continue ongoing military aid to opposition groups already fighting against Assad.<sup>50</sup>
- On October 1, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that Russia would attack other terrorist groups "recognized by the UN Security Council or Russian law", contradicting the original statement that Russia would only be targeting ISIL.<sup>51</sup>
- On October 1, The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) reported that Iran and Iraq had deployed Shia militia ground forces to Syria. Iran reportedly deployed several hundred members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as of September 21 in anticipation of a major ground offensive. ISW anticipates that the intended ground offenses will target "northwestern Hama ... and southwestern Idlib" governorates, that are currently held by rebel forces. In addition, the Iranian-backed Iraqi Shia militia group, Kata'ib al-Imam, has also reportedly been deployed to Syria.<sup>52</sup>
- On October 2, Russia announced that it had carried out ten airstrikes against ISIL targets in the north and northeastern governorates of Syria, areas mainly held by rebel factions. A Russian lawmaker announced that Russian airstrikes in Syria would last three to four

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<sup>46</sup> <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/29/under-fire-u-s-suspends-part-of-syrian-rebel-training-program/>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/world/europe/russia-airstrikes-syria.html> ;

<http://www.bbc.com/news/live/world-middle-east-34404438>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/01/world/europe/france-investigates-syria-torture-bashar-assad.html>

<sup>49</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-latest-russian-airstrikes-hit-islamic-state-in-syria/2015/09/30/a8b2b4de-6777-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-latest-russian-airstrikes-hit-islamic-state-in-syria/2015/09/30/a8b2b4de-6777-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205_story.html)

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/saudi-arabia-threatens-military-action-against-syrias-assad-1521764>;

<http://www.agsiw.org/rushin-to-syria-riyadh-pledges-to-counter-moscows-sudden-escalation/>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/syria-russia-says-air-strikes-last-three-four-months-accuses-us-pretending-bomb-isis-1522142>

<sup>52</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/warning-update-iran-and-iraqi-shia.html>



months. Simultaneously, the US-led coalition called on Russia to immediately cease airstrikes in Syria. The coalition countries including France, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UK, and the U.S. expressed concern that Russian airstrikes had targeted Syrian rebels, as well as civilians, instead of ISIL targets. Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu accused Russia of targeting moderate Syrian rebels in their efforts to “prop up” President Assad’s regime.<sup>53</sup>

- On October 3, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry expressed approval of Russia’s actions in Syria as a way of preventing the spread of terrorism and degrading ISIL. Shoukry stopped short of voicing support for President Assad.<sup>54</sup>
- On October 5, Russia announced that “volunteer ground forces” could be deployed in Syria in the near future. U.S. officials expressed concern about Russia’s continued buildup of ground troops in western areas of Syria where anti-regime forces are currently based.<sup>55</sup>
- On October 5, President Barack Obama authorized the resupplying of Syrian Kurdish forces and Arab-Syrian opposition during a National Security Council Meeting.<sup>56</sup>
- On October 5, NATO urged Russia to end its ongoing airstrikes in Syria stating concerns of Russia’s actions and an escalation of the conflict.<sup>57</sup>
- On October 7, Russia and Syria conducted a coordinated land, air, and sea attack attempting to reverse rebel groups’ gains along the Syrian coast. Moscow announced that it had fired 26 cruise missiles from naval vessels in the Caspian Sea, 900 miles away from Syria. On the ground, Syrian military forces launched an “offensive” attack against opposition-held areas in Hama and Idlib governorates.<sup>58</sup>
- On October 8, Russian cruise missiles, launched from warships in the Caspian Sea, reportedly crashed in Iran. The missiles landed in an unknown rural area of Iran with no reports of casualties. Russia’s Defense Ministry disputed this claim, stating the missiles had hit their targets in Syria.<sup>59</sup>
- On October 8, NATO renewed its pledge to support its allies in response to Russia’s escalation of military action in Syria. Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg urged Russia to end their support of President Bashar al-Assad.<sup>60</sup>
- On October 8, a Saudi official announced that Saudi Arabia will be increasing its supply of lethal weaponry to three different rebel groups in Syria: Jaish al-Fatah, the Free Syrian Army, and the Southern Front.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/syria-russia-says-air-strikes-last-three-four-months-accuses-us-pretending-bomb-isis-1522142> ; <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/russian-air-strikes-in-syria-us-led-coalition-urges-vladimir-putins-forces-to-immediately-cease-a6677216.html> ;

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/10/02/Turkey-coalition-partners-call-on-Russia-to-cess-air-strikes-in-Syria.html>

<sup>54</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/10/04/Egypt-voices-support-for-Russia-s-moves-in-Syria.html>

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/world/middleeast/russian-soldiers-join-syria-fight.html> ; <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/06/politics/russia-syria-isis/index.html>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/05/politics/russia-ground-campaign-syria-isis/index.html>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34448942>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/08/world/middleeast/russia-syria-conflict.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/syrian-regime-starts-ground-offensive.html>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/09/world/middleeast/russian-missiles-aimed-at-syria-crashed-in-iran-us-officials-say.html> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/10/08/Four-Russian-cruise-missiles-targeting-Syria-crashed-in-Iran-U-S-official.html>

<sup>60</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraqi-security-forces-launch-new.html>

