

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

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Weekly Report 81-82 — February 17 –March 1, 2016

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Executive Summary

During the reporting period, multiple suicide bombings targeted mosques in both Iraq and Syria. Another Shia mosque in Muqdadiah was targeted approximately six weeks following a mass targeting of mosques by ISIL militants and supporters, while a Shia mosque in Baghdad was also attacked. In Syria the Shrine of Sayyida Zainab was also attacked for the second time in less than a month. In addition to kidnapping, ransoming, and expelling Christian populations, ISIL militants have also attacked at least 19 churches in the Hasakah area of Syria since the beginning of 2015. These incidents further indicate that ISIL is advancing its pattern of terrorizing vulnerable populations, particularly ethnic and religious minorities, within its occupied regions while also directing increased efforts to accelerate sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shia in order to proliferate the conflict in Iraq.

Aerial bombing campaigns continue to inflict significant damage to heritage sites throughout Syria. One mosque in Homs Governorate and three mosques in Aleppo Governorate were damaged in airstrikes. Relatedly, Day After Heritage Protection Initiative conducted a site assessment for the site of Ebla at the end of February 2016 following multiple direct hits by airstrikes to the ancient site.

Between August and September 2015 The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative produced two condition reports on heritage assets in the villages of Jaradeh and Serjilla located in Idlib Governorate. Both reports document damage due to a variety of anthropogenic and natural agents, including illegal excavation, quarrying, reuse of ancient structures, and erosion.

No new satellite images were available during the current reporting period. Additional analysis will continue for more complicated datasets, particularly over Aleppo and Mosul.

Key Points

- The Malthai Rock Reliefs in Dahuk were vandalized by graffiti ([ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0005](#)).
- Two ISIL suicide bombings damaged the Shia Rasul al-Azam Mosque in Baghdad ([ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0006](#)).

¹ 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.

- An ISIL suicide bomber attacked a Shia mosque in Muqdadiyah, Diyala Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0007**).
- Russian airstrikes damaged the al-Souq Mosque in Palmyra, Homs Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0029**).
- Aerial bombardment damages two mosques in the city of Aleppo (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0030**).
- A series of four suicide bombings occurred near the Shrine of Sayyida Zainab in Damascus Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0031**).
- ISIL militants damaged or destroyed at least 19 Assyrian churches along the Khabur River in Hasakah Governorate since early 2015 (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0032**).
- Russian airstrikes damaged a mosque in Dar Ta'izzah, Aleppo Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0033**).
- The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative produced two condition assessments on heritage assets in Jaradeh and Serjilla in Idlib Governorate (**Appended TDA Reports #1 and #2**).
- The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative also conducted a rapid site assessment to document damage caused by Russian airstrikes around the site of Ebla (**Appended TDA Report #3**).

Heritage Timeline

March 1, 2016

Cardozo School of Law at Yale University held an event titled **"Rethinking Antiquities: Restitution and Collecting in the Time of ISIS."**

<https://www.cardozo.yu.edu/events/rethinking-antiquities-collecting-age-isis>

- *BBC* published an article titled **"Museum of Lost Objects: The Temple of Bel"** (by Kanishk Tharoor & Maryam Maruf).

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35688943>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b071tgbm>

- *The Art Newspaper* published an article titled **"What do we really know about Islamic State's role in illicit antiquities trade?"** (by Cristina Ruiz). Scholars and investigators debate how much ISIL has actually gained from the antiquities trade in a symposium on art and terrorism co-organized by the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA) held at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London on February 27, 2016.

<http://theartnewspaper.com/news/news/what-do-we-really-know-about-islamic-state-s-role-in-illicit-antiquities-trade/>

February 29, 2016

BBC published an article titled “**Museum of Lost Objects: The Winged Bull of Nineveh**” (by Kanishk Tharoor & Maryam Maruf). The first of 10 stories about lost or destroyed ancient objects, this article discusses the Winged Bull of Nineveh, a colossal Lamassu statue destroyed by ISIL militants in 2015. A podcast accompanies this story.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35669056>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0738jc2/episodes/download_s

- *Al Monitor* published an article titled “**Iraq’s dubious religious shrines**” (by Wassim Bassem). The Shia residents of Babil visit non-Muslim religious shrines that they believe have healing properties, although historical information contradicts their beliefs.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/02/iraq-babil-religious-shrines-history.html#ixzz41IIQu4GA>

- *Reuters* published an article titled “**Suicide bombings kill 40 in eastern Iraq, eight west of Baghdad**” (by Stephen Kalin et al.) At least 40 people were killed by a suicide bomber at a funeral in a Shia mosque in the Palestine neighborhood of Muqdadiyah. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0007**

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0W21UA>

<http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/290220162>

<http://presstv.ir/Detail/2016/02/29/452995/Iraq-Diyala-blast-Muqdadiyah->

- The Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago held a talk on February 29, 2016 titled “**The Idols of ISIS**” that will “explore how religion, politics, and art intersected in the destruction of Mosul Museum sculptures.”

http://neubauercollegium.uchicago.edu/events/uc/idols_of_isis/

February 28, 2016

Heritage for Peace published their bi-weekly “**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-28-february-2016/>

- BBC Radio 4* presented a short documentary titled “**Simon Schama: The Obliterators**,” examining the current trend of iconoclasm and destruction of archaeological sites amongst terrorist groups like ISIL in Iraq and Syria.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b071s6nr>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/the-obliterators-review-simon-schama-gives-the-horror-of-war-a-human-face-a6908256.html>
- February 27, 2016

SNHR published a post titled “**Suspected Russian forces targeted Ali in Abi Taleb Mosque in Darat Azza city in Aleppo governorate in February 26.**” A Russian airstrike reportedly hit a mosque in Dar Ta’izzah, damaging it. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0033**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/27/18931/>
- February 26, 2016

Atlantic Council published an article titled “**What Can Be Done for Syria’s Antiquities?**” (by Idir Ouahes). The article discusses several countries’ approaches to stopping the illegal trade of antiquities and ways to learn about and get involved in such efforts.
<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/what-can-be-done-for-syria-s-antiquities>
- The Guardian* published an article titled “**How western art collectors are helping to fund Isis**” (by Leila Amineddoleh). The article highlights the need to educate collectors on the consequences of purchasing looted artifacts or those with improper provenance.
<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/26/western-art-funding-terrorism-isis-middle-east>
- CNN* published a video report titled “**Ancient City of Aleppo Reduced to Rubble**” (by Hala Gorani). CNN compares pre-2011 images and video with amateur video and news footage of Aleppo from the last five years to demonstrate how much damage has been done to the UNESCO World Heritage Site.
<https://www.facebook.com/halagoraniCNN/videos/1267724106577208/>
- February 25, 2016

Reuters published an article titled “**Two suicide bombers kill 15 at Shi’ite mosque in Baghdad.**” Two ISIL suicide bombers blew themselves up at a Shia mosque in Baghdad, causing at least 15 deaths and wounding dozens more. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0006**
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0VY2AH>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/25/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-fatal-baghdad-mosque-explosion>

<http://www.arabnews.com/featured/news/886236>

- *Berliner Zeitung* published an article titled “**Wie antike Schätze vor dem IS gerettet werden sollen**” (“How ancient treasures are being saved from IS”) (by Martina Doering). The head of Berlin’s Vorderasiatisches Museum Markus Hilgert discusses practical methods for saving archaeological treasures in Syria and Iraq.
<http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kultur/interview-mit-museumsdirektor-wie-antike-schaetze-vor-dem-is-gerettet-werden-sollen,10809150,33847250.html>

February 24, 2016

DGAM published an article titled “**Restoring looted artifacts in collaboration with Qamishli local communities.**” The DGAM regional office in Qamishli in Hasakah Governorate reports that locals in the area recovered a group of looted artifacts, some of which had been stolen from storage at the archaeological site of **Tell Mohammad Diyab.**

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1926>

<http://www.syriaonline.sy/?f=Details&catid=22&pageid=21155&g=1>

- *Expressen* published an article and video titled “**Hidden camera shows how IS destroyed Palmyra World Heritage.**” An amateur video shows the state of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Palmyra, including monuments ISIL militants have destroyed.
<http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/hidden-camera-shows-how-is-destroyed-the-palmyra-world-heritage/>

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

- *Vanity Fair* published an article titled “**Culture contre barbarie Ces ‘Monuments Men’ qui veulent sauver Palmyre des bulldozers de Daech**” (“Culture against barbarism: These ‘Monuments Men’ want to save Palmyra from Daesh bulldozers”). This article discusses the life and execution of famed Palmyra archaeologist Khaled al-Assad.

<http://www.vanityfair.fr/actualites/international/articles/ces-monuments-men-qui-veulent-sauver-palmyre-des-bulldozers-de-daech/32078>

February 23, 2016

DGAM published an article titled “**Seasonal fieldwork in al-Marqab Citadel is completed by the Syro-Hungarian archaeological mission.**” The joint Syro-Hungarian Archaeological Mission (SHAM) has successfully completed its 15th fieldwork season at **al-Marqab Citadel** in Tartus governorate.

