

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

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## Executive Summary

During the reporting period, military explosives continued to be the predominant cause of damage to heritage assets in Syria with at least five sites hit in Raqqa, Homs, Deir ez-Zor, Aleppo, and Daraa. Three mosques were struck by SARG and/or Russian airstrikes, and SARG forces allegedly damaged Roman columns within the World Heritage Site of Palmyra. The DGAM reported that mortar shells fired by “armed groups” struck the Daraa National Museum, although the DGAM report does not explicitly state which armed groups were responsible.

Terrorist attacks at places of worship have increased in recent weeks. In Iraq, unknown assailants intentionally set fire to the Imam Hassan Shrine in the region of Kirkuk. In Syria, two ISIL suicide bombers and a car bomber attacked the Sayeda Zeinab Shrine, Syria’s most venerated Shia shrine, killing more than 70 people including pro-regime fighters. ISIL has engaged in the intentional destruction of Islamic holy sites, including shrines, mosques, and cemeteries, in order to suppress Islamic plurality, stoke sectarian tensions, and draw more belligerents into the conflict. The execution of Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr by Saudi Arabia on January 2, 2016 has triggered an uptick in violence between Sunni and Shia populations, particularly in Iraq, where strong reprisals by Shia Popular Mobilization Units, intended to fight ISIL, have escalated to attacks on Sunni civilians.

The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative produced a report on heritage assets in the city of Ma’arat al-Numan, Idlib Governorate. The June 2015 assessment reports that the Al-Ma’arra Museum, located in the converted Khan Murad Pasha, was heavily damaged by aerial bombardments, urban warfare, looting and vandalism. The Great Mosque and the *tekkiye*, which houses a library, have also sustained similar heavy damage. Another report from August 21, 2015 assesses the condition of Maarat al-Numan Citadel.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights released its December Vital Facilities Report,<sup>2</sup> which documents damage to civilian and non-military sites caused by conflict belligerents. The report lists damage to fifteen (15) heritage assets, fourteen (14) mosques, and one historical site. These incidents were not published by SNHR on its website or social media platforms, and the report itself does not provide further information on the situation. As such, the following incidents have not been independently corroborated and remain unverified:

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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.

<sup>2</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/17/16586/>

- Bouz Al Kherbi Mosque, Latakia Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles on October 19, 2015.
- Great Mosque, Abu Al Ruwayel, Aleppo Governorate, damaged by Russian shelling on December 3, 2015.
- Great Mosque, Kafr Batna, Damascus Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles on December 4, 2015.
- Al Sagheir Mosque, Al Bab, Aleppo Governorate, damaged by Russian shelling on December 6, 2015.
- Al Rawda Mosque, Hamouria, Damascus Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles on December 9, 2015.
- Al Sharia Mosque, Menbej, Aleppo, damaged by SARG shelling on December 12, 2015.
- Al Sheikh Najeb Mosque, Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles on December 14, 2015.
- Orwa Bin Al Zubeir Mosque, Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, damaged by Russian shellings on December 16, 2015.
- Mos'ab Bin Omayr Mosque, Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles and shellings on December 17, 2015.
- Al Baraa Bin Malek Mosque, Hraytan, Aleppo Governorate, damaged by Russian missiles on December 18, 2015.
- Al Naser Mosque, Al Bab, Aleppo Governorate, damaged by SARG barrel bombs on December 20, 2015.
- Shahroua Mosque, Al Turkmen Mountain, Latakia Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles on December 22, 2015.
- Great Mosque, Barzina, Damascus Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles on December 22, 2015.
- Zayroun Mosque, Hama, Hama Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles on December 25, 2015.
- Temple of Bel, Palmyra, Homs Governorate, damaged by SARG missiles on December 27, 2015.

DigitalGlobe satellite imagery of Aleppo was released during the report period. These are the first images of the city since September 2014, and not surprisingly show significant damage to multiple heritage assets due to airstrikes and militarization. These new images allowed CHI to complete updates to previous incident reports on Al Kabir Mosque in Hamima. Newly released images of Iraq provided new information for the assessment of the al-Hajj Shaker al-Dahi Mosque in Fallujah, Iraq.

## **The 2014 Destruction of the Mar Elijah Monastery in Iraq**

On January 20, 2016 the Associated Press released an article on the intentional destruction of the Mar Elijah (St. Elijah) Monastery located in Iraq's Ninawa Governorate immediately south of Mosul in a strategic area previously militarized by the Iraqi government. The article presented before and after comparisons of DigitalGlobe satellite imagery of the site. The image from March 2011 showed the monastery intact, while the later image from September 2014 showed the site after its intentional destruction through mechanical and/or explosive means. Based on unpublished satellite imagery, Stephen Wood, CEO of Allsource Analysis, pinpointed the site's destruction between August and September 2014. Wood claims the cause of the destruction was "[...]bulldozers, heavy equipment, sledgehammers, possibly explosives turned those stone walls into this field of gray-

white dust.”<sup>3</sup> The AP article also asserts that ISIL militants destroyed the monastery without sourcing.

ASOR CHI found the presentation and timing of the article, which produced a viral response, potentially problematic. The resulting news coverage and social media responses perpetuated the false notion that this was a recent event, when in fact the damage dates to 2014. The original AP article states that the damage occurred between August and September 2014 but only in the fourth paragraph, and the exact dates of the DigitalGlobe satellite imagery (March 31, 2011 and September 28, 2014) are stated in the image caption. This imagery, which had also been collected by ASOR CHI, shows damage indicative of earth-moving equipment. In the September 28, 2014 image, tracks from heavy machinery, likely bulldozers, are visible in the post destruction image. The bases of the walls are still visible in places, and some of the building debris is piled just east of the monastery. It is possible that explosives were used, but in such cases of intentional destruction, well documented during the current conflict for similar structures, there would typically be a large crater and/or outward dispersal pattern, which is lacking in available imagery and extant site documentation. Such evidence may have been obscured/obliterated by subsequent earthmoving activity.

Imagery dating to November 12, 2014 and August 29, 2015 shows little change to the debris piles, suggesting the site was unaltered following the initial destruction. While this intentional destruction accords with ISIL’s persecution of minorities through destructions of religious heritage as well as typical ISIL destruction methods, the specific allegations of ISIL involvement are only tenuously supported at the current time — a separate BBC report relates, “a security source in Nineveh province separately confirmed [...] that ISIL militants had blown up the monastery, completely destroying it.”<sup>4</sup> The purported use of explosives is unsupported, and casts some doubt on the source’s conformity to facts, and the reliance on a single anonymous security source begs further investigation given the egregious nature of this crime. Moreover, the existence of an official source raises the question: Why was this information on a famous heritage site not released sooner? The vast majority of intentional destructions of religious heritage, including Christian heritage, perpetrated by ISIL in Ninawa Province were immediately reported in 2014 and 2015 by ISIL itself, official sources, local heritage experts, and networks of concerned citizens.

ASOR CHI has found that heritage destructions in Syria and Iraq are occasionally speciously attributed to ISIL in open-source and human-source information streams, particularly when single anonymous officials are root sources, but further investigation often reveals substantial circular reporting, inadequate sourcing, the involvement of other belligerents, and probable deliberate misinformation. In short, claims of ISIL involvement draw only minimal scrutiny and may serve as an expedient scapegoat device given ISIL’s long record of proven atrocities. The emphasis here is on proven: in most instances, ISIL willing claims and promotes its atrocities as “propaganda of the deed.”

ASOR CHI strongly cautions against potentially sensationalizing reporting of heritage destruction and advocates for neutral and objective efforts at raising public awareness. We readily acknowledge this can be a difficult balance to achieve. We must keep in mind that ISIL engages in “propaganda of the deed” in which heritage destructions serve both immediate objectives — raising sectarian tensions, religious suppression, psychological warfare — as well as higher order, ideological objectives connected to promoting ISIL ideology, cultural cleansing, and establishing a

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<sup>3</sup> <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/efce21dc34094eec86892b51779380aa/only-ap-oldest-christian-monastery-iraq-razed>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35360415>

so-called caliphate. Tellingly, we are unaware of evidence that ISIL has used the destruction of the monastery in its propaganda or claimed responsibility. The long silence surrounding this incident in itself deserves further investigation. Publicizing the incident as an ISIL act may have unintended consequences that benefit ISIL and, at the same time, further obscures the facts surrounding this terrible crime.



Monastery of St. Elijah intact (DigitalGlobe; August 21, 2014)



Monastery of St. Elijah — now mounds of rubble with tire tracks (marked with red arrows) and a new debris pile (DigitalGlobe; September 28, 2014)



ASOR  
Monastery of St. Elijah with rubble mounds still intact and tire tracks covered in grass (Digital Globe; November 12, 2014)



In August 2015, the rubble mounds of the Monastery of St. Elijah appear to be in the same general condition as documented in November 2014, but the mounds are weathered (DigitalGlobe; August 29, 2015)

## Key Points

- An intentional fire caused extensive damage to Imam Hassan Shrine in the district of Laylan, southeast of the city of Kirkuk, Kirkuk Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0003**).
- Suspected Russian airstrikes damaged Al Nour Mosque in the town of Al Boleel, Deir ez-Zor Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0012**).
- DGAM reported structural damage to the Daraa National Museum caused by mortar shells fired by armed groups (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0013**).
- Regime and Russian airstrikes cause damage to Hinni Mosque in the Old City of Raqqa, Raqqa Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0014**).
- Russian airstrikes damaged Abu Bakr Al Sedeiq Mosque in the city of Al Bab, Aleppo Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0015**).
- Regime airstrikes caused damage to five columns in the archaeological site of Palmyra, Homs Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0016**).
- ISIL carried out three bombings near the Sayyida Zeinab Shrine, Damascus Governorate, causing no reported damage (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0017**).
- The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative produced two reports on the Al-Ma'aara Museum and the Citadel in the city of Ma'arat al-Numan, Idlib Governorate (**Appended TDA Reports**).