- On October 9, U.S. officials announced the suspension of their Syrian rebel training program. Despite the suspension, the U.S. will continue to provide ammunition to about 5,000 moderate rebels of the Syrian Arab Coalition located in the north of Syria as well as Syrian Kurdish groups already fighting ISIL. According to a U.S. official, the administration will be exploring other ways to support moderate opposition forces in Syria.<sup>62</sup>
- On October 9, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it had killed over 300 anti-Assad insurgents in “nearly 70 sorties” in the last 24 hours. According to the RIA news agency, 200 insurgents from the Islamist opposition group Liwa al-Haqq in Raqqa governorate were killed in an attack against their base, while another 100 were killed in Aleppo. According to Russia, two ISIL field commanders were among the casualties. However, there is no independent confirmation of the death toll.<sup>63</sup>
- On October 10, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it had hit 55 ISIL targets in the last 24 hours. The areas targeted included: Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Raqqa, and Idlib. Their statement detailed their strikes as destroying: 29 terrorist training camps, 23 defensive positions, two command centers, and an ammunition depot. Although Raqqa is a known stronghold of ISIL, there is little to no presence of the group in the other governorates targeted in these strikes.<sup>64</sup>
- On October 11, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Saudi Defense Minister, Mohammed bin Salman, in Sochi, Russia regarding Russia’s intervention in Syria.<sup>65</sup>
- On October 12, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated on Russian television that his aim in Syria was not only to defeat ISIL but to “stabilize the legitimate government and to create conditions for a political compromise”. Putin clarified this stabilization must be accomplished through military means.<sup>66</sup>
- On October 12, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, announced in a Moscow press conference that Russia was “ready to establish new information coordination centers in the Middle East and North Africa to support its operations in Syria”.<sup>67</sup>
- On October 13, UN special envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura was in Moscow, urging Russia to aid in finding political resolution in Syria.<sup>68</sup>
- On October 13, al-Nusra Front commander Abu Muhammed al-Jolani called for revenge attacks against Russians in the Caucasus in exchange for the Syrian lives lost as a result of Russia’s military activity.<sup>69</sup>
- On October 13, Amnesty International released a report titled: *‘We had nowhere else to go’: Forced displacement and demolitions in northern Syria*. The report highlighted abuses committed by the Syrian Kurdish militia known as the People’s Protection Unit (YPG) against Arab and Turkmen residents, following the YPG overtaking villages from ISIL. According to Amnesty, YPG actions in razing of villages in the governorates of Hasakeh and

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34479929>

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/09/politics/us-syria-rebels-arms-program-suspended/index.html> ; <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/10/us-arm-syria-kurds-rebels-isis.html>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/09/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0S30J220151009>

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34496583>

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-military-activity-october-8-14-2015>

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/12/world/syria-russia-airstrikes/index.html>

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-military-activity-october-8-14-2015>

<sup>68</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/al-qaeda-in-syria-calls-for-revenge-attacks-on-russia/2015/10/13/b7f7dfdf-a0a4-451d-bd2e-180f2f4882f5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/al-qaeda-in-syria-calls-for-revenge-attacks-on-russia/2015/10/13/b7f7dfdf-a0a4-451d-bd2e-180f2f4882f5_story.html)

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/world/europe/putin-complains-about-us-cooperation-on-syria.html> ; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/al-qaeda-in-syria-calls-for-revenge-attacks-on-russia/2015/10/13/b7f7dfdf-a0a4-451d-bd2e-180f2f4882f5\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/al-qaeda-in-syria-calls-for-revenge-attacks-on-russia/2015/10/13/b7f7dfdf-a0a4-451d-bd2e-180f2f4882f5_story.html)

Raqqa between July and August 2015, should be considered war crimes. The YPG is considered a U.S. ally and has been engaged in fighting ISIL militants. The U.S. State Department announced that it is looking into the allegations.<sup>70</sup>

- On October 13, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced that it had carried out “88 sorties” against ISIL targets in the last 24 hours, with 86 of those strikes hitting their targets. The strikes occurred as Russia announced that it would be “intensifying its airstrikes against Syrian insurgents”.<sup>71</sup>

**The most significant political and military events during the reporting period in Iraq were:**

1. Al Anbar:

- On September 29, ISIL militants carried out a suicide bombing in the town of al-Jarashi, north of Ramadi. One of the suicide bombers was confirmed to be the son of a Jordanian member of parliament.<sup>72</sup>
- On October 2, Syrian activists online reported ongoing clashes between Iraqi forces and ISIL militants in the town of al-Jarashi, north of Ramadi.
- Between October 2-5, the US-led coalition conducted 12 airstrikes targeting ISIL militants “near” Ramadi and Habaniya.<sup>73</sup>
- On October 4, ISIL militants executed 70 Sunni tribesmen from the Al Bu Nimr tribe in the village of Khanizir. The Al Bu Nimr tribe, thought to constitute more than half a million people, has been engaged in the fight against ISIL. In 2014, ISIL militants killed more than 500 members of the tribe.<sup>74</sup>
- On October 4, Iraqi security forces recaptured the Olympic Stadium located west of Ramadi. Fighting was ongoing in the areas north and east of Ramadi.<sup>75</sup>
- On October 6, Iraqi security forces launched an official operation to retake the city of Ramadi from ISIL militants.<sup>76</sup>
- On October 7, Iraqi security forces continued their operations in the areas north and west of Ramadi. Iraqi forces intend to cut off ISIL supply lines by surrounding the city.<sup>77</sup>
- On October 12, the Iraqi air force announced that it had struck a convoy carrying ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on his way to an ISIL meeting in Karbala. Later media coverage reported that eight senior leaders of ISIL had been killed in the attack, but al-Baghdadi was not among them.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/10/syria-us-allys-razing-of-villages-amounts-to-war-crimes/> ;

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-looking-allegations-kurdish-militia-war-crimes-syria-829280637>

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/14/world/europe/putin-complains-about-us-cooperation-on-syria.html>

<sup>72</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/10/02/Jordan-MP-s-son-carried-out-Iraq-suicide-attack-.html>

<sup>73</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34446066>

<sup>75</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>76</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html> ;

<http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>77</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraqi-security-forces-launch-new.html>

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/12/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-baghdadi-idUSKCN0S50KI20151012> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34500402>

- On October 13, the US-led coalition conducted four strikes on two ISIL tactical units and destroyed six buildings, five fighting positions, a sniper position, two separate “command and control nodes.” Another strike hit an ISIL tactical unit and weapons cache near the city of Habbaniyah.<sup>79</sup>