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1922>

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=177&id=1921>

- The **Commission of Inquiry on Syria** of the UN Human Rights Commission released its “**Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.**” The report draws on interviews with victims and eyewitnesses inside and outside the country, collected between July 2015 and January 2016. The report discusses, in particular, damage done by ISIL militants at **Palmyra** and **Deir Mar Elian**.
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/A-HRC-31-68.pdf>
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53292#.Vsx2I4wr1g>
- February 22, 2016 **Syrian Network for Human Rights** published a post titled “**Armed opposition forces targeted Al Ma’arouf Mosque in Al Sheikh Maqsood neighborhood in Aleppo city in February 21.**” Shells fired on an Aleppo mosque allegedly came from artillery located in armed opposition territory and partially destroyed the mosque’s minaret. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0030**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/22/18764/>
- February 21, 2016 **Syrian Network for Human Rights** published a post titled “**Suspected Russian forces targeted Muhi Al Din Bin Arabi Mosque in Al Mayser neighborhood in Aleppo city in February 20.**” Russian warplanes allegedly fired missiles on a in Aleppo, severely damaging the mosque. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0030**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/21/18715/>
- February 19, 2016 *Expresso* published an article titled “**Arte de guerra** (Art of war)” (by Alexandra Carita). The article discusses ISIL’s intent to both finance itself and erase local identities by destroying and looting cultural heritage. The article quotes Michael Danti ASOR CHI Academic Director.
<http://expresso.sapo.pt/internacional/2016-02-19-Arte-de-guerra>
- February 18, 2016 *Atlantic Council* published an article titled “**Stories from a City Held Hostage**” (by Hassan Ali). The article discusses life under ISIL in Palmyra and compares regime and ISIL treatment of artifacts and historic monuments.
<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/stories-from-a-city-held-hostage>

- *The Huffington Post* published an article titled “**Laying the Foundations for 2016: Partnerships Between Counter Extremism and Cultural Protection**” (by Jacob Davey). Documentation of destruction by heritage professionals has the potential to contribute to an understanding of how terror groups adapt their strategy.
http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/jacob-davey/counter-extremism-cultural-protection_b_9244396.html

February 17, 2016

Smithsonian published an article titled “**Crash Courses Prepare Art Conservators for Catastrophic Disasters**” (by James Harkin). In partnership with the University of Pennsylvania, the Smithsonian Institution is leading a month-long course in Erbil, training Iraqi conservators in many aspects of emergency conservation, including quickly inventorying and transporting collections and stabilizing immovable heritage.
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/crash-courses-prepare-art-conservators-catastrophic-disasters-180958093/>

- **Syrian Network for Human Rights** published a post titled “**SNHR: regime warplanes targeted Al Souq Mosque in Al Janoubi neighborhood in Palmyra in Homs, rendering it inoperable, Feb 16.**” SARG forces fired a missile on a mosque in the city of Palmyra, partially destroying it and rendering it inoperable. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0029**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/17/18578/>

- *The Observer* published an article titled “**These ISIS-Destroyed Artifacts Are Now Available to Download and 3-D Print**” (by Casey Quackenbush). Digital art organization Rhizome (an affiliate of the New Museum) has launched *Material Speculation: ISIS/Download*, a 3-D modeling and printing project by Morehshin Allahyari focusing on artifacts destroyed by ISIL in Iraq.
<http://observer.com/2016/02/these-isis-destroyed-artifacts-are-now-available-to-download-and-3-d-print/>

<https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-an-iranian-artist-is-using-3d-printing-to-combat-isis>

- *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published an article titled “**Alles in Scherben**” (“Everything in shards”). The Bundestag, Germany’s Parliament, is considering ratifying the Cultural Property Protection Act. Archaeologist Michael Müller-Karpe argues that the law will not protect against the trafficking of ancient looted art.
<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/kunstmarkt-alles-in-scherben-1.2867583>

- *Aeon* published an article titled “**Why ISIS hates the Sufis and blows up their shrines**” (by Nile Green). Green discusses a variety of reasons ISIL and other extremist groups hate or distrust Sufism, including the belief that Sufism is antithetical to the original Islam preached by the Prophet Muhammad.
<https://aeon.co/opinions/could-sufism-offer-an-alternative-to-isis-for-young-muslims>

- *Smithsonian* published an article titled “**The Heroic Effort to Digitally Reconstruct Lost Monuments**” (by Kati Nodjimbadem). Various projects, including Project Mosul, #NEWPALMYRA, and Project Anqa, are using 3-D modeling and scanning to record or reconstruct heritage sites and monuments in areas of conflict.
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/heroic-effort-digitally-reconstruct-lost-monuments-180958098/>

February 16, 2016

University of California Newsroom published an article titled “**Cyber-archaeology, big data and the race to save threatened cultural heritage sites**” (by Andy Murdock). Thomas Levy, professor of anthropology at UC San Diego and director of the Center for Cyber-Archaeology and Sustainability at the Qualcomm Institute, is interviewed.
<http://universityofcalifornia.edu/news/cyber-archaeology-big-data-and-race-save-threatened-cultural-heritage-sites>

- The blog **Cultural Heritage Lawyer** published an article titled “**Prosecutors, Detector Dogs, and Laws: 6 Law Enforcement Recommendations to Combat Transnational Cultural Heritage Trafficking**” (by Rick St. Hilaire). Recommendations include the appointment of specialized federal prosecutors, the application of state law to cultural property crimes, and the use of “detector dogs.”
<http://culturalheritagelawyer.blogspot.in/2016/02/prosecutors-detector-dogs-and-laws-6.html>

February 14, 2016

Al Monitor published an article titled “**Jewish shrine reminds Iraqis of religious coexistence**” (by Adnan Abu Zeed). Although the tomb of the Jewish Prophet Ezra was turned into an Islamic landmark over the years following the Jewish exodus in the 1950s, clerics there say they are preserving the Jewish character of the shrine.
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/02/iraq-tomb-jewish-prophet-ezra-turned-islamic.html#ixzz41lCodjIC>

Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo Governorate:
 - On February 18, Syrian opposition sources reported that between 500 and 2,000 opposition forces had arrived in the town of Azzaz with the support of Turkish forces that escorted the group through Turkish territory.²
 - On February 19, Turkey increased its ongoing shelling of Kurdish forces in northern Aleppo Governorate, striking the Kurdish town of Afrin.³
 - On February 20, SARG forces, backed by Russian airstrikes and pro-regime militias, captured 18 ISIL-held villages in eastern Aleppo Governorate and extended the regime's control of a road connecting the cities of Aleppo and Raqqa.⁴
 - On February 22, ISIL militants attacked the Syrian regime's main supply route between the cities of Damascus and Aleppo.⁵
 - On February 23, suspected Russian airstrikes targeted one of the last remaining roads connecting opposition-held areas in the city of Aleppo to western rural and opposition-held areas in Idlib Governorate. Pro-regime forces also targeted ISIL and Islamist-held areas south and east of the city of Aleppo.⁶
 - On February 26, "increased" Russian airstrikes were reported in Aleppo Governorate ahead of the cessation of hostilities.⁷
 - On February 28, airstrikes of unknown origin struck the towns and villages of Andan, Dar Ta'izzah, Hreitan, Kfar Hamra, Ma'aret al-Arteek, and Qabtan al-Jabal.⁸
 - On February 29, SARG forces regained control of a "key road" to the city of Aleppo following the capture of the ISIL-held town of Khanaser.⁹
2. Damascus Governorate:
 - On February 21, four suicide attacks in the district of Sayyida Zainab killed at least 83 people. ISIL later claimed responsibility for the attack.¹⁰
 - On February 24, the Syrian army announced that it would exclude the suburb of Daraya in the upcoming 'cessation of hostilities' on the grounds that members of Al-Nusra Front are operating in the area.¹¹
 - On February 26, local Syrian activist groups reported increased airstrikes on the suburbs of Daraya and Eastern Ghouta.¹²

² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-18/337904-500-rebels-cross-turkish-border-towards-syrian-town-of-azaz-observatory.ashx> ; <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUKKCN0VR0RH>

³ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-19/338165-kurdish-led-forces-push-back-isis-in-northeast-syria-activists.ashx>

⁴ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-20/338347-syrian-army-allies-advance-against-isis-in-eastern-aleppo.ashx>

⁵ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-22/338537-in-syria-heavy-fighting-cuts-off-road-to-city-off-aleppo.ashx>

⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-airstrikes-idUSKCN0VW008>

⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35667082>

⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-strikes-idUSKCN0W1067>

⁹ <http://af.reuters.com/article/idAFKCN0W20SZ>

¹⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35628815> ; <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=44386> ; <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.704572>

¹¹ <http://news.yahoo.com/syria-army-excludes-rebel-town-near-capital-truce-164855049.html>

¹² <http://www.buzzfeed.com/borzoudaragahi/isis-is-nowhere-near-this-city-but-syrian-regime-keeps-bombi> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-26/339330-intense-russian-strikes-on->

3. Homs Governorate:
 - On February 21, two car bombings in the predominantly-Alawite neighborhood of Zahra, in the city of Homs, killed at least 64 people.¹³
 - On February 26, increased Russian airstrikes were reported in northern Homs Governorate ahead of the cessation of hostilities.¹⁴
4. Lattakia Governorate:
 - On February 18, Syrian state media reported that pro-regime forces had retaken the opposition held northern village of Kinsaba.¹⁵
 - On February 23, the Russian Defense Ministry stated they had established a “coordination center” at Hemeimeem Air Base to monitor the cessation of hostilities.¹⁶
 - On February 25, local sources reported Russian airstrikes in northern Lattakia Governorate during ongoing clashes between opposition and pro-regime forces.¹⁷
5. Hasakah Governorate:
 - During the reporting period, Syrian Democratic Forces, reportedly backed by American special advisors, captured the ISIL-held town of al-Shaddadi. According to US Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter, the capture of the town cuts off “the last major artery between Raqqa and Mosul.”¹⁸
 - On February 18, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that US-led coalition airstrikes in the ISIL-held town of al-Shaddadi, as well as three other villages, killed at least 15 civilians.¹⁹
 - On February 22, ISIL militants released 43 Assyrian Christian hostages who were abducted one year ago from the Assyrian village of Tel Ahmar.²⁰
6. Deir ez-Zor Governorate:
 - On February 24, the United Nations World Food Program announced that the organization’s attempted aid drops to civilians in besieged government-held areas of the city of Deir ez-Zor were unsuccessful.²¹
7. Hama Governorate:
 - On February 27, shortly after the cessation of hostilities began, two suicide bombings in the town of Salamiya and the village of Teeba killed six people.²²

[rebel-bastions-ahead-of-'cessation-of-hostilities'-activists.ashx](http://www.rebel-bastions-ahead-of-'cessation-of-hostilities'-activists.ashx) ; <http://www.newsweek.com/russia-syria-assad-isis-islamic-state-united-states-cessation-fighting-rebels-430541>

¹³ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=44386>

¹⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35667082>

¹⁵ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-18/337904-500-rebels-cross-turkish-border-towards-syrian-town-of-azaz-observatory.ashx>

¹⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/02/23/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria-the-latest.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.newsweek.com/russia-syria-assad-isis-islamic-state-united-states-cessation-fighting-rebels-430541>

¹⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-islamicstate-idUSKCN0VZ2PD> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/674433/cease-fire-to-begin-in-syria-oir-spokesman-says> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/01/world/middleeast/after-gains-against-isis-american-focus-is-turning-to-mosul.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-18/337932-us-led-strikes-kill-15-civilians-in-northeast-syria-activists.ashx>

²⁰ <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/isis.releases.43.assyrian.christian.hostages.in.syria/80394.htm> ; <http://www.newsweek.com/isis-releases-43-assyrian-hostages-syria-raqqa-ransom-428974> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35630196>

²¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35654483> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35658287>

8. Raqqa Governorate:

- On February 27, ISIL militants attacked the Kurdish-held areas of Tal Abyad and Suluk but were forced out after 70 of their fighters were killed.²³

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, Raqqa, and Tel Abyad.²⁴
- During the reporting period, Russian airstrikes targeted areas within Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, Hama, and Lattakia Governorates. Airstrikes continued in these areas after the cessation of hostilities was enacted.²⁵
- During the reporting period, aid convoys continued to deliver and attempt to deliver humanitarian aid to several areas across Syria, including the opposition-held areas of Madaya, Zabadani, Kafr Batna, and Muadhmiya near Damascus and the pro-regime villages of Foah and Kefraya in Idlib Governorate.²⁶
- On February 22, the US and Russia settled on a “draft agreement on the cessation of hostilities” to take place between the Syrian government and opposition groups. According to the draft, all groups must sign the agreement by “midday on Friday, February 26,” and end hostilities by midnight on Saturday, February 27. Al-Nusra Front and ISIL are not included as part of the cessation of hostilities.²⁷
- On February 23, the Syrian government and the High Negotiations Committee accepted the 'cessation of hostilities' terms proposed by the US and Russia.²⁸
- On February 27, the “cessation of hostilities” officially began in Syria. As of March 1 the cessation of hostilities had been largely upheld; however, local and international sources have reported several dozen airstrikes as well as clashes between armed groups.²⁹

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

1. Al Anbar Governorate:

- On February 17, ISIL militants shot down an Iraqi Army helicopter near the city of Amriyah al-Fallujah, killing at least one person.³⁰
- On February 18, airstrikes on the ISIL-held towns of Hit and Rutbah killed at least 24 civilians. An ISIL suicide car bomber detonated near Iraqi Army and Shia Popular Mobilization Front forces in al-Subaihaat village, east of the city of Ramadi, killing 20 members of the groups. In the city of Haditha, ISIL militants killed at least 13 Sunni tribal fighters north of the city before the attack was repelled by the tribal fighters.³¹

²² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-27/339500-car-bomb-attack-kills-two-in-syrias-hama-province.ashx>

²³ http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_SYRIA?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

²⁴ See: “US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq”. *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [656793](#), [657686](#), [658977](#), [669101](#), [670091](#), [671220](#), [671968](#), [672884](#), [673982](#), [674705](#), [674820](#), [681601](#), [683137](#)

²⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-opposition-idUSKCN0W4134>

²⁶ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/202934-u-n-aid-convoys-head-to-two-syrian-besieged-towns> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35683931>

²⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/deal-reached-cease-hostilities-syria-160222150923772.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-draft-idUSKCN0VV1NJ>

²⁸ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35639970>

²⁹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35674908>

³⁰ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/202433>

³¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/civilians-killed-air-strikes-iraq-anbar-160218131347042.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-18->

- On February 19, Sunni tribal fighters attacked ISIL militants in the city of Fallujah, destroying an ISIL building used by the group's morality police.³²
- On February 20, Sunni tribal fighters clashed with ISIL militants in the city of Fallujah in the northwest district of Al-Jolan and the central district of Nazal.³³
- On February 21, ISIL militants detained up to 180 local residents in the city of Fallujah, following an uprising of Sunni tribesmen. The tribesmen reportedly "withdrew from the clashes [with ISIL militants]...fearing for the fate of the detainees."³⁴
- On February 21, ISIL militants detonated seven car bombs targeting Iraqi security forces in the village of Albu Duayij, south of the city of Fallujah.³⁵
- On February 23, Sunni tribal fighters clashed with ISIL militants in the ISIL-held district of Hit, west of Ramadi.³⁶
- On February 25, Iraqi security forces recaptured the ISIL-held village of Albu Daij, north of Fallujah.³⁷
- On February 28, an Iraqi emergency police commander issued a warning that civilians in the area had to leave the ISIL-held district of Hit within 48 hours, "in preparation for an upcoming attack."³⁸
- On February 29, ISIL militants carried out four suicide-bombing attacks against an Iraqi military headquarters in the town of Haditha, killing an Iraqi army general and nine other soldiers.³⁹

2. Baghdad Governorate:

- On February 25, two ISIL suicide-bombing attacks struck a Shia mosque in the Baghdad neighborhood of Shulaa, killing at least 15 people and wounding 50 more.⁴⁰
- On February 26, more than 100,000 supporters of influential Shia cleric, Moqtada al-Sadr, massed in Baghdad's Tahrir Square where al-Sadr delivered a speech criticizing PM Haider Al-Abadi's government and the absence of promised reforms.⁴¹
- On February 28, ISIL militants attacked the area of Abu Ghraib, capturing two positions, burning a customs building, and killing at least 24 Iraqi security forces.

[22.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/civilians-killed-air-strikes-iraq-anbar-160218131347042.html) ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/civilians-killed-air-strikes-iraq-anbar-160218131347042.html>

³² https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/sunni-tribesmen-clash-with-islamic-state-in-fallujah-as-resentment-boils/2016/02/19/2a21ce95-e7c0-4a3c-89e8-f02005d9400b_story.html ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35616264> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-19/338174-iraq-tribesmen-clash-with-extremists-inside-isis-held-fallujah.ashx> ; <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-reasserts-control-over-fallujah-1456073090>

³³ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Feb-20/338317-iraq-tribesmen-battle-isis-inside-fallujah-for-second-day.ashx>

³⁴ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-reasserts-control-over-fallujah-1456073090> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/02/21/Clashes-in-ISIS-held-Iraq-s-Fallujah-halt-after-residents-seized.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-18-22.html>

³⁵ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-18-22.html>

³⁶ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-22-29.html>

³⁷ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-22-29.html>

³⁸ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-22-29.html>

³⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/03/01/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-haditha-idUSKCN0W342P> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35695683>

⁴⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0VY2AH>

⁴¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2016/02/26/world/middleeast/26reuters-mideast-crisis-iraq-protests.html> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/27/world/middleeast/moktada-al-sadr-iraq.html>

- On February 28, two ISIL suicide bombings struck Mredi market in the Shia district of Sadr City, killing 78 people and wounding more than 100 more. Two other attacks in and around Baghdad killed seven people and wounded ten more.⁴²
 - On March 1, sporadic attacks by unknown assailants in and around Baghdad killed at least 13 people and wounded 31 more.⁴³
3. Ninawa Governorate:
- On February 18, the Iraqi activist group Mosul Eye released a special report stating that ISIL militants in the city of Mosul are now “harvesting organs of prisoners” to be used as transplants for their fighters or to be sold.⁴⁴
 - On February 22, it was reported that ISIL militants in the city of Mosul have begun “manipulating the exchange rate” between the US dollar and Iraqi dinar to siphon more money from the local population.⁴⁵
 - On February 22, it was reported that Kurdish Peshmerga forces had deployed to the northern village of Hassan Jilad and to the northwest village of Sharikhan, where they will reportedly be ‘inactive’ until operations begin to recapture Mosul from ISIL.⁴⁶
 - On February 24, ISIL militants reportedly destroyed 20 houses and arrested an unknown number of people in the Mosul sub-districts of al-Shura and al-Qayyara.⁴⁷
 - On February 25, it was reported that between 1,000 and 2,000 Turkish forces have had an ongoing presence in northern Iraq, where they have been covertly fighting ISIL militants.⁴⁸
 - On February 26, the Kurdish Regional Government Security Council reported that Peshmerga fighters were recovering from a suspected chemical attack carried out by ISIL militants in Sinjar.⁴⁹
 - On February 28, Iraqi PM Haider Al-Abadi issued a statement calling for residents of Mosul “to move six kilometers away from the Tigris River.” The US Embassy in Baghdad issued its own warning on February 29, calling for people to evacuate the “Tigris flood plain area.”⁵⁰
4. Diyala Governorate:
- On February 22, a targeted car bombing in the city of Baquba killed a senior Diyala police chief.⁵¹

⁴² <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKCN0W10EL> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-22-29.html> ; <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Mar-02/340076-baghdad-attacks-signal-iraqi-forces-stretched-thin-against-daesh.ashx>

⁴³ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/03/01/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>

⁴⁴ <https://mosuleye.wordpress.com/2016/02/18/mosul-eye-special-report-isil-organ-trade-2016contribution-of-mosulyoon/>

⁴⁵ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-iraq-mosul-idUKKCNOVV1G0>

⁴⁶ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-18-22.html>

⁴⁷ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-22-29.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/12172521/Turkish-troops-taking-on-Isil-in-secret-battle-in-Iraq.html>

⁴⁹ <http://www.voanews.com/content/is-chemical-weapons/3211453.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-kurds-chemicalweapons-idUSKCN0VZ23B>

⁵⁰ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-22-29.html> ; <http://time.com/4242563/iraq-u-s-citizens-mosul-dam-collapse-isis/>

⁵¹ <http://aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/iraq-five-including-police-chief-killed-in-daesh-attacks-/525254>

- On February 29, an ISIL suicide bomber attacked the funeral of a Shia militia member in the city of Muqdadiya, killing at least 40 people, including six Shia militia commanders, and wounding 55 more.⁵²
- 5. Salah ad Din:
 - On March 1, Iraqi security forces, backed by US-led coalition airstrikes, launched an attempt to retake the city of Samarra. East of the city a suicide car bomber attacked a convoy of Shia militia fighters, killing four.⁵³
- 6. Dahuk Governorate:
 - On February 18, Turkey conducted airstrikes on Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) bases in the Haftanin region one day after a suicide car bombing attack in Ankara. Though the PKK and the YPG were originally blamed, the attack was later claimed by the Turkish Kurdish group, Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK).⁵⁴
- 7. Erbil Governorate:
 - On February 17, it was reported that US troops were creating a “train-advise-and-assist team” at the Ninawa Operations Center in the district of Makhmour, where around 1,000 Iraqi soldiers from the army’s 15th Division recently arrived.⁵⁵

Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Albu Hayat, Baghdadi, Fallujah, Habbaniyah, Hit, Huwayjah, Kirkuk, Kisik, Makhmour, Mosul, Qaim, Qayyarah, Ramadi, Sinjar, Sultan Abdullah, Tal Afar, and Tikrit.⁵⁶
- On February 18, the Shia militia known as the Popular Mobilization Front announced that it was cutting 30 percent of its fighters due to “financial constraints.”⁵⁷
- On February 19, protests against corruption in the government occurred in Baghdad and in southern governorates.⁵⁸
- On February 26, more protests against corruption in the government occurred in Baghdad and in southern governorates.⁵⁹
- On February 29, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter confirmed that the US Army’s elite Delta Force had begun operations against ISIL in Iraq.⁶⁰