## Heritage Timeline

February 1, 2016

*BBC News* published an article titled “**Syria conflict: Dozens killed near Sayyida Zeinab Shrine.**” At least 71 people died in blasts near the Shia shrine of Sayyida Zeinab in a suburb of Damascus. ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack. The shrine itself was apparently not damaged. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0017**. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35454359>

- **DGAM** published a post titled “**صور حديثة تظهر مدى الضرر في محيط قلعة حلب**” (“Recent photos showing the extent of damage around the Citadel of Aleppo”). The DGAM posted photos taken by photographer Shady Martak in late January 2016, showing the current state of the **Citadel of Aleppo** and its surroundings. <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=1902>
- **Human Security Centre** published an article titled “**ISIS, Blood Antiquities, and the International Black Market**” (by Ashleigh Tilley). The article focuses on the need for more legislation to restrict the market for blood antiquities in destination countries, and explores opportunities for increased cooperation and information sharing between countries in Europe and the Middle East. <http://www.hscentre.org/policy-unit/isis-blood-antiquities-international-black-market/>



January 31, 2016

**Human Rights Watch** published a report titled “**Iraq: Possible War Crimes by Shia Militia.**” Shia militias in **Muqdadiyah** reportedly attacked Sunni homes, mosques, and killed dozens following an attack on a cafe by ISIL. According to the local mayor, “gangs’ destroyed five Sunni mosques in Muqdadiya after January 11, but... others had been destroyed in the previous months.” A local Sunni activist, in contrast, claims 12 Sunni mosques were attacked. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0002 UPDATE.**

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/31/iraq-possible-war-crimes-shia-militia>

January 29, 2016

*The National* published an article titled “**Rewriting history in Syria and Israel are two sides of a coin**” (by Yasmin Khan). The article examines parallels between Israel’s politicization of archaeology as part of a nationalist narrative and the deliberate destruction of archaeology and culture by groups like ISIL as part of a “nation-breaking” agenda.

<http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/rewriting-history-in-syria-and-israel-are-two-sides-of-a-coin>

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*Al Monitor* published an article titled “**Once-lively caravan stops crumble along abandoned Silk Road**” (by Wassim Basseem). **Khan al-Nusf**, a large, 18th century caravanserai, is one of many historic khans in Iraq that have been neglected and reduced to ruins. The Karbala Antiquities Committee hopes to draw more tourists to such sites to create revenue for upkeep and conservation.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/01/iraq-khan-al-noss-ruins-hajj.html>

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**SNHR** published an article titled “**Regime forces targeted ancient site in Palmyra city in Homs governorate in January 31.**”

According to SNHR, regime warplanes fired two missiles at the archaeological site of **Palmyra**, severely damaging five columns.

**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0016.**

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/31/17733/>

January 28, 2016

**SNHR** published an article titled “**Suspected Russian warplanes targeted Abu Bakr Al Sedeiq Mosque in Al Bab city in Aleppo governorate in January 27.**” According to SNHR, the mosque was almost completely destroyed. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0015.**

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/28/16949/>

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*New America Foundation* and *Future Tense* published a video titled “**Deploying Technology to Rescue the Past.**” Panelists Dr. Salam al-Kuntar, Dr. Scott Branting, and Dr. Kirk Johnson discuss different methods by which technology, such as geospatial imaging, can be used to document and protect cultural heritage.

<http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/82131851>

- Senate Committee on Foreign Relations** passed **Antiquities Bill HR 1493, the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act**. According to the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield, “the goal of this legislation is to protect and preserve international cultural property at risk due to political instability, armed conflict, or natural or other disasters, and for other purposes.”  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/1493/actions>

<http://uscbs.org/news/antiquities-bill-hr-1493-passed-by-the-senate-foreign-relations-committee/>

[http://www.northwestgeorgianews.com/calhoun\\_times/senator-david-perdue-applauds-committee-passage-of-antiquities-bill/article\\_c0342716-c6a7-11e5-ab66-03baf0f84149.html](http://www.northwestgeorgianews.com/calhoun_times/senator-david-perdue-applauds-committee-passage-of-antiquities-bill/article_c0342716-c6a7-11e5-ab66-03baf0f84149.html)

<http://politicalnews.me/?id=37227&keys=ISIS-ANTIQUITIES-BAN-SALE>

- The Drum* published an article titled “**The Economist uses virtual reality to reconstruct museum lost in IS attack**” (by Jessica Goodfellow). The Economist is collaborating with Project Mosul to use virtual reality to reconstruct the historical sites and artifacts from Iraq’s Mosul Museum. The initiative, *RecoVR Mosul: A collective reconstruction*, uses crowd-sourced imagery to digitally reconstruct the museum’s artifacts.  
<http://www.thedrum.com/news/2016/01/28/economist-uses-virtual-reality-reconstruct-museum-lost-attack>

- Tasnim News Agency* published an article titled “**Iran Urges UNESCO Push to Protect Cultural Heritage in Syria, Iraq.**” Iranian President Rouhani called on UNESCO to use their utmost efforts to protect cultural heritage sites in Syria and Iraq.  
<http://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2016/01/28/984268/iran-urges-unesco-push-to-protect-cultural-heritage-in-syria-iraq>

January 27, 2016

- APSA 2011** published a series of photos titled “**Aleppo - Qadi Askar: damage to the mosque Agha Jaq (Ottoman era) because of Russian bombing 12.01.2016.**” The photographs do not appear to show any new information or damage to the mosque, which was previously reported in **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0003** in **Weekly Report 75-76**.  
<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/agha-jaq/>
- APSA 2011** published photos and a video titled “**Palmyra: the Arch of Triumph after the destruction by ISIS.**” ISIS destroyed the **Triumphal Arch** on April 10, 2015. This incident was reported in **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0138** in **Weekly Report 61-62**.  
<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/parch/>

- *Hyperallergic* published an article titled “**In Acts of Resistance, Artists and Scholars Digitally Reconstruct the Past**” (by Claire Voon). The article discusses a series of artworks and preservation projects associated with *The Missing: Rebuilding the Past*, an exhibit at John Jay College’s Shiva Gallery in New York City.  
<http://hyperallergic.com/270503/in-acts-of-resistance-artists-digitally-reconstruct-the-destroyed-past/>

January 26, 2016

- *Slate* published an article titled “**Using Social Media to Predict When Precious Antiquities Are Under Threat**” (by Katie A. Paul). The Antiquities Coalition conducted a study on the patterns of cultural heritage crimes in Egypt from 2011 to 2015, revealing patterns that may be applied in studies of other conflicts.  
[http://www.slate.com/blogs/future\\_tense/2016/01/26/using\\_social\\_media\\_to\\_predict\\_when\\_isis\\_and\\_other\\_groups\\_threaten\\_antiquities.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2016/01/26/using_social_media_to_predict_when_isis_and_other_groups_threaten_antiquities.html)
- *The Conversation* published an article titled “**Preservationists race to capture cultural monuments with 3D images**” (by Herbert Maschner). Maschner discusses several projects, including the Democratization of Science project at the University of South Florida and Project Mosul, which use 3D imaging to document, reconstruct, and protect cultural heritage sites and museums.  
<https://theconversation.com/preservationists-race-to-capture-cultural-monuments-with-3d-images-53536>  
<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/3-d-scanners-race-to-monuments-before-terrorists-blow-them-up/>
- **Heritage for Peace** published their “**Damage to Syria’s Heritage**” newsletter.  
<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-26-january-2016/>
- *Medill Reports Chicago* published an article titled “**Space archaeology meets the Islamic State**” (by Kathleen Ferraro). Ferraro discusses the increasingly widespread use of satellite images in archaeology and cultural heritage protection.  
<http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/space-archaeology-meets-the-islamic-state/>
- **Future Tense** will hold a discussion on January 28 titled “**Deploying Technology to Rescue the Past.**” The discussion will center on how technologies like geospatial sensing, satellites, drones and 3D imaging can be used to restore and document damaged or at-risk archaeological sites.  
<https://www.newamerica.org/future-tense/deploying-technology-to-rescue-the-past/>

January 25, 2016

*National Interest* published an article titled “**ISIS and Antiquities: The Missing Pieces**” (by Alex Joffe). Aside from making a profit and destroying what they consider to be un-Islamic, one reason ISIS destroys and loots antiquities is to impose a system of social control over their captive population.

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/isis-antiquities-the-missing-pieces-15005>

- *CNBC* published an article titled “**To defeat ISIS, study the antiquities trade**” (by Yaya J. Fanusie). Studying the antiquities trade can reveal ISIS’ operational structure, its links with partners and middlemen, and its exploitation of the civilian population.  
<http://www.cNBC.com/2016/01/25/to-defeat-isis-study-the-antiquity-trade-ex-cia-commentary.html>
- **APSA 2011** published a series of photos titled “**Idleb: Report on the State of the Harem Citadel.**” The date of this incident was unknown at the time of publication and it is confirmed if this is a new incident.  
<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/e-harem-citadel/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/posts/1527888693984903>  
<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/a.324921080948343.76891.324869057620212/1528084233965349/?type=3&theater>
- *Shia Waves* published an article titled “**Unknown assailants set ablaze Imam Hassan Holy Site in Kirkuk.**” The **Imam Hassan Sanctuary** was attacked on January 24, causing material damage.  
**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0003.**  
<http://shiawaves.com/english/news-archive/2297-unknown-assailants-set-ablaze-imam-hassan-holy-site-in-kirkuk>
- *Francetv Info* published a video and article titled “**Syrie : au cœur de la vieille ville d'Alep, ravagée par la guerre**” (Syria: The heart of the old city of Aleppo, ravaged by war). A film crew visits the Old City of Aleppo, including the Temple of Hadad, the al-Kabir Mosque in the Aleppo Citadel, and the al-Madina souq.  
[http://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/revolte-en-syrie/document-france-2-syrie-au-coeur-de-la-vieille-ville-d-alep-ravagee-par-la-guerre\\_1284019.html](http://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/revolte-en-syrie/document-france-2-syrie-au-coeur-de-la-vieille-ville-d-alep-ravagee-par-la-guerre_1284019.html)

January 24, 2016

*Ekathimerini* posted an article titled “**Greece a transit country for trade in illicit antiquities from Syria, Iraq**”. Lynda Albertson, CEO of the Association for Research into Crimes Against Art, warns that because Greece is a transit country for refugees and migrants, it is likely that antiquities are being smuggled through the country as well.