## 2. Baghdad:

- On September 29, ISIL militants carried out a suicide attack at a security checkpoint north of Baghdad, killing at least 7 people including 4 soldiers and 3 civilians.<sup>80</sup>
- On September 30, 16 Turkish workers, who had been kidnapped nearly a month ago from a construction site in Baghdad, were released to the Turkish ambassador in Iraq. The exact details and conditions of their release remain unknown.<sup>81</sup>
- On September 30, the Prime Minister of Iraq Haider al-Abadi, announced via his Facebook page that the Iraqi government’s cooperation with Russia, Syria, and Iran “is solely to share information on Daesh” (the Arabic name for ISIL). He disputed the idea that Iraq had established a military coordination cell with any of the aforementioned countries.
- On October 2, Prime Minister of Iraq Haider al-Abadi, said he would be open to Russian airstrikes in Iraq against ISIL targets. Abadi also criticized what he considered to be insufficient air support for Iraqi forces from the United States to combat ISIL advances in Iraq.<sup>82</sup>
- On October 2, demonstrations against financial corruption occurred in Baghdad.<sup>83</sup>
- On October 5, a car bomb exploded in the northeastern neighborhood of Husseiniya, killing at least 14 people and wounding 25. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>84</sup>
- On October 12, the Iraqi Defense Minister, Khalid al-Obeidi, met with a delegation from Russia’s Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation to discuss “armament contracts and training arrangements”.<sup>85</sup>
- On October 13, the chairman of Iraq’s parliamentary security and defense committee, Hakim al-Zamili, announced that the new coordination between Russia, Iran, Syria, and Iraq had provided intelligence for Iraqi airstrikes against ISIL.<sup>86</sup>
- On October 13, two US-led coalition strikes hit two separate ISIL tactical units, destroyed six ISIL bunkers and two fighting positions.<sup>87</sup>

## 3. Kirkuk:

- On September 30, Peshmerga forces, backed by US-led coalition airstrikes, were able to retake 12 villages in a push against ISIL in western Kirkuk. According to Secretary General of the Kurdish Socialist Democratic Party Mohammed Haji Mahmoud, military operations were ongoing. Clashes between Peshmerga and ISIL

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/622817/strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

<sup>80</sup> <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/149652.aspx> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-september-26.html>

<sup>81</sup> <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/5fe7624a3be242ee89014757be25f485/report-turkish-workers-kidnapped-iraq-are-released>

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.france24.com/en/20151001-france-24-iraq-abadi-russian-airstrikes-isil-isis>

<sup>83</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2015/10/05/3-car-bombs-in-iraq-kill-31-wound-75-iraqi-security-officials> ; <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0ad88f8984bc4485a5f2344aa723a683/iraq-officials-car-bombs-iraq-kill-18-wound-45>

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-military-activity-october-8-14-2015>

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-military-activity-october-8-14-2015>

<sup>87</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/622817/strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

militants continued as the Peshmerga attempted to retake an additional seven villages.<sup>88</sup>

- On October 2, clashes between ISIL militants and an armed group affiliated with the former Ba'ath party known as Jaish Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandiya occurred in the al-Abbasiya sub-district killing 28 people.<sup>89</sup>
4. Salah ad Din:
    - On October 12, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and militias launched a major offensive to recapture Baiji. Iranian proxy militias were also involved in the offensive and alongside ISF, clashed with ISIL forces in Baiji. Ten coalition airstrikes also targeted ISIL near Baiji.<sup>90</sup>
    - On October 13, the US-led coalition struck an ISIL tactical unit, one building, and a vehicle near Baiji.<sup>91</sup>
  5. Al Basrah:
    - On October 2, demonstrations against financial corruption occurred in Al Basrah governorate.<sup>92</sup>
    - On October 5, a car bomb exploded on a commercial street in the town of al-Zubair killing 10 people and wounding at least 25 others. ISIL militants claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>93</sup>
  6. Diyala:
    - On October 5, a car bomb exploded on a commercial street in the Shiite-majority town of Khalis, near Rafidain Bank, killing at least 40 people and wounding 50 others. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>94</sup>
  7. Dohuk:
    - Between October 4-5, Turkish jets conducted airstrikes against PKK forces in the Hafatin and Matina areas as well as in parts of the Qandil Mountains.<sup>95</sup>
  8. Ninawa:
    - On October 13, ISIL spokesman Abu Mohamed al-Adnani announced the death of ISIL second-in-command Fadel al-Hayari (aka Hajji Moataz). U.S. officials described al-Hayari as “Baghdad’s military emir and emir of Ninawa” governorate. Al-Hayari was confirmed as having been killed by a US-led airstrike in Mosul in August of this year.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/300920151> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-september-26.html>

<sup>89</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>90</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-6-15-2015.html>

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/622817/strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

<sup>92</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2015/10/05/3-car-bombs-in-iraq-kill-31-wound-75-iraqi-security-officials> ; <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0ad88f8984bc4485a5f2344aa723a683/iraq-officials-car-bombs-iraq-kill-18-wound-45> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2015/10/05/3-car-bombs-in-iraq-kill-31-wound-75-iraqi-security-officials> ; <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0ad88f8984bc4485a5f2344aa723a683/iraq-officials-car-bombs-iraq-kill-18-wound-45> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34447851>

<sup>95</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/islamic-state-second-command-confirmed-killed-group-iraq-621824645>