⁵² <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/02/29/world/middleeast/ap-ml-islamic-state.html> ; <http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUKKCNOW21UA> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-22-29.html>

⁵³ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Mar-01/339931-iraqi-forces-launch-operation-to-retake-area-north-of-baghdad.ashx> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBNOLX1QL20150302>

⁵⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-blast-idUSKCN0VQ25S> ; <http://presstv.ir/Detail/2016/02/18/450979/Turkey-airstrikes-PKK-positions-Haftanin-Iraq> ; <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/19/middleeast/turkey-ankara-attack/>

⁵⁵ <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/2016/02/17/80505318/> ; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/02/17/pentagon-iraqi-units-move-into-kurdistan-in-prep-for-battle-of-mosul/> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-18-22.html>

⁵⁶ See: “US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq”. *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [656793](#), [657686](#), [658977](#), [669101](#), [670091](#), [671220](#), [671968](#), [672884](#), [673982](#), [674705](#), [674820](#), [681601](#), [683137](#)

⁵⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/02/18/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>

⁵⁸ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-18-22.html>

⁵⁹ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/02/iraq-situation-report-february-22-29.html>

⁶⁰ <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/29/politics/pentagon-army-target-isis-iraq/index.html>

- On March 1, American defense officials confirmed that an elite American Special Operations force had captured a “significant” ISIL operative in Iraq. Few details were released, and the name of the captive is not yet known.⁶¹

Other significant political and military events during the reporting period:

- On February 17, US officials announced that US-led coalition airstrikes have destroyed upwards of \$500 million of ISIL’s cash reserves.⁶²
- On February 18, George Washington University’s Program on Extremism released a report stating that ISIL’s “English-language reach on Twitter has stalled in recent months” as Twitter has suspended the accounts of users affiliated with ISIL.⁶³

⁶¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/02/world/middleeast/us-captures-isis-operative-ushering-in-tricky-phase.html>

⁶² <http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-airstrikes-destroy-500-million-isis-cash-reserves/story>

⁶³ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-twitter-idUKKCN0VR0EA>

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 16-0029

Report Date: February 17, 2016

Site Name: Al Souq Mosque (مسجد السوق)

Date of Incident: February 16, 2016

Location: Al Souq Market, Al Janoubi Neighborhood, Palmyra City, Homs Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Missiles strikes cause partial destruction of mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On January 16, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that SARG airstrikes struck the Al Souq Market in the Al Janoubi neighborhood in the city of Palmyra, causing partial destruction of the mosque and rendering the building inoperable.⁶⁴ No photographs of the damage were available at the time of publication.

Additionally, SARG and Russian military activity forces recently damaged the archaeological area of Palmyra (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0026** in **Weekly Report 79-80**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

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

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/17/18578/>

⁶⁴ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/17/18578/>

SHI 16-0030

Report Date: February 21, 2016; February 22, 2016

Site Name: Muhi al-Din bin Arabi Mosque (الدين بن عربي مسجد محيي); al-Ma'arouf Mosque (جامع معروف)

Date of Incident: February 20, 2016; February 22, 2016

Location: Muhi al-Din bin Arabi Mosque: Maysar neighborhood, Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria; al-Ma'arouf Mosque: al-Sheikh Maqsud neighborhood, Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosques

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Russian warplanes allegedly fired missiles on Muhi al-Din bin Arabi Mosque; armed opposition activity damaged the al-Ma'arouf Mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On February 21, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that on February 20, 2016 suspected Russian warplanes fired missiles on Muhi al-Din bin Arabi Mosque in Al Maysar neighborhood in Aleppo, damaging the mosque severely.⁶⁵

On February 22, 2016 SNHR reported that on February 21, 2016 shelling partially destroyed the minaret of al-Ma'arouf Mosque, located in the al-Sheikh Maqsud neighborhood. The shelling reportedly came from artillery located in armed opposition territory in Aleppo.⁶⁶ No photographs of the damage to either mosque were available at the time of publication.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Muhi al-Din bin Arabi Mosque, al-Sheikh Maqsud Mosque, and other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/21/18715/>
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/22/18764/>

⁶⁵ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/21/18715/>

⁶⁶ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/22/18764/>

SHI 16-0031

Report Date: February 21, 2016

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

Date of Incident: February 21, 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. Shia Muslims believe the shrine holds the remains of Sayyida Zeinab and that it is thus the “holiest” Shia shrine in Syria.⁶⁷ The shrine is located six miles southeast of Damascus in an area known as Sayyida Zeinab. It became a place of “mass pilgrimage” for Shia Muslims in the 1980s and 1990s “when a large shrine was built around the tomb with Iranian support.”⁶⁸ According to N.C. 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.”⁶⁹ During the ongoing conflict in Syria, the Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah justified the presence of its fighters in Syria by claiming the shrine required Hezbollah protection. The shrine has also been a site popular with pro-regime supporters.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹ The Shia militia known as the Abu Fadl al-Abbas brigade was formed to defend the shrine at the beginning of the Syrian conflict.⁷²

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

Incident Summary: Four suicide bombings occurred near the shrine, no damage reported.

Incident Source and Description: On February 21, 2016 four suicide bombers attacked the district of Sayyida Zeinab. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) has put the death toll as high as 120, the majority being civilians. The attacks reportedly occurred on al-Tin Street near al-Sadr hospital, just half of a mile away from the Sayyida Zeinab shrine.⁷³ No photographs of the damage were available at the time of publication.

The Sayyida Zeinab Shrine has been a target of attacks since 2012. In November 2012, two bombs detonated east of the shrine killed at least six people.⁷⁴ In February 2015, two suicide attackers

⁶⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35454359> ; <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2013/06/12/syria-inventing-religious-war/>

⁶⁸ <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2013/06/12/syria-inventing-religious-war/>

⁶⁹ Brockman, N.C. 2011. *Encyclopedia of Sacred Places* 2nd Edition ABC-CLIO. pp. 478

⁷⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/video/world/middleeast/10000002814759/syria8217s-shrine-of-sayeda-zeinab.html>

⁷¹ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/starvation-spreads-ahead-of-syria-talks-1454029302>

⁷² <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2013/06/12/syria-inventing-religious-war/>

⁷³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35628815> ;

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=44386> ; <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.704572>

⁷⁴ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121031143513140163.html>

targeted the shrine, killing four people and wounding 13 more at a nearby checkpoint.⁷⁵ On January 31, 2016 a car bomb and two suicide bombers targeted a bus station and military headquarters near the shrine. ISIL took responsibility for the attack. At least 70 people were killed, including pro-regime fighters. Sources state that the blasts occurred several hundred meters from the shrine and the shrine reportedly was not damaged (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0017** in **Weekly Report 77-78**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Sayyida Zeinab Shrine and other heritage sites located in regions subject to attacks by ISIL.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35628815>

Haaretz: <http://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.704572>

SOHR: <http://www.syriahr.com/en/?p=44386>

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.

⁷⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/10/20121031143513140163.html>

SHI 16-0032

Report Date: March 2, 2015

Site Names:

- Church of the Virgin Mary (كنيسة السيدة العذراء), Tel Nasri (تل نصري)
- Mar Bisho Church (كنيسة مار بيشوع), Tel Shamiram (تل شميرام)
- Mar Giorgis Church (كنيسة مار كيوركيس), Tel Maghas (تل مغاص)
- Mar Cyriacus Church (كنيسة القديس مار قرياقس), Tel Meghada (تل مخاضة)
- Mar Shimon Church (كنيسة مار شمعون), Abu Tina (ابو تينة)
- Mar Sleewa Church (كنيسة مار صليوا), Tel Talaa (تل طلعة)
- Mar Giorgis Church (كنيسة مار كيوركيس), Qabr Shamiya (قبر شامية)
- Mar Raban Pithon Church (كنيسة رين بثيون), Tel Hormiz (تل هرمز)
- Mar Odisho Church (كنيسة القديس مار اوديشو), Tel Tal (تل طال)
- Mar Yunan Church (كنيسة مار يونان), Tel Jazira (تل جزيرة)
- Mar Hanania Church (كنيسة القديس مار خنانيا), Tel Sakra (تل سكرة)
- Mar Zaia Church (كنيسة مار زيا), Tel Goran (تل كوران)
- Mar Sawa Church (كنيسة مار ساوا), Tel Jadiya (تل جدايا)
- Monastery of the Virgin Mary (دير السيدة العذراء), Tel Wardiyat (تل ورديات)
- Mar Giorgis Church (كنيسة مار كيوركيس), Tel Baz (تل باز)
- Mar Cyriacus and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church (كنيسة مار قرياقس و مار شمعون برصباعي), Tel Balua (تل بالوعة)
- Mar Shimon Church (كنيسة مار شمعون القديمة), Tel Balua (تل بالوعة)
- Mar Shalita Church (كنيسة مار شليطا), Tel Hafian (تل حفيان)
- Mar Shimon Prusbai Church (كنيسة مار شمعون برصباعي), Tel Kharita (تل خريطة)

Date of Incident: Ongoing since February 23, 2015; Church of the Virgin Mary - April 5, 2015

Location: Villages in Tel Tamr Region, Hasakah Governorate

Site Description: The churches are located in several of the 35 Assyrian Christian villages that surround the Khabur River, in northeastern Hasakah Governorate. The 35 villages lie between the cities of Hasakah and Ras al-Ain.⁷⁶ Assyrians first began inhabiting the villages surrounding the Khabur River in 1933, following the massacre of Assyrians by Iraqi nationalists in Iraq.⁷⁷

According to Fernandez, “the Khabur settlements... probably represent the densest concentration of Assyrians anywhere in the world.” Today other populations, including Kurdish and Arab bedouins, also live in the villages.⁷⁸

Assyrian Christians are one of the world’s oldest Christian communities. Many still speak a modern version of the ancient Aramaic language. Assyrians in Syria and Iraq trace their origins to the Assyrian Empire.⁷⁹ Assyrians were persecuted by both the Ottoman Empire and Iraqi Nationals in

⁷⁶ Fernandez 1998: 35

⁷⁷ <http://www.aina.org/guesteds/20150305152550.htm>

⁷⁸ Fernandez 1998: 34

⁷⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/27/world/middleeast/more-assyrian-christians-captured-as-isis-attacks-villages-in-syria.html>

1918 and 1933 respectively, forcing the population to relocate several times before many settled along the Khabur River.⁸⁰

In order to defend themselves amidst the ongoing conflict in Syria, Assyrians established their own military council, known as the Syriac Military Council, in January 2014. The Council is headquartered in the city of al-Malikiyah.⁸¹ The group has their own army that often operates alongside the Kurdish Peshmerga and elements of the Free Syrian Army.⁸² Assyrian Security Forces include: the Assyrian Christian Defense Force, the Gozarto Protection Force, and a police force operating in the city of Qamishli known as the Sootoro.⁸³

Site Date:

- All churches likely built after 1933.
 - Church of the Virgin Mary Church, Tel Nasri: Built 1934
 - Mar Shalita Church, Tel Hafian: Built 1991⁸⁴

Incident Summary: Targeted destruction of Assyrian Christian churches in Hasakah Governorate by ISIL.