<http://www.ekathimerini.com/205358/article/ekathimerini/news/greece-a-transit-country-for-trade-in-illicit-antiquities-from-syria-iraq>

January 23, 2016

*Sputnik News* published an article titled “**Syria’s Third Largest City of Homs Arising From the Ashes of War.**” Hüssam Hamis, the head of a major museum in Homs, says that restoration work is underway for several of Homs’ dozens of historic sites. The **Khalid ibn al-Walid Mosque** and **Qasr al-Zahrawi Mosque** are two of the first monuments to be restored. Hamis also reports that damage to the city’s historical sites is not as bad as once feared.

<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160123/1033596000/syria-homs-restoration.html>

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*BBC* published an article titled “**Partying for Palmyra: A Davos party with a difference**” (by Joe Miller). Peter Salovey, the president of Yale University, devoted Yale’s annual World Economic Forum party at the Belvedere Hotel in Davos, Switzerland to the importance of preserving the cultural heritage.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-35383436>

January 22, 2016

The creators of “**The Missing: Rebuilding the Past**” exhibit at City University of New York held a symposium titled “**The Future of the Past: Digitizing Cultural Property in an Era of Destruction.**” The event will consist of a roundtable discussion on the costs and benefits new technologies available to archaeology.

<http://www.themissingexhibit.com/symposium/?platform=hootsuite>

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*SNHR* published an article titled “**Suspected Russian warplanes targeted Al Hinni Mosque in Raqqa city in January 22.**” According to SNHR, Russian warplanes fired two missiles at the mosque, damaging it. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0014.**

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/22/16785/>

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*Rome Reports* published an article titled “**Archaeologist on Syria and Iraq: The artistic pillaging is very grave and irreparable.**” Paolo Matthiae, director of the archaeological mission in Ebla, discusses the severity of the cultural heritage situation in Syria and Iraq.

<http://www.romereports.com/2016/01/22/archaeologist-on-syria-and-iraq-the-artistic-pillaging-is-very-grave-and-irreparable>

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*TASS* published an article titled “**Russia to help Syria restore cultural heritage after defeating IS.**” Russia will help Syria to restore its cultural heritage monuments after ISIS has been defeated, says Grigory Ordzhonikidze, Executive Secretary of the Russian Commission for UNESCO.

<http://tass.ru/en/society/851691>

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**Antiquities Coalition** published a press release titled “**Antiquities Coalition Releases ‘Mapping Culture Under Threat’ Resource.**” The map tracks instances of deliberate destruction of cultural

heritage in the Middle East and North Africa in order to raise awareness about the extent of destruction.

<https://theantiquitiescoalition.org/press-releases/interactive-map-shows-scale-of-isis-destruction-threats-to-cultural-heritage-sites-in-middle-east-north-africa/>

<http://www.newsweek.com/cultural-heritage-destruction-map-418618>

- *PRI* published an article and podcast titled “**ISIS wants to erase the Middle East’s Christian history—and make a few bucks along the way**” (by Matthew Bell). Matthew Peppard (Fordham University) discusses ISIS’s destruction of Christian monuments and its illegal trafficking of Christian and other artifacts in order to fund its activities.

<http://www.pri.org/stories/2016-01-22/isis-wants-erase-middle-east-s-christian-history-and-make-few-bucks-along-way>

- *The Economist* published an article titled “**To make a case against Islamic State’s cultural vandalism, Western armies must set an example**” (by Erasmus). As well as signing treaties like the Hague Convention, Western powers should foster a mindset of respect for cultural heritage and train armies to know what international norms apply to places of spiritual or historic importance.

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2016/01/religion-heritage-and-war>

January 21, 2016

*Al Jazeera* published an article titled “**ISIL targets tourism**” (by James Denselow). Terrorist attacks by ISIL and other groups in North Africa and the Middle East have had a huge impact on tourism.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/01/isil-attacks-tourism-160121053303756.html>

- **DGAM** published an article titled “انجاز توثيق لأجزاء من الجامع الأموي باستخدام “تلاطي الأبعاد” (“Complete documentation of parts of the Umayyad Mosque using 3D imaging”). In collaboration with ICONEM, DGAM has completed the documentation of parts of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus using 3D imaging techniques. Eventually, DGAM hopes to make a variety of 3D images of sites available to the public via its website.

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=1900>

- *Vice News* published an article titled “**Tomb Raiding Is a Growing Problem in the Middle East**” (by Mark Hay). Recent conflicts throughout the Middle East have shown that widespread looting frequently follows political and civil unrest. **Amr al-Azm** and other experts highlight the need to combat underlying reasons for looting, such as poverty.

<http://www.vice.com/read/egypts-tomb-raiders>

- *The Art Newspaper* published an article titled “**Lords put pressure on UK government to sign Hague Convention this year**” (by Anny Shaw). Members of the House of Lords are urging the UK government to ratify the Hague Convention, seven months after it agreed to sign it. A swift ratification would allow the UK to set up a headquarters in London for the Blue Shield.  
<http://theartnewspaper.com/news/conservation/lords-put-pressure-on-uk-government-to-sign-hague-convention-this-year/>

- *Vice News* published an article titled “**On the Run from the Islamic State, Iraqi Christians Are Trying to Save Their Heritage**” (by Benedetta Argentieri). Father Gabriel Tooma, a Jesuit priest in al Qosh, Iraq has rounded up manuscripts and other “relics” from across Iraq and hidden them in secure places in Iraqi Kurdistan to protect them from ISIS.  
<https://news.vice.com/article/on-the-run-from-the-islamic-state-we-spoke-to-iraqi-christians-trying-to-save-their-heritage>

January 20, 2016

**SNHR** published a report titled “**Suspected Russian forces shelling targeted Mosque in Al Boulail town in Deir Ez-Zour governorate in January 19.**” SNHR reports “suspected Russian warplanes” fired missiles on the mosque, damaging it. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0012.**  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/20/16699/>

- *The Engineer* published an article titled “**Digging the new image: Archeology from the air**” (by Jason Ford). Sarah Parcak and others are using high-resolution satellite imagery in order to identify sites that have been looted in Syria and elsewhere. Archaeologists and others are using a variety of photogrammetry techniques, which are becoming more affordable.  
<https://www.theengineer.co.uk/digging-the-new-image-archeology-from-the-air/>

- **DGAM** published an article titled “قذائف هاون تطل متحف درعا الوطني” (“Mortar shells hit the Daraa National Museum”). According to DGAM, the **Daraa National Museum** was damaged by shelling on January 20, causing some structural damage. The museum’s artifacts had already been moved to a safe location. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0013.**  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1899>

- Associated Press* published an article titled “**Islamic State razing of Iraq monastery condemned**” (by Martha Mendoza et al.). The destruction of the Deir Mar Elijah monastery by ISIL was condemned by the U.S., UNESCO, and other groups after the AP reviewed a series of satellite images of the site released by DigitalGlobe. The images indicate the site was destroyed between August and September 2014.

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/5093ba551d1b45b08fe8a26363b88f54/only-ap-oldest-christian-monastery-iraq-razed>

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/efce21dc34094eec86892b51779380aa/only-ap-oldest-christian-monastery-iraq-razed>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35360415>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-razes-to-ground-the-oldest-christian-monastery-in-iraq-satellite-images-show-a6822256.html>

<http://time.com/4186469/isis-christian-monastery-iraq/?xid=homepage>

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco\\_director\\_general\\_expresses\\_concerns\\_after\\_the\\_destruction\\_of\\_the\\_monastery\\_of\\_deir\\_mar\\_elia\\_st\\_elijahs\\_in\\_mosul\\_iraq/#.VqZjmBgrl1g](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_director_general_expresses_concerns_after_the_destruction_of_the_monastery_of_deir_mar_elia_st_elijahs_in_mosul_iraq/#.VqZjmBgrl1g)
- Saving Antiquities for Everyone* published an article titled “**Protecting Monasteries, Places of Protection**” (by Matthew McDaniel). The post argues that in destroying monasteries, ISIS aims to destabilize communities and gain a new stream of revenue through blood antiquities stolen from these sites.

<http://savingantiquities.org/protecting-monasteries/>
- Art Forum* published an article titled “**Preservation Project Uses 3D Printers to Fight ISIS’s Destruction of Heritage Sites.**” #NewPalmyra, an online platform and data repository launched in October, is collecting and sharing data about the ancient city and its destroyed monuments and plans to have 25,000 active printers in 160 countries working in support of its project to preserve Syrians’ rich history by 3D-printing versions of the arch.

<http://artforum.com/news/id=57551>

<http://qz.com/599752/programmers-and-artists-are-fighting-isils-destruction-with-3d-printers/>



January 18, 2016

*World Economic Forum* published an article titled “**Terrorists are destroying our cultural heritage. It’s time to fight back**” (by Irina Bokova). Bokova highlights three methods of fighting back against the destruction of cultural heritage in conflict areas: fighting against the illicit traffic of antiquities, reinforcing preventative actions, and strengthening international cooperation.

<http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/terrorists-are-destroying-our-culture-heritage-it-s-time-to-fight-back>

January 17, 2016

*Al Watan* published an article titled “ الأثار والمتاحف» تؤكد استفحال تزوير “ القطع الأثرية السورية وخاصة لوحات الفسيفساء confirm rampant forgery of Syrian artifacts, especially mosaics”) (by Muhammad Manar Hamijo). Maamoun Abdulkarim asserts that the phenomenon of forging antiquities has worsened and is mostly carried out by Syrians in contact with networks of forgers in Turkey and Jordan.