- On October 13, the US-led coalition struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroyed a tactical vehicle, a heavy machine gun, and two fighting positions near Sinjar district. Another strike also neutralized two ISIL heavy machine gun positions near Mosul and Tal Afar.<sup>97</sup>
9. As Sulaymaniya:
- On October 8, fights broke out between protesters and riot police in Qala Diza in northern Sulaymaniya. The protesters, who had gone on strike, were made up of teachers, hospital workers, and other employees of the public sector whose salaries have not been paid by the KRG for the past three months. On October 9, the protests turned violent as demonstrators clashed with police. The fighting left two protesters dead and 18 wounded.<sup>98</sup>
  - On October 11, protestors in Sayid Sadiq in eastern Sulaymaniya clashed with security forces, wounding an unconfirmed number of protestors and Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) supporters. Protesters also attacked the KDP headquarters in Sulaymaniya, as well as other KDP buildings in Kalar, Sharzur, Zarayin, Qala Diza, and Halabja. The KDP reported that in Sulaymaniya, two KDP members were killed and nine others injured in the attack on the KDP headquarters. Journalists and media outlets in these areas have also become targets for attacks by protesters and other unknown gangs.<sup>99</sup>
10. Erbil:
- On October 12, the Goran Movement, a political party in Kurdistan, said that its parliamentarians, including its parliament speaker, had been blocked by the KDP from entering Erbil at a military checkpoint.<sup>100</sup>

#### Other Key Points:

- On October 2, demonstrations against financial corruption occurred in Babil, Baghdad, Al Basrah, Dhi Qar, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Al Qadisiya, and Wasit. Additional demonstrations occurred in Diwaniya against “the appointment of a new Fadhila governor.”<sup>101</sup>
- Between October 8–9, unpaid teachers protested in the towns of Kalar, Karmiyan, and Sulaymaniya city, as well as in the cities of Koya and Halabja.<sup>102</sup>

#### **The most significant political and military events during the reporting period in Turkey were:**

- On October 2, Turkey continued its attacks on PKK fighters. Turkish forces killed over 10 militants in the town of Silvan, in Diyarbakir governorate, and arrested 40 PKK members in Istanbul.<sup>103</sup>
- On October 4, Turkish jets on the Turkey-Syria border reported being “harassed” by an unidentified plane.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>97</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/622817/strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

<sup>98</sup> <http://news.yahoo.com/protesters-scuffle-police-iraqs-kurdistan-region-154303282.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/political-crisis-in-iraqi-kurdistan.html>

<sup>99</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/political-crisis-in-iraqi-kurdistan.html>

<sup>100</sup> <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/121020152>

<sup>101</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/iraq-situation-report-october-2-5-2015.html>

<sup>102</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/10/political-crisis-in-iraqi-kurdistan.html>

<sup>103</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/10/02/us-turkey-kurds-raids-idUSKCN0RW0SE20151002>

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34441201>

- On October 5, Turkish jets intercepted a Russian plane that entered its airspace. Russia said it “clarified” the incident to Ankara, stating it was an error in navigation.<sup>105</sup>
- On October 10, two explosions, thought to be two suicide bombers, struck a peace rally in Ankara, killing nearly 100 people and wounding 245. No group has yet to claim responsibility for the attack; however, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has stated he is focusing on ISIL as the perpetrator.<sup>106</sup>
- On October 11, the Turkish air force struck PKK targets in southeastern Turkey and northern Iraq. PKK positions in the northern Metina and Zap areas of Iraq were hit during the airstrikes.<sup>107</sup>

## Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Analysis

While there were many media reports of damage to heritage sites occurring within the reporting period, none of the reports were able to be corroborated using the available satellite imagery. The geospatial group is continuing to monitor the situation at Palmyra and within the Dead Cities region where Russian airstrikes are reportedly taking place. Updates will be forthcoming once new satellite images over the areas become available.

However, there were six other satellite images made available to us over various parts of Syria, which covered 180 different archaeological and heritage sites. Recent images over the sites of Hama and Bosra showed no new significant damages to either location. The image over Bosra revealed only minimal damage to an area directly northeast of the Hippodrome, which occurred between July and September of this year. This damage included the excavation of dirt likely with heavy machinery. This was a short term event, and the disturbed area did not increase between September and October.

Based upon the recent analysis of imagery, one site stood out with regard to the high degree of new damage. Tell Bezzam, in Hama governorate, was previously looted before the conflict began based upon a small number of looting pits visible in a satellite image from 2008. In an image from March 22, 2013, a small road was built up the western side of mound to facilitate the harvesting of fields located at the top of the mound. Since then, an image from October 1, 2015 shows military forces have constructed earthworks and berms around the site (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0135**). A tank may be visible at the northwestern corner of the mound.

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<sup>105</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34441201>

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34495161>

<sup>107</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34501617>

## Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0135

**Report Date:** October 13, 2015

**Site Name:** Tell Bezzam

**Date of Incident:** Unknown

**Location:** Hanan, Hama Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Tell Bezzam is one of four tells located on a plateau around Tell Souran, along a riverside, east of the eastern rampart of Nasriyah.<sup>108</sup>

**Site Date:** Possibly 2nd millennium BCE based on the dating of surrounding sites.<sup>109</sup>

**Incident Summary:** Satellite imagery from October 2015 shows intensive building of earthworks around the site.

**Incident Source and Description:** Satellite imagery analyzed by ASOR CHI shows small looting pits visible in the 2008 satellite images. From 2008 to 2013, there was no change in the looting pits, but a single small road was constructed up the western side to reach the fields on the top of the mound. The most recent image, October 1, 2015, shows intensive building of earthworks around the site. Earthworks like those apparent at Tell Bezzam are used for weapons storage at other tells in the region. There are also possible tanks still on the mound in the most recent photo.

**Pattern:** Military activity: earthworks/roadwork; Military activity: occupation/militarization.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to gather on the ground observations of the damage evidenced in DigitalGlobe satellite imagery, and is continuing to monitor the condition of cultural heritage sites in Hama Governorate.