Incident Source and Description: On February 23, 2016 ISIL militants released 43 Assyrian hostages who had been abducted the previous year from the Assyrian village of Tel Ahmar.⁸⁵ The hostages were the last to be freed after around 230 Assyrians were kidnapped in February 2015 from the Assyrian villages surrounding the Khabur River.⁸⁶

According to The Assyrian International News Agency (AINA), on February 23, 2015 ISIL militants began an attack on several Assyrian villages surrounding the Khabur River. In the following months the group destroyed 11 churches and villages.⁸⁷ Earlier that month, ISIL militants had demanded that Assyrians living in the villages along the Khabur River remove their crosses and pay the religious tax known as 'jizya', which is traditionally paid in gold.⁸⁸

On March 7, 2015 AINA reported that ISIL militants had "crossed to the northern side of the Khabur River" in the morning and attacked several villages. AINA reported heavy shelling in the area by ISIL militants as well as clashes occurring between ISIL militants and forces made up of Kurdish

⁸⁰ <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/8-things-didnt-know-assyrian-christians/> ; <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/who.are.the.assyrian.christians/48789.htm>

⁸¹ <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/427304/syria-christian-militia-takes-isis-jordan-allott>

⁸² <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/427304/syria-christian-militia-takes-isis-jordan-allott>

⁸³ <https://philosproject.org/assyrian-christians-life-inside-a-war-torn-nation/>

⁸⁴ <http://www.shlama.be/shlama/content/view/290/243/>

⁸⁵ <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/isis.releases.43.assyrian.christian.hostages.in.syria/80394.htm> ; <http://www.newsweek.com/isis-releases-43-assyrian-hostages-syria-raqqa-ransom-428974> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35630196>

⁸⁶ <http://time.com/4232487/isis-release-christians-ransom/>

⁸⁷ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150316182816.htm> ; <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/56508>

[8-isis-blows-up-assyrian-church-on-easter](http://www.aina.org/news/20150223174904.htm) ; <http://www.aina.org/news/20150223174904.htm> ; <http://www.aina.org/news/20151212211531.htm> ; <http://www.aina.org/guesteds/20150305152550.htm> ; <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/kidnap>

[ped.assyrian.christians.four.more.hostages.released.by.islamic.state/49290.htm](http://www.christiantoday.com/article/kidnap)

⁸⁸ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/27/world/middleeast/more-assyrian-christians-captured-as-isis-attacks-villages-in-syria.html>

and Assyrian fighters.⁸⁹ ISIL militants continued to hold the villages surrounding the Khabur River for several months, during which time additional damage and destruction occurred at several churches in the area.

According to Father Emanuel Yougkhana, the head of the Christian Aid Program in Northern Iraq, all of the villages taken by ISIL along the Khabur River were liberated by Kurdish forces on May 22, 2015.⁹⁰ However, clashes continued to occur frequently in Hasakah Governorate between ISIL militants, the Syrian Regime, and Kurdish forces.

On May 30, 2015 ISIL launched another assault on the city of Hasakah, damaging a local church.⁹¹ According to the AINA, “attacks on Christians in Syria began almost immediately after the Syrian civil war began. The attacks have targeted villages, churches monasteries and the clergy, and have been perpetrated by Al-Qaeda, The Al-Nusra Front, ISIS, and other Muslim groups.”⁹²

Prior to the February 2015 attack, Al-Nusra Front and other Syrian “insurgents” had entered the villages along the Khabur River and looted Christian artifacts.⁹³ According to the AINA, the first “persecution” of Assyrian Christians in the villages began in September 2014 when residents were first ordered to remove crosses from the churches.⁹⁴

The following information concerns damage to specific sites:

- Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri— According to multiple media reports, ISIL militants planted explosives that leveled the Church of the Virgin Mary at 9:00 am on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015.⁹⁵ ISIL militants had briefly taken control of the village of Tel Nasri on March 7, 2015 and heavily shelled the area. It is unclear as to when and if ISIL had retaken the village of Tel Nasri prior to the destruction of the Church of the Virgin Mary.⁹⁶ The Church of the Virgin Mary was one of the three main churches in the village of Tel Nasri.⁹⁷ According to Fernandez: the church contained “one of the few relics” in the area, which was “a portion of the cloth of the robe of the Virgin Mary...[located] in a gold gilt reliquary.”⁹⁸ A journalist who visited Tel Nasri in 2015, described the state of the Church of the Virgin Mary. According to the report, ISIL militants had tried to demolish two churches in the village. The Church of the Virgin Mary, being the larger of the two, was left in a state of ruin. According to journalist Jordan Allot, “all that is left standing [of the church] are the large pillars that once held up its roof. The dome lay on its side, amid the ruins, with some church items scattered about... The walls of the church recreation center were bullet-pocked, used by (ISIL) fighters for target practice.”⁹⁹ The Church of the Virgin Mary had reportedly been struck

⁸⁹ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150307144915.htm>

⁹⁰ <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/assyrian.villages.taken.by.islamic.state.have.been.liberated/54455.htm>

⁹¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/isil-launches-offensive-syria-hasakeh-150530134454150.html>

⁹² <http://www.aina.org/news/20151212211531.htm>

⁹³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/27/world/middleeast/more-assyrian-christians-captured-as-isis-attacks-villages-in-syria.html>

⁹⁴ <http://www.aina.org/guesteds/20150305152550.htm>

⁹⁵ <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/565088-isis-blows-up-assyrian-church-on-easter> ; <http://sana.sy/en/?p=34933>

⁹⁶ <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/565088-isis-blows-up-assyrian-church-on-easter>

⁹⁷ <http://sana.sy/en/?p=34933>

⁹⁸ Fernandez 1998: 40

⁹⁹ <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/427304/syria-christian-militia-takes-isis-jordan-allot>

once before by SARG missiles on November 15, 2012. The church was reportedly destroyed in the attack, however it appears that the main church building was largely intact when it was intentionally destroyed by ISIL. Video footage shows destruction surrounding the Church of the Virgin Mary, including adjacent and neighboring buildings.¹⁰⁰

- Mar Bisho Church, Tel Shamiram — Tel Shamiram was one of the first villages attacked by ISIL militants in late February, 2015 and is the village where the majority of Assyrians abducted by ISIL were from.¹⁰¹ According to AINA, Mar Bisho Church in Tel Shamiram village was “completely leveled” by ISIL. Only the cross on the church remains standing.¹⁰² Additionally, on March 7, 2015 AINA reported that SARG warplanes had bombed ISIL positions in Tel Shamiram, causing unknown damage. On June 17, 2015 the Syriac Military Council released a video showing the village of Tel Shamiram after it had been liberated. The video shows extensive damage to the village as well as damage to Mar Bisho Church.¹⁰³ Photographs from local sources corroborate the leveling of Mar Bisho.
- Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas — According to AINA, on March 7, 2015 ISIL attacked and held the village of Tel Maghas for a brief period of time before it was recaptured by Kurdish and Assyrian fighters with the help of SARG airstrikes. During the attack, ISIL “heavily shelled” the area.¹⁰⁴ During the period when ISIL held Tel Maghas, Mar Giorgis Church was “ransacked by (ISIL), who burned the bibles and broke its cross.”¹⁰⁵ Photographs from local sources and video footage show damage to both religious texts and a cross in the church. However, damage to the interior of the church appears to be minimal. A video from local sources describes Mar Giorgis Church as having been the seventh church to be destroyed by ISIL.¹⁰⁶
- Mar Cyriacus Church, Tel Meghada — Photographs from local sources of Mar Cyriacus Church show minimal material damage, including what appears to be vandalism, to the interior of the church.
- Mar Shimon Church, Abu Tina — The village of Abu Tina was reportedly captured by ISIL militants in late February, 2015. It is likely that a short time after the capture of Abu Tina, Mar Shimon Church was destroyed. Photographs from local sources show extensive destruction to the structure of the church.
- Mar Sleewa Church, Tel Talaa — On December 13, 2015 AINA included Mar Sleewa Church on a list of churches that had been destroyed by ISIL (and possibly other groups), following the group’s initial attack on February 23, 2015.¹⁰⁷ According to AINA, Tel Talaa was one of the first villages attacked by ISIL.¹⁰⁸ Photographs from local sources show significant damage, possibly caused by explosives, to the church.