<http://alwatan.sy/archives/36820>

January 1, 2016

**National Center for Policy Analysis** published an article titled “**Shutting Down ISIS’ Antiquities Trade**” (by David Grantham). The article argues that the U.S. government needs a more comprehensive plan for dealing with ISIS, a plan that must include the destruction of the terrorist group’s financial networks. These networks include illegal trade in antiquities. Narrowing legislation to an ISIS-specific law could produce measurable results not likely to result from the overly broad Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act currently awaiting Senate approval.

<http://www.ncpa.org/pdfs/ib185.pdf>

## Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo Governorate:

- On January 22, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that a team of Russian experts and military personnel arrived at Kweires Military Airport in order to expand control over the airbase for future use.<sup>5</sup>
- On January 25, a suicide bomber killed at least 23 people at a checkpoint held by Ahrar al-Sham in the city of Aleppo.<sup>6</sup>
- On January 25, Russian forces reportedly delivered military aid to Kurdish forces in the northwestern area of Aleppo governorate.<sup>7</sup>
- On February 2, Syrian and allied armed forces advanced in areas north of the city of Aleppo currently held by opposition forces, opening the opportunity for the regime

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=43103> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/22/world/middleeast/russia-and-us-while-pushing-for-peace-talks-jockey-for-position-in-syria.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-diplomacy-idUSKCN0V318D>

<sup>7</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-20.html>

to block opposition supply lines between Aleppo and Turkey. Syrian forces have seized the city of Hardatnin, six miles northwest of the city of Aleppo.<sup>8</sup>

2. Latakia Governorate:

- On January 24, Syrian government troops, backed by allied forces, captured the last rebel-held town of Rabia in Latakia governorate.<sup>9</sup>
- On February 1, the Syrian government accused Turkish military forces of shelling pro-regime forces in Latakia governorate.<sup>10</sup>
- On February 1, Russia announced that its advanced Su-35 fighter jets had been deployed to Hmeimeem Airbase.<sup>11</sup>

3. Daraa Governorate:

- On January 26, pro-regime forces, backed by Syrian and Russian airstrikes, captured the strategic rebel-held town of Sheikh Miskeen.<sup>12</sup>

4. Damascus Governorate:

- On January 21, local sources reported ongoing heavy aerial bombardment by Syrian government forces on the opposition-held city of Darayya as well as the advancement of pro-regime forces.
- On January 31, a car bomb and two suicide bombers attacked the Damascus district of Sayeda Zeinab, home to a Syria's most venerated Shia shrine, killing more than 70 people including pro-regime fighters. ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>13</sup>
- On February 1, Russian airstrikes reportedly destroyed a "stash of oil products" that belonged to the Islamic opposition group, Jaish al-Islam.<sup>14</sup>
- On February 2, the Syrian government allowed humanitarian aid to reach the Damascus suburb of al-Tal.<sup>15</sup>

5. Hasakah Province:

- During the reporting period, Turkey expressed its concern over a buildup of Russian troops at the Qamishli airport near the Turkish border with Syria.<sup>16</sup>
- On January 20, it was reported that US troops had taken over Rmelan airfield in order to provide support for the Syrian Democratic Forces.<sup>17</sup>
- On January 30-31, US Special Envoy to the Anti-Islamic State coalition, Brett McGurk, along with other US, French, and British representatives, visited the

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-26/333995-syria-army-allies-gain-more-ground-north-of-aleppo.ashx> ; <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/201085-syria-regime-forces-press-advance-in-north-aleppo>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/24/middleeast/syria-government-retakes-rabia/> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35395328>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-26/335234-syria-condemns-turkey-cross-border-shelling.ashx>

<sup>11</sup> <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/586d962ca94046b5aa3d3eb79616f826/russia-beefs-air-group-syria-advanced-fighters>

<sup>12</sup> <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-26/333995-syrian-govt-forces-capture-key-southern-rebel-town-activists.ashx> ; <http://news.yahoo.com/syria-regime-forces-capture-key-southern-rebel-town-070813735.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-damascus-idINKCN0VA1R9>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-russia-jaish-idUSKCN0VA2DX>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/02/02/world/middleeast/ap-syria.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/210120162> ; <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/200097-turkey-watching-closely-russian-troop-movements-on-border> ; <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2016/01/25/russia-denies-report-new-military-base-north-syria/79317974/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/takes-control-rmeilan-airfield-syria-160119141331681.html> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35387388>

Kurdish-held areas of Rojava and Kobane in northern Syria and met with Kurdish officials and fighters.<sup>18</sup>

6. Homs Governorate:
  - On January 26, ISIL carried out several bombings on a government-run security checkpoint in the predominantly-Alawite neighborhood of Zahra in the city of Homs, killing at least 20 people and wounding over a hundred more.<sup>19</sup>
7. Idlib Governorate:
  - On January 20, unknown gunmen assassinated a local leader of Al-Nusra Front in the northwestern town of Ariha.<sup>20</sup>
  - On January 25, a missile struck an Al-Nusra Front meeting in the town of Salqin, killing at least 11 people.<sup>21</sup>
8. Rif Dimashq Governorate:
  - On January 27, clashes occurred between Al Nusra Front and ISIL in the Qalamoun mountains along the Syria-Lebanon border.<sup>22</sup>
9. Raqqa Governorate:
  - On January 20, ISIL militants were reported to be holding “high-value prisoners and sheltering senior officials” at the Tabqa Dam, 25 miles to the west of the city of Raqqa.<sup>23</sup>
10. Deir ez-Zor Governorate:
  - On January 30, the Iranian Air Force reportedly provided humanitarian aid via airdrops to regime-controlled areas around the besieged city of Deir ez-Zor.<sup>24</sup>

#### Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Abu Kamal, Ayn Isa, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakah, Al-Hawl, Manbij, Mar’a, Palmyra, Raqqa, and Washiyah.<sup>25</sup>
- During the reporting period, media outlets reported ongoing Russian airstrikes against opposition and ISIL-held territories in the governorates of Aleppo, Damascus, Daraa, Deir ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Latakia, and Raqqa, inflicting mass civilian casualties.<sup>26</sup>
- On January 21, it was reported that the SARG had reclaimed 1.3% of its territory since the start of Russian airstrikes.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-envoy-goes-to-syria-to-press-the-fight-against-the-islamic-state/2016/01/31/7cd39aaf-b44e-467c-97e9-a365c627fa31\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-envoy-goes-to-syria-to-press-the-fight-against-the-islamic-state/2016/01/31/7cd39aaf-b44e-467c-97e9-a365c627fa31_story.html) ; <http://news.yahoo.com/u-envoy-visited-kurdish-held-syrian-north-153452282.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/01/26/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>

<sup>20</sup> <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/21012016>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-25/333808-missile-kills-11-islamists-5-civilians-in-syrias-idlib-activists.ashx>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Jan-27/334260-isis-nusra-clashes-leave-at-least-13-dead-on-lebanon-syria-border.ashx>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-uses-syrias-biggest-dam-as-rampart-and-potential-weapon-1453333531>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.janes.com/article/57610/iranian-c-130-drops-supplies-into-besieged-syrian-enclave>

<sup>25</sup> See: “US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq”. *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [643845](#), [644050](#), [644262](#), [644277](#), [644308](#), [644407](#), [644642](#), [645464](#), [646267](#), [646950](#), [647000](#), [647147](#), [648526](#)

<sup>26</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-20.html> ; <http://news.yahoo.com/suspected-russian-raids-kill-44-syrian-civilians-monitor-090822792.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-23.html>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.janes.com/article/57402/syrian-government-territory-grows-by-1-3-with-russian-military-support>

- On February 1, UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, declared the official start of peace talks between the Syrian opposition and the Syrian regime. However, the Syrian opposition, now known as the 'High Negotiations Committee', has refused to participate in discussions until Syrian and Russian bombardments end and civilian blockades are alleviated.<sup>28</sup>

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

1. Ninawa Governorate:
  - On January 20, US-led coalition airstrikes targeted nine oil tankers at the Qayyarah Oil refinery south of the city of Mosul.<sup>29</sup>
  - On January 23, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu announced that “a memorandum (had) been reached on strengthening coordination on Bashiqa camp”. The memorandum was released after a meeting between Davutoglu and US Vice President Joe Biden regarding a resolution that would allow Turkish and Iraqi military forces to coordinate in the reclaiming of the city of Mosul from ISIL.<sup>30</sup>
  - On January 26, the Iraqi Council of Ministers agreed to form “competent committees” to address maintenance of the Mosul Dam. Experts have warned that the dam is at risk of collapsing due to erosion and lack of maintenance.<sup>31</sup>
2. Al Anbar Governorate:
  - During the reporting period, Iraqi security forces continued to clear areas northeast and east of Ramadi.<sup>32</sup>
  - On January 21, Iraqi security forces targeted ISIL militants near the sub-district of Baghdadi, south of the city of Haditha.<sup>33</sup>
  - On January 25, Iraqi security forces targeted ISIL militants in the area of Wadi Houran, west of the city of Haditha.<sup>34</sup>
  - On January 27, ISIL militants attacked the Ain al-Asad airbase residential complex, killing at least 11 police officers and the local police commander.<sup>35</sup>
  - On February 2, media outlets reported that tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians, who are trapped in the ISIL-held city of Fallujah, are suffering from shortages of food, medicine, and fuel. Residents have reported deaths due to starvation and lack of medical care.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35364114> ; <http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN0V014C> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35435065>

<sup>29</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-20-25-2016.html>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/joe-biden-affirms-commitment-to-isis-fight-if-syria-talks-fail-1453565763>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-dam-idUSKCN0V61H4> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35351888> ; <http://www.iraqoilreport.com/news/mosul-dam-flows-returning-power-held-city-17843/> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-20-25-2016.html> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/01/26/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq-mass-grave.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>33</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-20-25-2016.html>

<sup>34</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-20-25-2016.html>

<sup>35</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-falluja-idUSKCN0VB0VZ>