### Sources:

#### Scholarly:

Maqdissi, M. and Parayre, D. (2007) Mission Archeologique Syro-Francaise de L'Oronte.  
<http://halma.recherche.univ-lille3.fr/depot/pdf/oronte2007.pdf>

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<sup>108</sup> <http://halma.recherche.univ-lille3.fr/depot/pdf/oronte2007.pdf>

<sup>109</sup> <http://halma.recherche.univ-lille3.fr/depot/pdf/oronte2007.pdf>





Tell Bezzam, small looting pits from before 2008 and a single small road up the western side of the mound to fields on top of the mound (DigitalGlobe; March 22, 2013)



Tell Bezzam, construction of significant earthworks on top of mound (DigitalGlobe; October 1, 2015)

**SHI 15-0136**

**Report Date:** September 30, 2015

**Site Name:** Tell al-Kasra and Tall as-Sin

**Date of Incident:** Ongoing

**Location:** Tell al-Kasra located 45 km north of Deir Ez-Zor and Tall as-Sin located 10 km west of Deir Ez-Zor, Deir Ez-Zor Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Tell al-Kasra: Located 45 km north of Deir ez-Zor on the left bank of the Euphrates. This site was excavated by the DGAM from 2006–2010 and covers 27 hectares. The mound is surrounded by a mud brick wall. During the 2009 season, a bath and large mosaic were found.<sup>110</sup>

Tall as-Sin: This site was excavated by a Syrian-Spanish joint expedition in 2009–2010. The team excavated the necropolis where 163 tombs are documented, the majority of which are hypogea dug into the rock. The site is 25 hectares in size and is organized in three different sections. In the extreme west is the Citadel from which extends a low pentagon shaped city, protected by a wall of mud in the north, northeast, and east. Outside the walls is the great necropolis of the city, which expands to the north and northeast.<sup>111</sup>

**Site Date:** Tell al-Kasra dates to the Byzantine period and was established during the 5th century CE; Tall as-Sin dates to the Byzantine and Sassanid periods and was established around 400 CE.

**Incident Summary:** Photographic evidence shared by the DGAM shows recent illegal excavations using heavy machinery.

**Incident Source and Description:** The DGAM released photos and a brief description of illegal looting/excavating at Al-Kasra and Tall as-Sin.<sup>112</sup> The information was based on reports from the DGAM offices in Deir ez-Zor, which cites illegal excavations being carried out with heavy machinery over the past month at both sites.

According to the DGAM, illicit excavations have damaged the Roman fortress of Tell al-Kasra with heavy machinery since September. DigitalGlobe satellite imagery from November 7, 2011 shows a mounded site with a partly raised city wall as well as modern graves on the western side. Some excavation of dirt on the northeastern corner of the mound is evident as well.

Since 2010, the illicit excavations on the high mound of Tell as-Sinn also employed heavy machinery where looting has been taking place at the site, particularly in the northern area and

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<sup>110</sup> R. Abboud, H. Issa, Y.D. Abed-Allah, E.H. Bakraji. "Application of Radioisotope XRF and thermoluminescence (TL) dating in investigation of pottery from Tell AL-Kasra archaeological site, Syria" *Applied Radiation and Isotopes* 105 (2015) 47-51.

<sup>111</sup> Montero l'Enollos, J.L. "Investigaciones Sirio-Espanolas en el Valle Medio del Eufartes. Primeros Datos Sobre la Necropolis Bizantina De Tall As-Sin (Siria)" *Antig. Crist. (Murcia)* XXIII, 2006, pg. 409-426.

<sup>112</sup> <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?p=314&id=1814>

possibly outside the site boundaries. There was a noticeable increase in looting between September to November 2014. There are also oil refining sites to the north of the site, which have been visible on satellite imagery since September 16, 2014.

**Pattern:** Illegal excavation; theft.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to find further information on these reports via in country sources and DigitalGlobe satellite imagery as it becomes available.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1814>

Scholarly:

Abdullah, Y. 2011. "The Works of the Syrian Mission in the Byzantine City (Tell Al Kasra) in Five Seasons (2006-2010)" *Journal of Ancient History* 2:269.

Montero l'Enollos, J.L. "Investigaciones Sirio-Espanolas en el Valle Medio del Eufrates. Primeros Datos Sobre la Necropolis Bizantina De Tall As-Sin (Siria)" *Antig. Crist. (Murcia)* XXIII, 2006, pg. 409-426

R. Abboud, H. Issa, Y.D. Abed-Allah, E.H. Bakraji. "Application of Radioisotope XRF and thermoluminescence (TL) dating in investigation of pottery from Tell AL-Kasra archaeological site, Syria" *Applied Radiation and Isotopes* 105 (2015) 47-51.



Tell al-Kasra, evidence of illicit excavation (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



Tell al-Kasra, evidence of illicit excavation (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



Tell al-Kasra, evidence of illicit excavation (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



Tell al-Kasra, most recent satellite imagery (DigitalGlobe; November 7, 2011)



Tall as-Sin, excavation pits from heavy equipment (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



Tall as-Sin, roads from heavy equipment traffic (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



Tall as-Sin in the upper right corner with excavation pits visible (DigitalGlobe; September 16, 2015)





Tall as-Sin in the upper right corner with visible excavation pits (DigitalGlobe; November 11, 2014)



Tall as-Sin (DigitalGlobe; October 1, 2014)

**SHI 15-0137**

**Report Date:** October 10, 2015

**Site Name:** Shinshara (Khirbet Hass); Serjilla (Serjible); Ebla (Tell Mardikh)

**Date of Incident:** October 1, 2015

**Location:** Jebel Zawiya Archaeological Park, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria, Idlib Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Shinshara (also known as Khirbet Hass) consists of an approximately 4 ha area of well-preserved Byzantine structures (houses and basilica) in the archaeological park of Jebel Zawiya, close to other Byzantine sites such as al-Bara and 2 km from the village of Rebiaa. The site is known for being well preserved and its variety in historical buildings, which include a bathhouse, a church, and elegant tombs (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0068**).

Serjilla is a group of extremely well-preserved standing ruins within the Jebel Zawiya park, the southernmost sector of the Limestone Massif of Idlib. One of the so-called Dead Cities, Serjilla includes a basilica church, houses, and baths, as well as other structures (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0094**).