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.aina.org/news/20121114192057.htm>

¹⁰¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11431401/Isil-abducts-at-least-90-from-Christian-villages-in-Syria.html>

¹⁰² <http://www.aina.org/news/20151212211531.htm>

¹⁰³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuanevMWTNQ>

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150307144915.htm>

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150316182816.htm>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWkMZhdjpbs>

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.aina.org/news/20151212211531.htm>

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150223174904.htm>

- Mar Giorgis Church, Qabr Shamiya — According to AINA, Qabr Shamiya was one of the first villages attacked by ISIL on February 23, 2015.¹⁰⁹ According to ARA News, ISIL “bombed the ancient Assyrian church of Qabr Shamiya.”¹¹⁰ Photographs of a heavily damaged church titled “Mar Giorgis Church” by local sources emerged in June of 2015. However, it is unclear whether “Mar Giorgis Church” and the so-called “ancient Assyrian church” described by ARA News are one and the same.
- Mar Raban Pithon Church, Tel Hormiz — According to AINA, on January 30, 2015, ISIL militants entered the village of Tel Hormizd and forced local residents to “remove the cross from the church tower,” threatening to destroy the church if the cross was not removed.¹¹¹ According to the Syriac Military Council, ISIL militants had entered the village in two pickup trucks and ordered that the cross on the church be taken down.¹¹² On February 3, 2015 Assyrian forces recaptured Tel Hormiz from ISIL militants.
- Mar Odisho Church, Tel Tal — According to AINA, ISIL bombed Mar Odisho Church on April 28, 2015.¹¹³ In a photograph later released by local sources, the church appears to have been completely leveled.
- Mar Yunan Church, Tel Jazira — On December 13, 2015 AINA included Mar Yunan Church on a list of churches that had been destroyed by ISIL (and possibly other groups), following the group’s initial attack on February 23, 2015. Photographs from local sources show extensive destruction to the gate of the church. The extent of damage to the church building itself remains unknown.¹¹⁴
- Mar Hanania Church, Tel Sakra — Photographs from local sources of Mar Hanania Church showing extensive fire damage to the interior of the church.¹¹⁵
- Mar Zaia Church, Tel Goran — Photographs from local sources show the removal of crosses at Mar Zaia Church as well as some exterior damage. Graffiti appears to be present on the walls of the church near the main door.
- Mar Sawa, Tel Jadiya — According to CrossMap, Mar Sawa Church was targeted by ISIL militants “who burned (b)ibles in the church and broke its cross.”¹¹⁶ Photographs from local sources show what appear to be bullet holes on the exterior walls of the church, while interior photographs show material damage. The structure of the building appears to be largely undamaged overall.
- Monastery of the Virgin Mary, Tel Wardiyat — According to a local media report, ISIL militants attempted to destroy the Monastery of the Virgin Mary in the village of Tel

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150223174904.htm>

¹¹⁰ <http://aranews.net/2015/02/isis-bombs-assyrian-church-abduct-and-displace-hundreds-christians-northern-syria/>

¹¹¹ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150131183427.htm>

¹¹² <http://www.syriacnews.com/syriac-military-took-control-of-tel-hormizd-from-isis/>

¹¹³ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150429141847.htm>

¹¹⁴ <http://www.aina.org/news/20151212211531.htm>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/Halmon.net>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.crossmap.com/news/islamic-state-destroys-assyrian-churches-hostages-still-being-held-17196/print>

Wardiyat, but were deterred by the strength of the walls surrounding the church.¹¹⁷ According to Fernandez, the Monastery of the Virgin Mary was made of “massive yellow stone walls” and was a large building project that comprised “a new Syrian Orthodox church/monastery/conference center.”¹¹⁸

- Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz — Photographs from local sources show the complete leveling of Mar Giorgis Church. The photographs also show significant damage to what is possibly a second church building adjacent or connected to the chapel of the church.
- Mar Cyriacus and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua — According to AINA, Tel Balua was one of the first villages attacked by ISIL.¹¹⁹ Photographs from local sources show significant damage, possibly caused by a fire, to the interior of the church. Vandalism and possibly theft are also clear in the images. The building structure itself remains standing and the exterior walls around the church are largely unharmed.
- Mar Shimon Church, Tel Balua — On December 13, 2015 AINA included Mar Yunan Church on a list of churches that had been destroyed by ISIL (and possibly other groups), following the group’s initial attack on February 23, 2015.¹²⁰ Photographs from local sources show extensive fire damage to the interior of the church as well as vandalism and theft. The building structure itself remains standing.
- Mar Shalita Church, Tel Hafian — On March 7, 2015 AINA reported that ISIL militants shelled Tel Hafian.¹²¹ Photographs from local sources show extensive damage to Mar Shalita.
- Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Kharita — Photographs from local sources show damage to the interior of Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, including vandalism and possible theft. The altar has also been vandalized, with any religious artifacts being removed or destroyed.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives, gunfire/light weaponry, intentional destruction

- Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri: Military activity: gunfire/light weaponry, intentional destruction
- Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas: Military Activity: intentional destruction
- Mar Pithew Church, Tel Hormiz: Performative Destruction
- Mar Hanania Church, Tel Sakra: Military activity: intentional destruction

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI remains particularly concerned with the state of Assyrian Christian sites along the Khabur River. As military actions by mainly Kurdish forces are ongoing to recapture all of Hasakah Governorate from ISIL militants, ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any destruction of or damage to cultural heritage sites.

¹¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWkMZhdjpbs>

¹¹⁸ Fernandez 1998: 40

¹¹⁹ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150223174904.htm>

¹²⁰ <http://www.aina.org/news/20151212211531.htm>

¹²¹ <http://www.aina.org/news/20150307144915.htm>

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Church of the Virgin Mary prior to destruction, Tel Nasri (NOW; Posted June 4, 2015)



Surrounding damage to Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (AINA; Posted November 15, 2012)



Damage to Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (AINA; Posted November 15, 2012)



Damage to Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (Middle East Concern; Posted May 28, 2015)



Damage to Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (Reuters; March 27, 2015)



A collapsed tower of the Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (Halmon.net; Posted May 24, 2015)



Damage to the Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (Halmon.net; Posted May 24, 2015)



Damage to the Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (Halmon.net; Posted May 24, 2015)



Damage to the Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (Halmon.net; Posted May 24, 2015)



Damage to the interior of the Church of the Virgin Mary, Tel Nasri (Jordan Allot, National Review; November 19, 2015)



Mar Bisho Church, Tel Shamiram (Google Images; Posted June 18, 2013)



Mar Bisho Church, Tel Shamiram (Google Images; Posted June 18, 2013)



Smoke rising from the attack on Mar Bisho Church, Tel Shamiram (AINA; February 23, 2015)



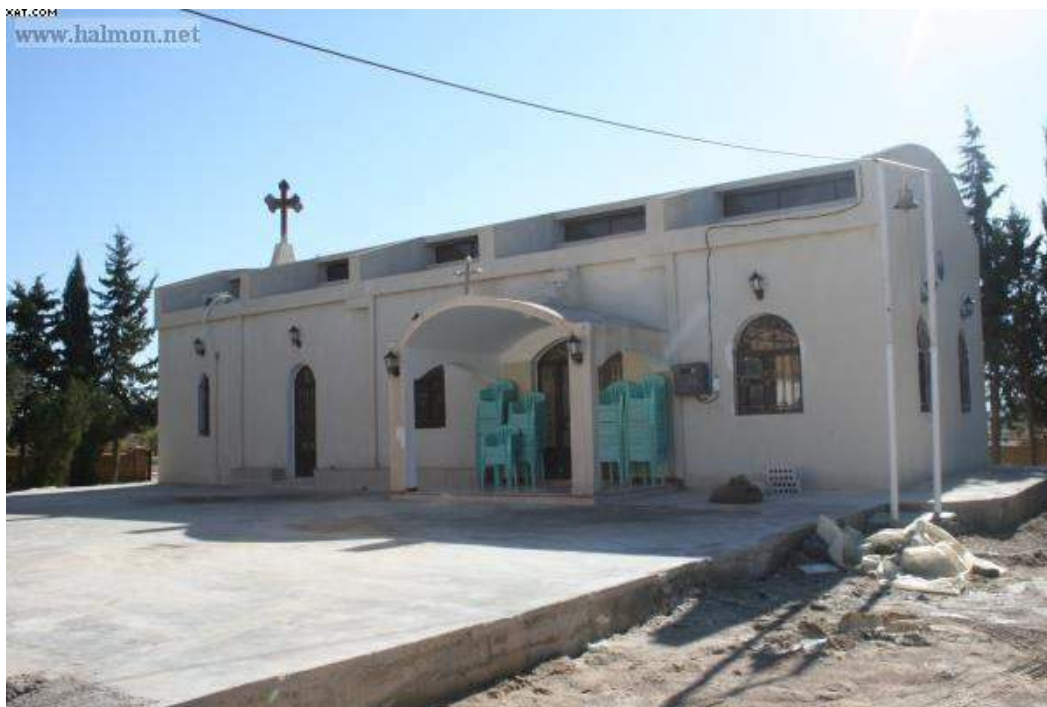
Destruction of Mar Bisho Church, Tel Shamiram (Halmon.net; Posted May 24, 2015)



Close up of damage to Mar Bisho Church, Tel Shamiram (AINA; December 13, 2015)



Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (Google Images; Posted May 10, 2012)



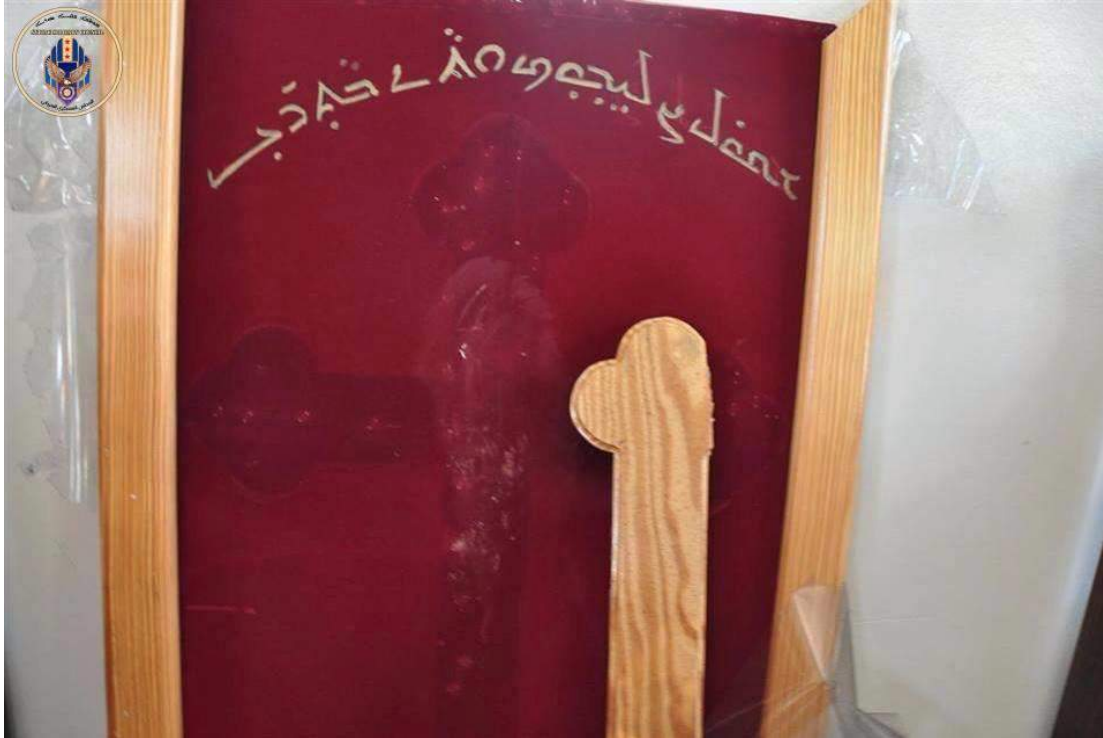
Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (Google Images; Posted May 10, 2012)