- On February 2, an ISIL suicide bomber attack killed 18 Iraqi soldiers in the town of Al-Bu Dhiaab, north of Ramadi.<sup>37</sup>
- 3. Erbil Governorate:
  - On January 23, ISIL militants attacked Arab tribal and Peshmerga fighters in the district of Makhmur, southwest of the city of Erbil. The fighters, backed by US-led coalition airstrikes, were able to repel the ISIL militants.<sup>38</sup>
  - On January 27, Kurdish officials from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party met to discuss the KRG's ongoing financial crisis.<sup>39</sup>
  - On February 1, Ninewa Operations Command announced that a coalition of Iraqi, tribal, and Peshmerga fighters, backed by US-led coalition air strikes, recaptured the village of Karmadi from ISIL militants, southeast of the city of Mosul.<sup>40</sup>
  - On February 2, Iraqi Kurdish President Massoud Barzani declared the need for a "non-binding referendum on independence," despite ongoing economic issues.<sup>41</sup>
- 4. Salah ad Din Governorate:
  - Between January 20–24, Iraqi security forces and Shia militias targeted ISIL militants in the areas of al-Lein, Jazeerat Samarra, and Mkahshifah.<sup>42</sup>
  - On February 1, ISIL carried out an attack in Tel Kusabah, east of Tikrit.<sup>43</sup>
- 5. Diyala Governorate:
  - On January 29, ISIL militants carried out an attack near the oilfield area of Naft Khana.<sup>44</sup>
- 6. Kirkuk Governorate:
  - On January 26, protests occurred near Kirkuk Castle demanding governmental reforms, the localization of oil production, and the payment of salaries.<sup>45</sup>

#### Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Albu Hayat, Assad, ar-Rutbah, Baghdadi, Beiji, Fallujah, Habbaniyah, Haditha, Hit, Huwayjah, Kirkuk, Kisik, Makhmur, Mosul, Qaim, Qayyarah, Ramadi, Sinjar, Sultan Abdullah, and Tal Afar.<sup>46</sup>
- On January 23, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi asked US military officials for additional training for Iraqi police forces.<sup>47</sup>
- On January 31, Iraqi and Kurdish officials met in Baghdad to discuss cooperation on financial issues between Baghdad and Erbil.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/isil-suicide-bomber-kills-iraqi-troops-ramadi-160202083140698.html>

<sup>38</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-20-25-2016.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>39</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>40</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>41</sup> <http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-kurd-leader-time-come-statehood-referendum-093222852.html>

<sup>42</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-20-25-2016.html>

<sup>43</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>44</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>45</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

<sup>46</sup> See: "US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq". *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [643646](#), [643845](#), [644050](#), [644262](#), [644277](#), [644308](#), [644407](#), [644642](#), [645464](#), [646267](#), [646950](#), [647000](#), [647147](#), [648526](#)

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/ap-iraq-seeks-more-coalition-trainers-for-local-police-2016-1>

<sup>48</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-january-26.html>

**Other significant political and military events during the reporting period:**

- During the reporting period, ISIL militants in Libya continued to carry out attacks in Benghazi as well as in the coastal areas of Ras Lanuf and Es Sider.
- On January 25, US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced that the US would send approximately 1,800 troops from the 101st Airborne Division to Iraq to assist in reclaiming the major cities of Mosul and Raqqa from ISIL.<sup>49</sup>
- On January 27, the Egyptian army announced that they had killed a top leader of the ISIL-linked Egyptian group, Sinai Province.<sup>50</sup>
- On January 28, ISIL claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing outside of the residence of Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Hadi in the city of Aden.<sup>51</sup>
- On February 2, the US-led coalition made up of twenty member states agreed to “accelerate and intensify” airstrikes against ISIL in Syria and Iraq. In addition, on January 25, the Czech government voted in favor of sending guns and ammunition to Iraq and Jordan to support the fight against ISIL.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/carter-us-to-send-101st-airborne-division-to-iraq/>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/top-leader-killed-sinai-military-sources>

<sup>51</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/01/28/Blast-rocks-the-outer-gate-of-President-Hadi-s-residence-Aden.html>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-czech-jordan-idUSKCN0V31A3> ; <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-airstrikes-islamic-state-accelerate-36417293> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-02/335253-us-allies-to-intensify-strikes-on-isis-in-iraq-syria-but-cool-on-libya-action.ashx> ; <http://time.com/4199758/netherlands-airstrike-isis-syria/>

## Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Analysis

A new DigitalGlobe satellite image taken January 26, 2016 over Aleppo Governorate, east of the city of Aleppo, illustrates the extent of damage due to airstrikes in the region. 21 different sites and villages showed damage from airstrikes since the previous image taken in September 22, 2014. Imagery shows significant shelling damage to modern villages, mosques, and archaeological sites. Tells in the area also were damaged due to increased militarization characterized by large embankments and trenches built on and into archaeological deposits. It is difficult to determine exactly when these events occurred or which group(s) was responsible because of the large gap between image acquisition dates, but these episodes attest to the increased militarization within Aleppo Governorate over the past year.

The newly available imagery also allowed ASOR CHI to update the **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0158** in **Weekly Report 71-72** on the Al Kabir Mosque in Hamima. It was reported that the mosque was severely damaged during an airstrike by SARG forces. The satellite imagery from January 26, 2016 confirms the demolition of the minaret with a pile of rubble visible. Though the main building of the mosque is still standing, the satellite imagery does not facilitate assessment of damage to the building's interior.

ASOR CHI previously reported on the al-Hajj Shaker al-Dahi Mosque in central Fallujah, Iraq as part of **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0083** in **Weekly Report 42-43**. It was reported that the mosque was damaged in an airstrike by Iraqi Air Forces. Imagery from January 29, 2016 shows the mosque is still intact with no visible damage. There is other damage to areas around Fallujah, but the neighborhood around the mosque is relatively intact.



Tell Kueires Sharkieh, Aleppo Governorate shows damage due to leveling on the archaeological mound, trenching, destruction of modern buildings in the village, and impact craters from airstrikes (DigitalGlobe; January 26, 2016).



Tell Khatabat, Aleppo Governorate is covered in earthen embankments and impact craters from shelling (DigitalGlobe; January 26, 2016)





al-Kabir Mosque, Hamima, Syria; rubble from the minaret is visible on the western side of the mosque (DigitalGlobe; January 26, 2016)



al-Hajj Shaker al-Dahi Mosque, Fallujah, Iraq with no discernible damage (January 29, 2016)

## Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 16-0012

**Report Date:** January 20, 2016

**Site Name:** Al Nour Mosque (مسجد النور)

**Date of Incident:** January 19, 2016

**Location:** Al Boleel Town, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosque

**Site Date:** Unknown

**Incident Summary:** Airstrike damages mosque.

**Incident Source and Description:** On January 19, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that “suspected Russian warplanes fired missiles on Al Nour Mosque” in the town of Al Boleel in Deir ez-Zor, causing damage to the mosque.<sup>53</sup> Images shared on social media show debris on the floor of the mosque, but the extent of the structural damage could be determined using the photographs available at the time of publication. SNHR also reported civilian casualties due to Russian strikes in the village Al Boleel that same day.<sup>54</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Al Nour Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

### Sources:

#### Online Reporting:

All4Syria: <http://all4syria.info/Archive/287141>

Deir Ezzor is Being Slaughtered Silently: <http://www.dierezzore-bss.com/?p=243>

#### Local Coordination Committees of Syria:

<https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1300118540015279>

Syrian Network For Human Rights: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/20/16699/>

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<sup>53</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/20/16699/>

<sup>54</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/20/16702/>



Damage to interior of Al Nour Mosque (Deir Ezzor is Being Slaughtered Silently; January 19, 2016)<sup>55</sup>



Damage to interior of Al Nour Mosque (All4Syria; January 19, 2016)<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.dierezzore-bss.com/?p=243>

<sup>56</sup> <http://all4syria.info/Archive/287141>

**SHI 16-0013**

**Report Date:** January 21, 2016

**Site Name:** Daraa National Museum (متحف درعا الوطني)

**Date of Incident:** January 20, 2016

**Location:** Daraa, Daraa Governorate, Syria

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

**Site Date:** Modern

**Incident Summary:** Structural damage to the museum from mortar shells.

**Incident Source and Description:** According to DGAM, the Daraa National Museum was hit by mortar shells fired by “armed groups,” damaging several exhibition halls and storage facilities. Photographs provided by the DGAM show holes piercing through the exterior facade into the museum interior and debris in the galleries. The Islamic era exhibit hall was particularly damaged. The report notes that the museum’s artifacts had already been removed to a safe location.<sup>57</sup>

Previous damage to the Daraa National Museum was documented in **ASOR Incident Report 15-0106** and **ASOR Incident Report 15-0106 UPDATE** in **Weekly Reports 47-48** and **51-52**. Incidents on July 3, July 30, and August 13, 2015 resulted in damage to the garden, building structure, and interior spaces of the museum. The building facade, windows, doors, and walls, as well as interior ceilings and furniture have also been affected.<sup>58</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

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

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1899>  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1735>  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1766>

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1899>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1735> ; <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1766>



Mortar damage to Daraa Museum exterior (DGAM; January 20, 2016)



**DGAM ©**  
[www.dgam.gov.sy](http://www.dgam.gov.sy)  
Jan .2016

Mortar damage to Daraa Museum interior (DGAM; January 20, 2016)



Mortar damage to Daraa Museum windows (DGAM; January 20, 2016)



Mortar damage to Daraa Museum window (DGAM; January 20, 2016)





Mortar damage to Daraa Museum interior (DGAM; January 20, 2016)



Mortar damage to Daraa Museum walls (DGAM; January 20, 2016)



Tailfin of a spent mortar round in Daraa Museum (DGAM; January 20, 2016)

**SHI 16-0014**

**Report Date:** January 22, 2016

**Site Name:** Hinni Mosque (جامع الحني) (Hunni, Hanni Mosque)

**Date of Incident:** January 22, 2016; November 25, 2014

**Location:** Old City, Raqqa, ar-Raqqa Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosque

**Site Date:** unknown

**Incident Summary:** On November 25, 2014 missiles fired by SARG planes cause major structural damage. On January 22, 2016 two missiles fired by suspected Russian warplane hit mosque, causing damage.