Ebla, also known as Tell Mardikh, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in Idlib governorate. The ancient city was the location of an important kingdom in the Early Bronze Age, where several thousand cuneiform tablets in both Eblaite and Sumerian were discovered dating back to 2500 and 2300 BC. Today, the 50-hectare site is encircled by an outer city wall that stands approximately 20 meters in height. Several royal palaces, temples/temple complexes, courts, monumental staircases, and burials have been excavated at the center of the site. Ebla was the center of a vast trading network in the Bronze Age linking Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean littoral and Egypt.<sup>113</sup>

**Site Date:** Shinshara and Serjilla: 1st Century CE to Byzantine era; Ebla: 3500 BCE–7th century CE.

**Incident Summary:** Various sources reported damage caused by Russian airstrikes at multiple sites within the Jebel Zawiya Archaeological Park and the mound of Ebla.

**Incident Source and Description:** The site of Shinshara has been severely impacted by occupation from Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) from both the nearby town of Kafrouma and elsewhere. Since its occupation by IDPs beginning in 2012, parts of the site have been mined for building stone, used as a garbage dump, and otherwise actively inhabited because of the standing architecture. Habitation of the site has also drawn bombardment attacks since at least 2013, as reported by APSA. In October 2013, APSA published a report on an incident of barrel bombing at Shinshara which damaged architecture at the site.<sup>114</sup> Since the capture of Idlib city by opposition forces on March 29, 2015, the Assad regime has targeted the city and its surroundings with continuous barrel bomb attacks. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, “no fewer than 335” barrel

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<sup>113</sup> <http://www.aaas.org/page/ancient-history-modern-destruction-assessing-status-syria-s-tentative-world-heritage-sites-7#Ebla>

<sup>114</sup> <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/apsa-rapports/823-shenshara-3.html>

explosives were dropped on Idlib and its countryside since March 29.<sup>115</sup> The most recent satellite imagery from September 17, 2015 shows IDPs in Shinshara as well as new buildings being constructed. This constellation of factors makes it difficult to assess the most proximate cause of damage to specific components of the site.

Around 1:00 PM local time on October 1, 2015, a Russian Air Force bombing campaign reportedly damaged the archaeological sites of Shinshara, Serjilla, and Ebla.<sup>116</sup> Evidence from multiple sources indicates that Shinshara and Ebla were indeed struck by Russian Air Force missiles, but reports are conflicting as to whether Serjilla was impacted as well. The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative has produced a brief, illustrated report of the damage at Shinshara below.

The most recent satellite image of Shinshara from September 17, 2014 shows people already living on site as well as the emergence of new buildings. The most recent image of Serjilla from July 4, 2015 indicates the presence of Russian bombings in the area. There appeared to be people living on site with tarps covering old buildings to enclose the spaces as well as new, smaller tarp covered areas. The most recent image of Ebla was taken on August 4, 2014, showing military embankments and other earthworks on site, particularly in the northern portion — this disturbance dates back to 2013. There is evidence of previous looting in the area.

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information and ground-based observations of the damage evidenced in DigitalGlobe satellite imagery as it becomes available. ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to assessing the condition of standing architectural remains in Jebel Zawiya Archaeological Park given the high visibility and ongoing significance of the site and its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

#### **Sources:**

##### Online Reporting:

The Syrian Coalition: <http://en.etalaf.org/all-news/news/russia-airstrikes-hit-2000-years-old-serjila-town.html>

##### APSA:

<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/ms.c.eJwzNDGzMD0yABK5uam5oZ6hABS2MjExMjY3O4gDIeHRfcwAKiwgIA1mQNzw~::~.bps.a.1468628663244240.1073741914.324869057620212/146862866577571/?type=3&theater>

APSA: <http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-the-limestone-massif-syrian-aircraft-drop-barrel-bombs-on-the-site-of-shanshara-2/>

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1821>

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<sup>115</sup> <http://syriahr.com/en/2015/04/700-air-strikes-on-idlib-in-20-days/>

<sup>116</sup> <http://en.etalaf.org/all-news/news/russia-airstrikes-hit-2000-years-old-serjila-town.html>

Wordpress: <https://altahrir.wordpress.com/2015/10/06/russia-airstrikes-hit-2000-years-old-serjila-town/>

The Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/11905520/Putin-pulls-the-strings-in-Ukraine-and-Syria.html>

UNESCO: <http://en.unesco.org/node/251327>



Location of three Idlib heritage sites allegedly hit by Russian airstrikes (DigitalGlobe; October 10, 2015)