Interior of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas, with Assyrian fighters present (AINA; March 16, 2015)



Material damage inside Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (AINA; March 16, 2015)



Damage to a cross at Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (AINA; March 16, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (AINA; March 16, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (Halmon.net; Posted May 29, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (Halmon.net; Posted May 29, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (Halmon.net; Posted May 29, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Maghas (Halmon.net; Posted May 29, 2015)



Mar Cyriacus Church, Tel Meghada (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 27, 2012)



Damage to the interior of Mar Cyriacus Church, Tel Meghada (Halmon.net; Posted June 11, 2015)



Mar Shimon Church, Abu Tina (AINA; March 20, 2015)



Mar Shimon Church, Abu Tina (Reuters; February 25, 2015)



Damage to Mar Shimon Church, Abu Tina (The Stream; January 16, 2016)



Mar Sleewa Church, Tel Talaa (Halmon.net; Posted April 15, 2015)



Extensive damage to Mar Sleewa Church, Tel Talaa (Halmon.net; Posted April 15, 2015)



Mar Giorgis Church, Qabr Shamiya (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted April 15, 2012)



Damage to Mar Giorgis Church, Qabr Shamiya (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Removal of the cross at Mar Raban Pithon Church, Tel Hormiz (AINA; January 31, 2015)



Assyrian fighters remount the cross on Mar Raban Pithon Church, Tel Hormiz (AINA; February 3, 2015)



Mar Odisho Church, Tel Tal (Halmon.net; Posted April 14, 2015)



Mar Odisho Church, Tel Tal (Halmon.net; Posted August 7, 2014)



Mar Odisho Church, Tel Tal (Halmon.net; Posted August 7, 2014)



Mar Odisho Church, Tel Tal (Halmon.net; Posted August 7, 2014)



Mar Odisho Church, Tel Tal (Halmon.net; Posted August 7, 2014)



Mar Odisho Church, Tel Tal (Halmon.net; Posted June 1, 2015)



Mar Yunan Church, Tel Jazira (Halmon.net; Posted April 14, 2015)



Gate of Mar Yunan Church, Tel Jazira (Halmon.net; Posted June 23, 2015)



Destruction of the gate of Mar Yunan Church, Tel Jazira (Halmon.net; Posted June 23, 2015)



Mar Haneina Church, Tel Sakra (Halmon.net; Posted April 14, 2015)



Damage to Mar Haneina Church, Tel Sakra (Halmon.net; Posted May 29, 2015)



Mar Zaia Church, Tel Goran (Halmon.net; Posted April 15, 2015)



Damage to Mar Zaia Church, Tel Goran (Halmon.net; Poste June 13, 2015)



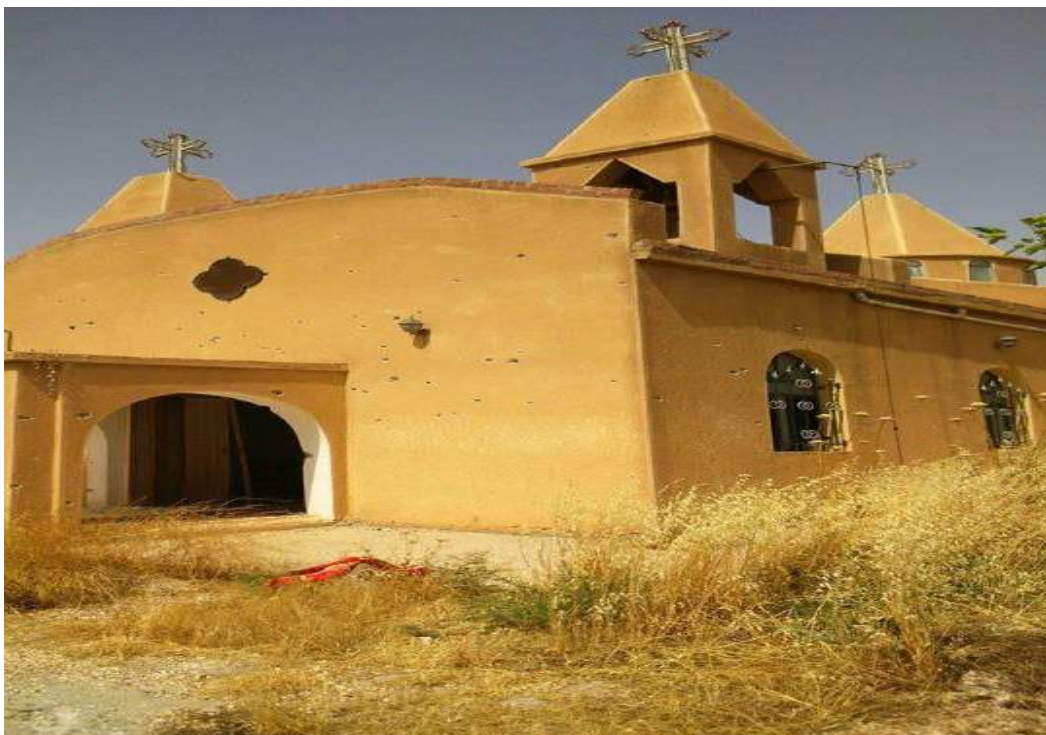
Interior of Mar Zaia Church, Tel Goran (Assyrian Khabour Villages; March 7, 2012)



Damage to the interior of Mar Zaia Church, Tel Goran (Halmon.net; Posted June 13, 2015)



Mar Sawa Church, Tel Jadiya (Halmon.net; Posed April 15, 2015)



Damage to Mar Sawa Church, Tel Jadiya (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Sawa Church, Tel Jadiya (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Sawa Church, Tel Jadiya (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Sawa Church, Tel Jadiya (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Sawa Church, Tel Jadiya (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Interior damage to Mar Sawa Church, Tel Jadiya (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Monastery of the Virgin Mary, Tel Wardiyat (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 26, 2011)



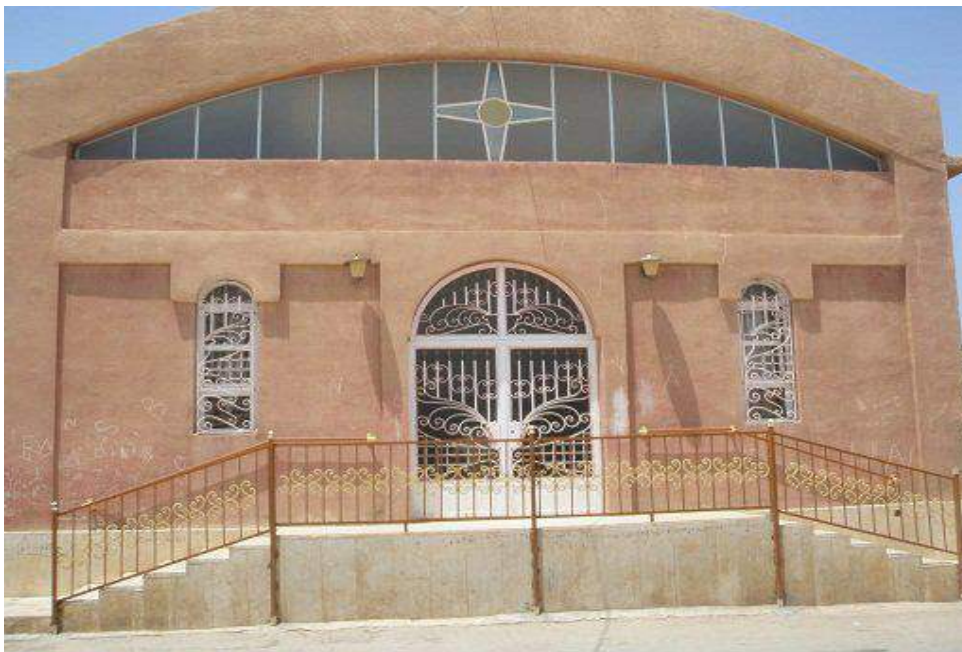
Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted January 1, 2012)



Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 23, 2011)



Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted May 6, 2012)



Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted January 1, 2012)



Interior of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted October 14, 2010)



Damage to the bell tower of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Halmon.net; Posted September 21, 2015)



The flattened roof of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Halmon.net; Posted September 21, 2015)



Destruction of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Halmon.net; Posted September 21, 2015)



Destruction of Mar Giorgis Church, Tel Baz (Halmon.net; Posted September 21, 2015)



Damage to Mar Giorgis Church adjacent building, Tel Baz (Halmon.net; Posted September 21, 2015)



Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua, Tel Balua Village (Halmon.net; Posted April 14, 2015)



Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 4, 2011)



Damage to Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to the interior of Mar Giorgis and Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Mar Shimon Church, Tel Balua (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 4, 2011)