**Incident Source and Description:** Previously on November 25, 2014 several news sources reported damage to Hinni Mosque, which was one of several buildings damaged in a series of six to ten SARG airstrikes that day, which killed at least 100 people (mostly civilians) in Raqqa, one of the worst massacres of 2014.<sup>59</sup> The bombing reportedly occurred during afternoon prayers when the mosque was full of worshippers, both ISIL members and civilians.<sup>60</sup> Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently published a photo showing the collapse of the mosque's minaret.<sup>61</sup> Al Jazeera reported the mosque as having been destroyed.<sup>62</sup> Photos confirm the mosque's minaret has collapsed onto the roof of the mosque, but the structure is still standing. More images of the damage have been published by Anadolu Agency on Getty Images, showing the collapsed minaret from several angles, the damage to the mosque roof caused by the collapse, and debris littering the interior and exterior of the mosque.<sup>63</sup>

On January 22, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights, "suspected Russian warplanes fired two missiles on the Al Hinni Mosque, damaging it."<sup>64</sup> No photographs or details of the damage were available at the time of publication. It is unclear if the bombing of the mosque caused casualties, but SNHR states airstrikes throughout the city of Raqqa on January 22 led to at least 30 deaths.<sup>65</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.syriaahr.com/en/?p=7445> ; <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/syria-raqqa-airstrikes-1508027443> (10 airstrikes);

[http://www.shrc.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Annual\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.shrc.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Annual_report_2014.pdf) (8 airstrikes)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/03/syria-ruthless-and-unlawful-government-attacks-killed-scores-of-civilians-in-al-raqqa/> (6 airstrikes)

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/03/syria-ruthless-and-unlawful-government-attacks-killed-scores-of-civilians-in-al-raqqa/>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Raqqa.SI/photos/a.780113668666553.1073741828.780110825333504/905188972825688/?type=1&theater>

<sup>62</sup> <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/11/25/raqqa-strikes.html>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.gettyimages.com/galleries/search?phrase=hinni+mosque&family=editorial&sort=>

<sup>64</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/22/16785/>

<sup>65</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/22/16776/>

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Hinni Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

**November 25, 2014:**

Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/03/syria-ruthless-and-unlawful-government-attacks-killed-scores-of-civilians-in-al-raqqa/>

Anadolu Agency (Getty Images):

<http://www.gettyimages.com/galleries/search?phrase=hinni+mosque&family=editorial&sort=>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31915114>

Al Jazeera: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/11/25/raqqa-strikes.html>

Middle East Eye: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/syria-raqqa-airstrikes-1508027443>

Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently:

<https://www.facebook.com/Raqqa.SI/photos/a.780113668666553.1073741828.7801108253335.04/905188972825688/?type=1&theater>

Reuters: <http://uk.reuters.com/news/picture/raqqa-the-islamic-state-capital?articleId=UKRTX224ZC&slideId=1109115826>

Syrian Committee for Human Rights: [http://www.shrc.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Annual\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.shrc.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Annual_report_2014.pdf)

**January 22, 2016:**

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/22/16785/>  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/22/16776/>

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights: <http://www.syriaahr.com/en/?p=43271>



Collapse of Hinni Mosque minaret and roof damage (Anadolu Agency Getty Images; November 26, 2014)



Collapse of Hinni Mosque minaret and roof damage (Anadolu Agency Getty Images; November 26, 2014)



Interior damage to Hinni Mosque (Anadolu Agency Getty Images; November 26, 2014)



Collapse of Hinni Mosque minaret (Anadolu Agency Getty Images; November 26, 2014)





Collapse of Hinni Mosque minaret and roof damage (Anadolu Agency Getty Images; November 26, 2014)



Collapse of Hinni Mosque minaret and roof damage (Nour Fourat, Reuters; November 25, 2014)

**SHI 16-0015**

**Report Date:** January 28, 2016

**Site Name:** Abu Bakr Al Sedeiq Mosque (مسجد أبو بكر الصديق)

**Date of Incident:** January 27, 2016

**Location:** Al Bab City, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosque

**Site Date:** Unknown

**Incident Summary:** Missiles cause extensive damage to mosque.

**Incident Source and Description:** On January 28, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that “suspected Russian warplanes fired missiles on Abu Bakr Al Sedeiq Mosque” in the city of Al Bab, causing almost complete destruction and “rending [the mosque] inoperable.”<sup>66</sup>

In the last few months, according to SNHR and other media outlets, the city of Al Bab, which is under the control of ISIL militants, has been targeted by airstrikes several times, causing widespread destruction and civilian casualties.

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Abu Bakr Al Sedeiq Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Syrian Network For Human Rights: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/28/16949/>

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<sup>66</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/28/16949/>



Abu Bakr Al Sedeiq Mosque showing extensive damage (Syrian Network for Human Rights; January 28, 2016)

**SHI 16-0016**

**Report Date:** January 31, 2016

**Site Name:** Palmyra

**Date of Incident:** January 31, 2016

**Location:** Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** From UNESCO:

“First mentioned in the archives of Mari in the 2nd millennium BC, Palmyra was an established caravan oasis when it came under Roman control in the mid-first century CE as part of the Roman province of Syria. It grew steadily in importance as a city on the trade route linking Persia, India and China with the Roman Empire, marking the crossroads of several civilisations in the ancient world. A grand, colonnaded street of 1100 metres' length forms the monumental axis of the city, which together with secondary colonnaded cross streets links the major public monuments including the Temple of Ba'al, Diocletian's Camp, the Agora, Theatre, other temples and urban quarters. Architectural ornament including unique examples of funerary sculpture unites the forms of Greco-roman art with indigenous elements and Persian influences in a strongly original style. Outside the city's walls are remains of a Roman aqueduct and immense necropolises.

An oasis in the Syrian desert, north-east of Damascus, Palmyra contains the monumental ruins of a great city that was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world. From the 1st to the 2nd century, the art and architecture of Palmyra, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, married Graeco-Roman techniques with local traditions and Persian influences.”<sup>67</sup>

**Site Date:** Hellenistic, Palmyrene, Roman, and Islamic

**Incident Summary:** Damage to five columns from two missiles fired by SARG warplanes.

**Incident Source and Description:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights reported on January 31, 2016 that SARG warplanes fired two missiles on the archaeological site of Palmyra, severely damaging five columns.<sup>68</sup> No photographs were available at the time publication and ASOR CHI has not been able to determine the specific location of the columns within the larger site of Palmyra.

ASOR has previously covered the extensive damage to Palmyra due to looting,<sup>69</sup> military occupation,<sup>70</sup> deliberate destruction,<sup>71</sup> and destruction due to military bombardment by SARG<sup>72</sup> as

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<sup>67</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23>

<sup>68</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/31/17733/>

<sup>69</sup> For looting by SARG forces and civilians, see: **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0023 in Weekly Report 4; SHI 14-027 in Weekly Report 6; SHI 15-0058 in Weekly Report 34**

<sup>70</sup> For SARG occupation, see: **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-019 in Weekly Report 3; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-027 in Weekly Report 6; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0055 in Weekly Report 33.** For ISIL occupation, see: **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0058 UPDATE in Weekly Report 34.**

<sup>71</sup> For deliberate ISIL destruction, see: **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0101 in Weekly Report 6; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0127 in Weekly Report 55-56; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0138 in**

well as Russian forces on and around the UNESCO World Heritage Site. For information on previous coverage of SARG bombardment please refer to the following reports:

- **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0055 in Weekly Report 33:** Militarization of Temple of Bel by SARG, and previous destruction attributed to SARG bombardment in August 2013.
- **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086 in Weekly Report 41:** Damage to Palmyra Museum, Temple of Bel, and Palmyra Citadel from mortar shells during battles between SARG forces and ISIL.
- **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086 Update in Weekly Report 42-43:** SARG bombardment of modern Palmyra and at least one strike on archaeological area, following ISIL capture of Palmyra.
- **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0096 in Weekly Report 45:** SARG bombardment of archaeological area of Palmyra and adjacent palm fields, causing damage to the north wall of Diocletian's Camp, the Baalshamin Temple, and the Theater.

Airstrikes in the Palmyra area have become particularly frequent since Russian forces began launching airstrikes in Syria on September 30, 2015 in support of SARG forces.