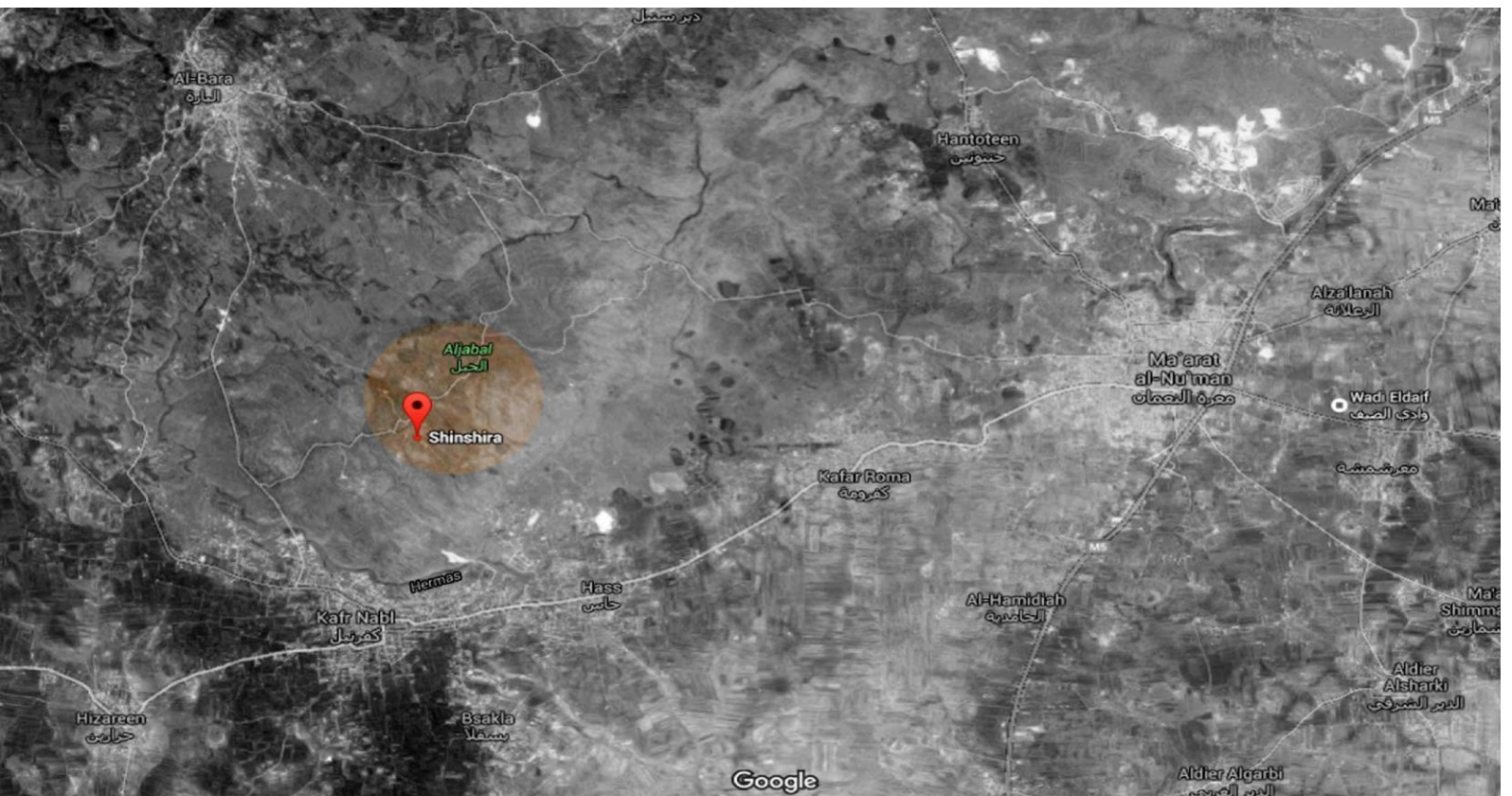
Shinshara, damage on the western side of site (DGAM; October 7, 2015)



**Site Monitors Project:  
Rapid Assessment Report of the Russian attack on Shinshara  
10/1/2015**

**The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative<sup>117</sup>**

Report prepared by Eng. Abdel Rahman Al Yahya  
Site Monitors Project: Director Amr Al-Azm



<sup>117</sup> This report is based on research conducted by the “The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative.” This report reflects analysis from an independent organization. As with the Weekly Reports produced by ASOR CHI, it should be treated as preliminary and subject to change.

The site of Shinshara is 15 km. west of the city of Ma'arra and represents one of the most important and well-preserved archaeological sites of the Jabal Zawiya region in the Limestone Massif. The archaeological houses at the site are considered to be rich with a refined architectural quality (ICOMOS report No:1348). The archaeological site of Shinshara is also part of Park no: 4 in Jabal Zawiya and designated a world heritage site by UNESCO (2010). In 2012 the site of Shinshara became a sanctuary for civilian refugees from nearby towns and villages escaping the incessant barrel bombing of their homes.

On October 1, 2015 at exactly 1 pm local time, the Russian air force bombed the archaeological site of Shinshara, causing extensive damage to the site and casualties among the refugees sheltering in the ruins.



Plan of Shinshara.



## Damage from Regime Bombardment in 2013



Damage caused by previous attacks by Syrian regime bombing in 2013.



Damage caused by previous attacks from Syrian regime bombing in 2013.

**Photos showing the extent of damage to archaeological buildings from the recent Russian aerial bombardment**



Damage caused by Russian bombing (western side).



Destruction caused by recent Russian bombing (eastern side).



Severe damage to the walls.



Severe damage to the walls and the need for emergency intervention and consolidation work.



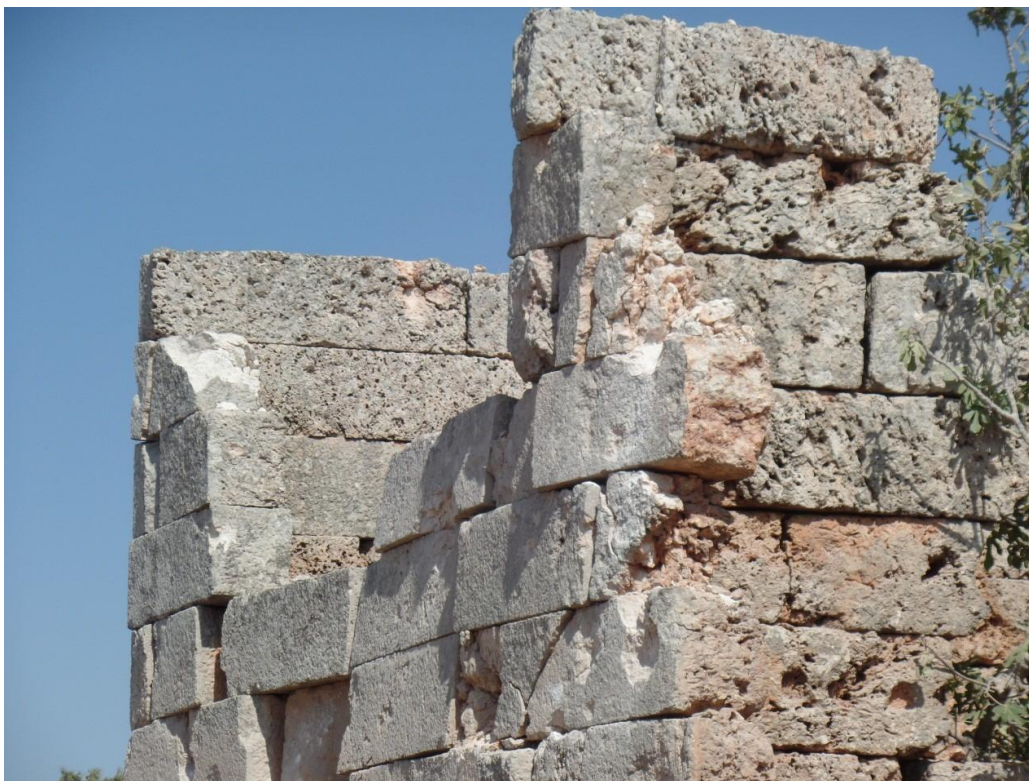
Collapse of an entire archaeological building.