In October 2015, Russia deployed helicopters and artillery to the SARG front near Palmyra.<sup>73</sup> Shortly thereafter Russian airstrikes in and around Palmyra were reported.<sup>74</sup> On October 8, airstrikes on the Al Furqan mosque in Palmyra city were attributed to both SARG and Russian forces.<sup>75</sup> These reports were first denied by Russia. However on November 5, 2015 the Russia announced a series of attacks targeting ISIL militants in Palmyra. The defense ministry said in an official statement that the strikes “destroyed a large fortified location of ISIS militants,” which included an air-defense gun and a tank. They added that the strikes were targeted strictly at terrorist infrastructure located a considerable distance from Palmyra’s historical architecture.<sup>76</sup> Russian military personnel and advisers have also been reported as working alongside SARG and other pro-regime forces in efforts to reclaim the territory from ISIL.<sup>77</sup> Russia has also offered, on more than one occasion, to aid Syria in restoring Palmyra in the future.<sup>78</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

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**Weekly Report 61-62; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0104 in Weekly Report 47-48; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0142 in Weekly Report 63-64**

<sup>72</sup> For damage from SARG forces bombardment, see: **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0055 in Weekly Report 33; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086 in Weekly Report 41; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086 Update in Weekly Report 42-43; ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0096 in Weekly Report 45**

<sup>73</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/russia-strikes-palmyra-syria-isis\\_us\\_56139b39e4b022a4ce5f50a6](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/russia-strikes-palmyra-syria-isis_us_56139b39e4b022a4ce5f50a6)

<sup>74</sup> <https://twitter.com/hadialbahra/status/670701823662141440> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/12/dozens-of-russian-airstrikes-target-tadmur-and-aleppo-countryside/>; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/672944564278308864>; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraRev1/status/672503523259584512>

<sup>75</sup> <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/674763420126810112>

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Nov-05/321811-russia-bombs-palmyra-eastern-syria-military.ashx>

<sup>77</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/russia-strikes-palmyra-syria-isis\\_us\\_56139b39e4b022a4ce5f50a6](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/russia-strikes-palmyra-syria-isis_us_56139b39e4b022a4ce5f50a6)

<sup>78</sup> <http://tass.ru/en/society/851691>; [http://rbth.com/multimedia/history/2015/12/16/state-heritage-gathering-materials-to-help-reconstruct-palmyra\\_551503](http://rbth.com/multimedia/history/2015/12/16/state-heritage-gathering-materials-to-help-reconstruct-palmyra_551503)

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** 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:

Syrian Network for Human Rights: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/31/17733/>

Scholarly:

UNESCO: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23>

**SHI 16-0017**

**Report Date:** January 31, 2016

**Site Name:** Sayyida Zeinab Shrine (Mosque of Sayyida Zeinab) (السيدة زينب)

**Date of Incident:** January 31, 2016

**Location:** Sayyida Zeinab Town, Damascus Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** The Shrine of Sayyida Zeinab is “named after the daughter of the first Shia Imam, Ali Ibn Abi Talib”, and the granddaughter of the Prophet Mohammed. The shrine is believed, by Shia Muslims, to hold the remains of Sayyida Zeinab and is considered the ‘holiest’ Shia shrine in Syria.<sup>79</sup> The Shrine is located 6 miles southeast of Damascus in an area known as Sayyida Zeinab and became a place of “mass pilgrimage” for Shia Muslim since the 1980s and 1990s “when a large shrine was built around the tomb with Iranian support”.<sup>80</sup> This site is not to be confused with another tomb and mosque located in Cairo, Egypt that is believed, by Sunni Muslims, to hold the remains of Sayyida Zeinab. According to Brockman:

“The mosque is fronted by a long colonnade covered with blue tiles, with a striking golden cupola rising above the tomb. [The minaret] is tall and slender and placed toward the back of the mosque. The tomb itself is behind a columned screen and topped by a green cover.”<sup>81</sup>

In the recent conflict in Syria, Hezbollah has used the protection of this shrine as a reason for its fighters to be operating in the country. The shrine has also been a site popular with pro-regime supporters.<sup>82</sup> Militiamen, backed by Iran, have “flocked” to Sayyida Zeinab since 2011 to fight alongside the Syrian regime, which is led by the Shia-linked Alawites.<sup>83</sup> The Shia militia known as the Abu Fadl al-Abbas brigade was formed to defend the shrine at the beginning of in the Syrian conflict.<sup>84</sup>

**Site Date:** Mosque Built: 1990. Death of Sayyida Zeinab: 681 CE.

**Incident Summary:** Three bombings occur near the Shrine but with no reported damage.

**Incident Source and Description:** On January 31, 2016 a car bomb and two suicide bombers targeted a bus station and military headquarters near the Shia shrine of Sayyida Zeinab. ISIL took responsibility for the attack. At least 70 people were killed, including pro-regime fighters. The blasts occurred several hundred meters from the shine and the shrine reportedly was not damaged.

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<sup>79</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35454359> ; <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2013/06/12/syria-inventing-religious-war/>

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2013/06/12/syria-inventing-religious-war/>

<sup>81</sup> Brockman, N.C. 2011. *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places* 2nd Edition ABC-CLIO. pp. 478

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/10000002814759/syria8217s-shrine-of-sayedazeinab.html>

<sup>83</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/starvation-spreads-ahead-of-syria-talks-1454029302>

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2013/06/12/syria-inventing-religious-war/>

The Sayyida Zeinab Shrine has previously been a target for attacks. In February 2015, two suicide attackers targeted the shrine, killing four people and wounded 13 more at a nearby checkpoint.<sup>85</sup> In November 2012, two bombs detonated east of the Shrine killing at least six people.<sup>86</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of the Sayyida Zeinab Shrine as it has been a target of multiple terrorist attacks.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Al Jazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121031143513140163.html>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35454359>

The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/31/syria-mosque-bombing-harsh-light-slow-un-peace-talks>

Reuters: <http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-damascus-idINKCN0VA1R9>

Scholarly:

Brockman, Norman C. (2011) *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places* 2nd Edition. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.

Esposito, John L. (2003) *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Revised and online edition.

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<sup>85</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121031143513140163.html>

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121031143513140163.html>



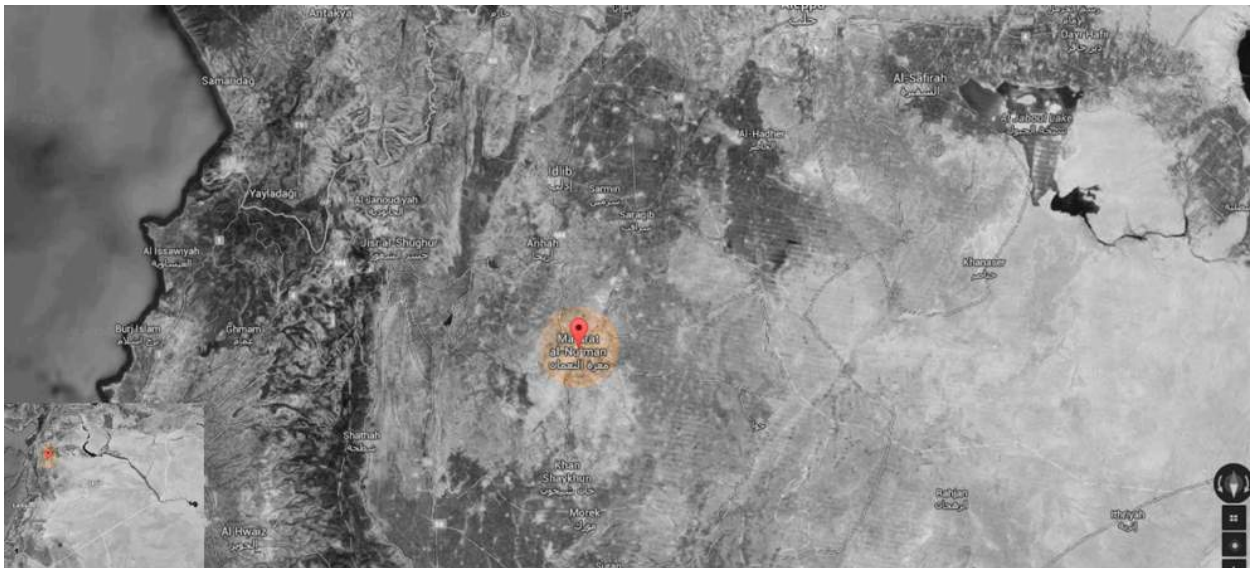


## The Day After “Heritage Protection Initiative”<sup>87</sup>

### Site Monitors Project:

### A preliminary report on the Barrel Bombing of the Ma’arra Museum in Ma’arrat Al-Nu’mān

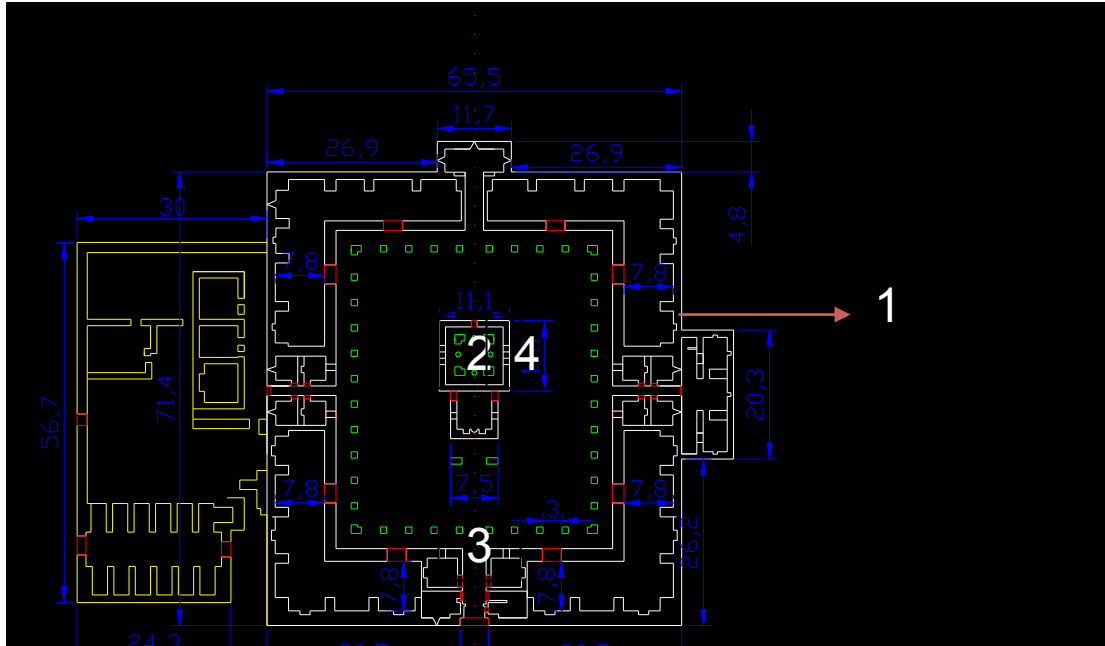
June 2015



On Monday, 06/15/2015 at 10:35, the museum of Ma’arat al-Nu’mān, located within Khan Murad Basha, which is considered one of the most important museums that specialize in mosaics, was struck during a bombing raid. It is composed of four wings, each wing in the form of the letter L. There is a corridor between each two wings leading to opposite chambers. The building includes an open courtyard. In the middle of the courtyard, there are the Takkiyah structure and the mosque. On the west side of the wings there are the public facilities composed of six opposite storage areas, al-Takkyā’s bathroom, and the furnace. The planes bombed the museum with a container shaped explosive barrel, which hit the middle of the facility, exactly above the mosque. This resulted in the following damage:

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<sup>87</sup> This report is based on research conducted by “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.



A horizontal projection of the Museum of Mu'arat al-Nu'man, Khan Murad Basha.

[1] The eastern front. [2] The mosque and the location of the dropped barrel bomb. [3] The entrance. [4] The eastern front of the mosque.



The complete collapse of the mosque. The ceiling and the eastern side were completely destroyed and the southern front was partially damaged.



The east side of the mosque.



The southeastern corner of the mosque



Partial collapse of al-Takkiyah. Represented by the total collapse of the ceiling and great damage of the walls. Keep in mind that al-Takkiyah contains the Al-I'layah Library.



Books and manuscripts inside al-Takkiyah



A partial collapse of the halls in the first and second wings, as well as a room used as an office:

The damage may become worse if no measures are taken to stop the collapse. Also, a room used as an office for the employees is in danger of collapsing. If no immediate measures are taken, the ceiling of the first wing will collapse, since the structure is made up of arches any collapse of the stones will lead to a compromise in structural integrity. Thus, it is urgent any [Potential] destruction of the arches should be stopped.

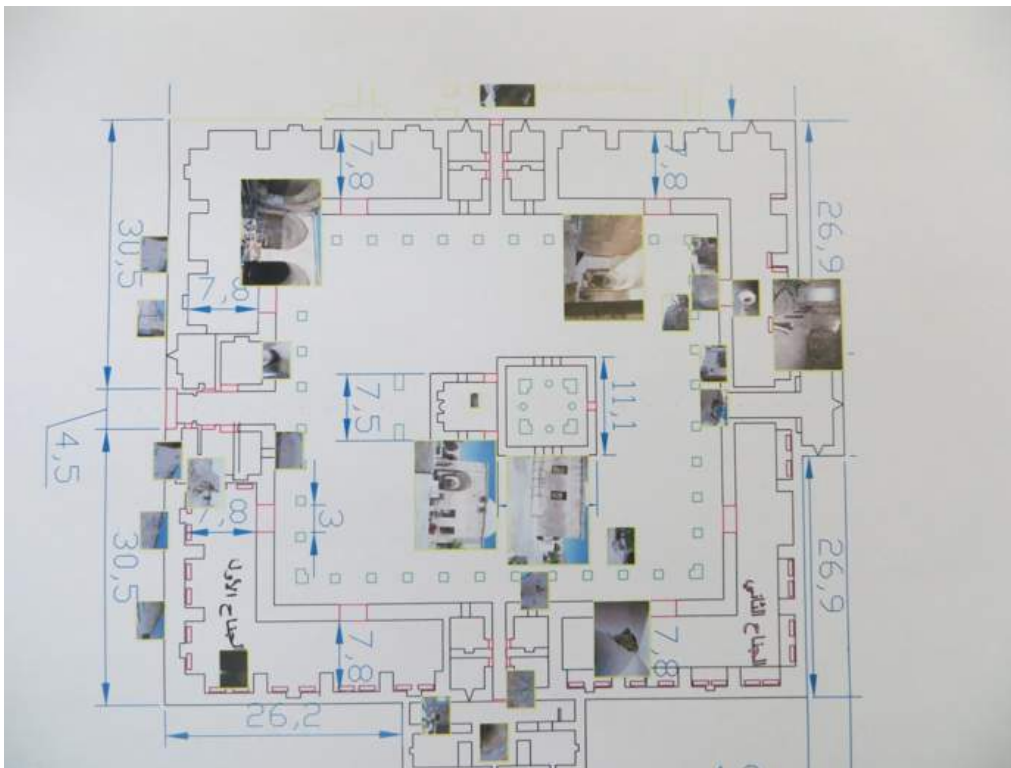


The eastern front is greatly damaged and in need of immediate repair.



The eastern front is greatly damaged and in need of immediate repair.

A schematic drawing of the museum





The second wing of the southern front.

Extensive damage to the walls, represented by large cracks and the exerted pressure resulting in the swallowing (sic) of the walls and the [formation] of large cracks, as well as the separation and displacement of some of the walls. They are in dire need of stopping of the swallowing (sic) and the displacement of the walls.



The front, which was repaired earlier.



The entrance of the first wing.



The entrance of the first wing.





Damage was inflicted on the exhibited antiquity items.



Antiquity items in the rubble.



Sand bags scattered due to the explosion.



Sand bags scattered due to the explosion.



Sand bags scattered due to the explosion.



A tableau covered with a layer of glue and cloth after the fall of the sand bags.



A basalt door, broken by the explosion.



A basalt door, broken by the explosion.

Reported by:

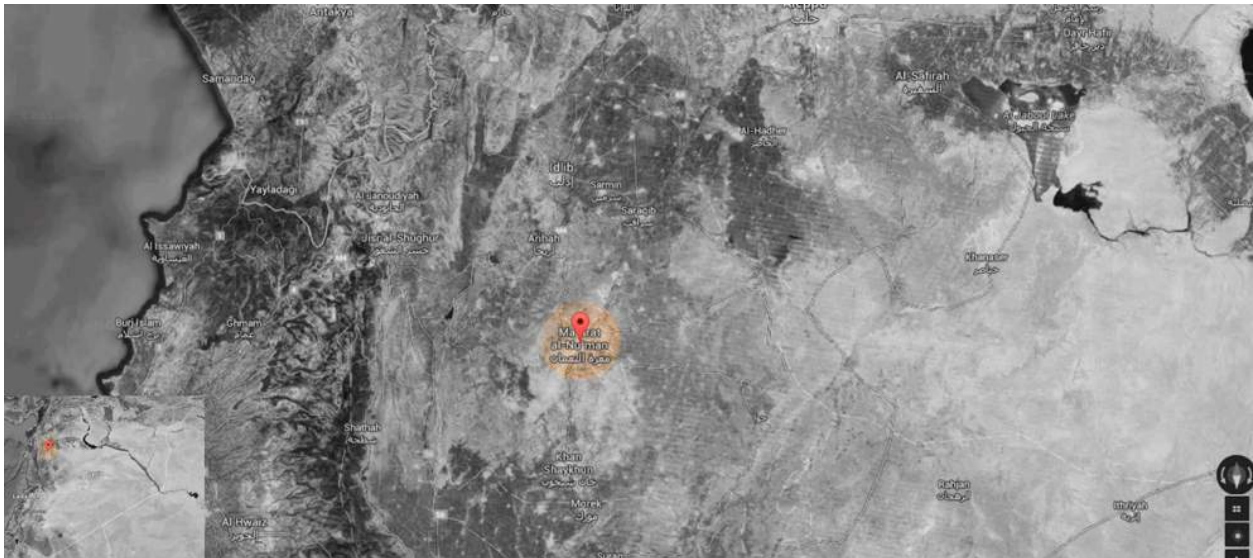


**Site Monitors project Manager -  
Dr. Amr Al-Azm**

## The Day After “Heritage Protection Initiative” Observer’s Project in Idlib City

### Site Monitor Report of the Citadel at Ma’arra Al-Nu’mān

August 21, 2015



The following observations were recorded:

- 1- Neglect over the last five years is one of the biggest factors contributing to the severe damage inflicted upon the citadel.
- 2- Most of the damage is due to weathering.
- 3- Damage was also sustained from housing and grazing sheep on the site.

The site needs urgent repairs especially in red areas:















Locations that need urgent repairs to fortify calcareous layer beneath the citadel





Reported by:



**Site Monitors project Manager -  
Dr.Amr Al-Azm**

## Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 16-0003

**Report Date:** January 25, 2016

**Site Name:** Imam Hassan Shrine (مقام الإمام الحسن)

**Date of Incident:** January 24, 2016

**Location:** Laylan District, Kirkuk, Kirkuk Governorate

**Site Description:** Shrine used by both Shia and Sunni Muslims.

**Site Date:** Unknown

**Incident Summary:** Intentional fire causes extensive damage to shrine.

**Incident Source and Description:** On January 25, 2016 Shia Waves and the Institute for the Study of War reported that unknown assailants had set fire to the Imam Hassan Shrine in the district of Laylan, approximately 15.5 miles southeast of the city of Kirkuk, causing extensive damage.<sup>88</sup> Photographs and video released by local media online showed the damage to the site.

A DigitalGlobe satellite image of the area around the shrine was taken on February 1, 2016. It showed no damage to the exterior of the building or the roof. The fire appears to have been confined to the interior of the shrine, which corresponds to the released photographs after the fire.

**Pattern:** Arson.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor damage to the Imam Hassan shrine and other Islamic places of worship in Iraq given the recent escalation of sectarian violence in response to the expansion of ISIL.

### Sources:

Online Reporting:

The Institute for the Study of War: <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-20-25-2016.html>

Shia Waves: <http://shiawaves.com/english/news-archive/2297-unknown-assailants-set-ablaze-imam-hassan-holy-site-in-kirkuk>

Shia Waves, video report: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrSZn1aqZJI>

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<sup>88</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-20-25-2016.html> ; <http://shiawaves.com/english/news-archive/2297-unknown-assailants-set-ablaze-imam-hassan-holy-site-in-kirkuk>



Damage to the exterior of Imam Hassan Shrine (Arabic 21; January 24, 2016)



Material damage to Imam Hassan Shrine (Arabic 21; January 24, 2016)



Damage to the interior of Imam Hassan Shrine (Arabic 21; January 24, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Imam Hassan Shrine (Arabic 21; January 24, 2015)





Damage to exterior of Imam Hassan Shrine (Alsumaria; January 24, 2016)



Imam Hassan Shrine after attack (DigitalGlobe; February 1, 2016)