Collapse of an entire archaeological building.



Severe damage to a wall caused by airstrikes.



Severe damage to a wall caused by airstrikes.



Severe and extensive damage to the archaeological park.



Severe and extensive damage to the archaeological park.



Collapse of an entire archaeological building.



Collapse of an entire archaeological building.

**SHI 15-0138**

**Report Date:** October 6, 2015

**Site Name:** Arch of Triumph, UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra

**Date of Incident:** October 4, 2015

**Location:** UNESCO World Heritage Site Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** The Arch of Triumph, built by Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (145–211 CE, Emperor from 193–211 CE), included three entrances, two 30 degree rotated gates and topped by an arch with geometrical and plant ornamentation. The decoration is rich, in the Syrian style, with resort to the niche to fill the disparate sides of the central opening. It served as a connector to the Colonnade and court leading to the Temple of Bel. The site's Northern gate was restored in the 1930s.<sup>118</sup>

**Site Date:** 193-211 CE

**Incident Summary:** ISIL detonated several bombs to destroy the Arch.

**Incident Source and Description:** On October 4, 2015 the DGAM received notification that ISIL militants had destroyed the Arch of Triumph at the Ancient City of Palmyra.<sup>119</sup> The Syrian Director of Antiquities confirmed that explosives had been planted at the site in and around the arch for weeks prior to detonation.<sup>120</sup> The arch was reportedly leveled by the explosions, however, recent footage published by APSA and the DGAM shows one column and the lower curve of one of the three arches still standing.<sup>121</sup> The DGAM later reported that the video shows only the current state of the three-gate arch. The central and Southern gates are severely damaged, while the Northern gate appears to be in better condition.<sup>122</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: intentional destruction.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on these reports via in country sources as well as DigitalGlobe satellite imagery for the Tadmor region as it becomes available. ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of all periods of cultural heritage at Palmyra, given the high visibility and ongoing significance of the city and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM (October 10, 2015) <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1823>

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<sup>118</sup> <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1823>

<sup>119</sup> <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?p=314&id=1817>

<sup>120</sup> <http://time.com/4060899/syria-palmyra-isis-arch-of-triumph/>

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhX1Rw2rlbs>

<sup>122</sup> <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1823>



DGAM (October 5, 2015): <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?p=314&id=1817>

APSA (October 8, 2015) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhX1Rw2rlbs&feature=youtu.be>

APSA (October 5, 2015):

<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/ms.c.eJwzNDGzMDQyABKm5uam5oZ6hIABS2MjExMjY3O4gDIeHRFcwAKiwgIA1mQNzw~-~- .bps.a.1468628663244240.1073741914.324869057620212/1468628693244237/?type=3&theater>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34440759>

Aljazeera America: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/10/5/isis-destroys-ancient-arch-in-palmyra.html>

New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/world/middleeast/isis-syria-arch-triumph-palmyra.html>

The Los Angeles Times: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-getty-19th-century-prints-palmyra-20151001-column.html>

National Geographic: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/10/151005-palmyra-arch-destruction-isis-syria-archaeology/>



Arch of Triumph, video still of damage (DGAM; October 9, 2015)



Arch of Triumph, video still of damage (DGAM; October 9, 2015)



Arch of Triumph, video still of damage (DGAM; October 9, 2015)



Arch of Triumph, video still of damage (DGAM; October 9, 2015)

## Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 15-0096

**Report Date:** September 30, 2015

**Site Name:** Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque

**Date of Incident:** September 28, 2015

**Location:** Hit in the Western District of Anbar, Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq

**Site Description:** The Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque was constructed over the grave of Abdullah ibn Mubarak, who was a Sunni Muslim and was buried during Ramadan in 797 CE.

**Site Date:** Modern

**Incident Summary:** The Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque was intentionally destroyed by ISIL supporters.

**Incident Source and Description:** On September 28, 2015 news outlets distributed photographs from ISIL militant social media accounts depicting the intentional destruction of the Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque in Hit near the city of Anbar.

**Pattern:** Intentional performative destruction.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to find further information of these reports via in country sources and is continuing to monitor the condition of al Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque.

### Sources:

#### Online Reporting:

BAS News:

<http://www.basnews.com/ar/news/2015/09/28/الأفيّ-دينيّاً-مزار-ابن-مبارك-داعش-بالصور>

Hamrin News: <http://hamrinnews.net/i/103474.html>



جانب من سير العمل لهدم ضريح عبد الله من المبارك في مدينة هيت



Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque before destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)



جانب من سير العمل لهدم ضريح عبد الله من المبارك في مدينة هيت



Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque, panel (BAS News; September 28, 2015)



جانب من سير العمل لهدم ضريح عبد الله من المبارك في مدينة هيت

Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque after destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)



جانب من سير العمل لهدم ضريح عبد الله من المبارك في مدينة هيت

Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque during destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)



جانب من سير العمل لهدم ضريح عبد الله من المبارك في مدينة هيت



Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque during destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)



جانب من سير العمل لهدم ضريح عبد الله من المبارك في مدينة هيت



Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque during destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)



جانب من سير العمل لهدم ضريح عبد الله من المبارك في مدينة هيت

Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque during destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)