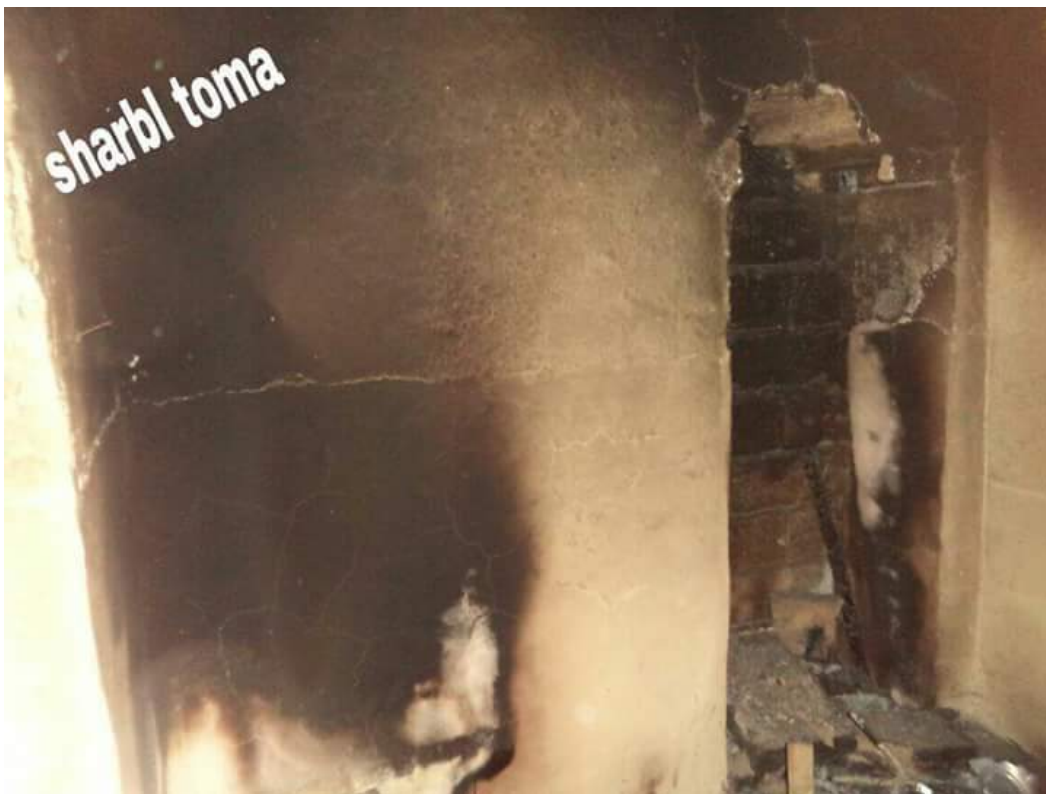
Mar Shimon Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Mar Shimon Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 015)



Damage to Mar Shimon Church, Tel Balua (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Damage to Mar Shimon Church, Tel Balua Village (Halmon.net; Posted June 5, 2015)



Mar Shalita Church, Tel Hafian (Halmon.net; Posted April 14, 2015)



Mar Shalita Church, Tel Hafian (Halmon.net; Posted April 14, 2015)



Damage to Mar Shalita, Tel Hafian (Halmon.net; Posted June 3, 2015)



Damage to Mar Shalita Church, Tel Hafian (Halmon.net; Posted June 3, 2015)



Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Kharita (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 3, 2011)



Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Kharita (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 28, 2011)



Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Kharita (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 3, 2011)



Altar of Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Kharita (Assyrian Khabour Villages; Posted November 3, 2011)



Damage to Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Kharita (Halmon.net; Posted June 16, 2015)



Damage to Mar Shimon Prusbai, Tel Kharita (Halmon.net; Posted June 16, 2015)



Damage to Mar Shimon Prusbai Church, Tel Kharita (Halmon.net; Posted June 16, 2015)

SHI 16-0033

Report Date: February 27, 2016

Site Name: Ali ibn Abi Talib Mosque (مسجد علي بن أبي طالب)

Date of Incident: February 26, 2016

Location: Dar Ta'izzah, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Shelling damage to mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On February 26, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that suspected Russian warplanes fired on Ali ibn Abi Talib Mosque in Dar Ta'izzah, damaging the building.¹²² No photographs of the damage were available at the time of publication and the extent of the damage is unknown.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

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

Sources:

Online Reporting:

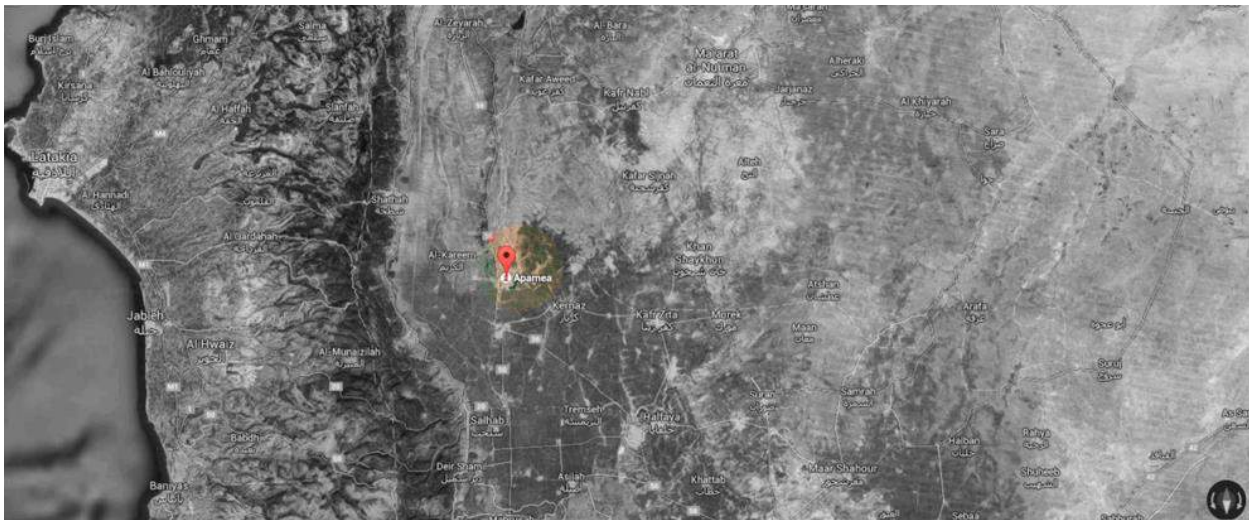
SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/27/18931>

¹²² <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/27/18931>



The Day After “Heritage Protection Initiative”¹²³ Site Monitor Project Idlib Province Jaradeh Village Damage Report

September 2015



Jaradeh is part of a group of archaeological sites known as the “Dead Cities” located in the north of Syria and part of the archeological park of Jaradeh and Ruweha.

The site is also registered under the Department of Antiquities at Ma’ara and located 10 km to the north of the city. Dating back to the Byzantine era, Jaradeh comprises several religious, residential and tower buildings with a unique style of architecture.

Al Burj (The Tower)

The tower is located in a dominant position on the site and it is still in a well-preserved condition. The building is square shaped with a side measurement of 5.50 meters and 18 meters total length. It comprises six floors. The bottom story has a small door leading to a beautifully decorated basalt room with stone tiles used to build the ceiling. The ceilings of the remaining floors are made out of wood and this same material was used to build the ladder and the staircase. Each of the floors has small windows, while the edges of the window on the sixth floor were designed in the shape of a

¹²³ 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.

cross. The top of the tower bears an ornamental bas-relief, while the fifth floor has a square-shaped toilet with a 25 cm deep basin linked to the drainage hole.

The Villas

The villas at Jaradeh are rich and spacious with open-air courtyards surrounded by service rooms and the main door is sometimes topped with a tower. The residential rooms are set in two stories, bottom and upper floor. The upper floor occupies a special wing with a terrace in front originally supported by elegant pillars and richly ornamented doors and windows. The ceiling of the bottom floor is built with large stone slabs supported by a number of arches while the ceiling of the upper floor is crafted in wood. Other villas at the site have three stories. These are some general characteristics of the public residential buildings in Jaradeh.

Al Hamal Al Wadi'a (The gentle lamb)

A bas-relief decorating one of the lintels found in the ruins of an old villa, depicting a lamb with the sign of the cross on top. The item which was called "the gentle lamb" was found in 1974 and dates to the 6th C. It is now the property of the Aleppo Museum.

The Basilica Church

The building is a small monastery church built in the shape of a basilica dating back to the 5th C. It measures 7 by 9 meters, with three aisles and two porticos each with six arches carried by five central pillars. There are two additional half pillars built in the two walls of the apsis and the western wall. The building is oriented to the east with triple apsis (central apse and two side chapels) curved in half circles and flanked by a double story (Diaconicon) service room with an arch-topped window on the second floor and a martyr's room reached by an external door facing west. The lintels of the lower windows are in the shape of an arch.

The church has seven doors. Three originally built in the western wall, one in the north, two in the southern wall and one in the service room.

This church is characterized by its simple style of decoration with decorative frames for its arches and ionic-style capitals.

The Monastery

The monastery is an isolated building located to the northeast of the site with an open-air courtyard surrounded by a wall. The courtyard has a cistern and a press (olive press). There is a funerary burial area for the priests to the east and the monastery entrance-gate. To the north is a two-story building; a church (chapel) occupies the bottom floor and priest dorms in the second. Some pillars are still visible on the terrace that was added in the front of the second story.

In addition to what has been mentioned; there are several other buildings that are in need of renovation including the tower.

An inspection report of the site prepared by the site monitor group in 9/28/2016 has highlighted the following:

1. Evidence of looting and random illicit digging within the nave of the church and beside the wall and on the eastern side.
2. Damage noted due to neglect of the site over the last five years.
3. Damage noted due to the environmental/climatic effects.
4. The site requires rapid intervention in order to stop the ongoing damage and deterioration.



Illicit digging at the site and near to the walls causing damage to buildings and foundations.



Illicit digging



Damage caused by vegetation



Damage caused by vegetation



Damage caused by neglect



Damage caused by neglect



Damage caused by neglect



Damage caused by neglect



Illicit digging near the walls



Damage due to weathering and neglect

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



The Day After “Heritage Protection Initiative” Observer’s Project in al-Ma’arat A Report on New Violations in the Old Village of Serjilla

August – September 2015



Map of Serjilla

The archaeological site of Serjilla lies 3 km southwest of the city of Idlib and is part of a group of sites known as the Dead Cities. Two visits were conducted to Serjilla to document damage to the archaeological site and its monuments. The visits took place in August and September 2015.

The primary causes of damage noted are:

1. Illicit excavations.
2. Human occupation and reuse of the buildings at the site.
3. Stone Quarrying
4. Environmental/weathering



General View the Archaeological Site of Serjilla



Damage caused by looting



Damage caused by looting



Damage caused by looting



Damage caused by looting



Human occupation and reuse of buildings at Serjilla by displaced Syrian refugees. The stone buildings provide shelter from the weather and the indiscriminate bombardment by regime forces. Some structures are permanent whilst others appear partial or temporary.



Partial or temporary dwelling structures with plastic tarpaulin for a roof.



Human occupation and reuse of buildings. Note use of local stone, mud, and straw in building construction.



Human occupation and reuse of buildings. Note new building construction in photo below.



Partial building reuse as an underground shelter from bombardment



Use of local stone, mud and straw for erecting shelters and buildings



Use of building as an animal pen



Herding sheep on the site



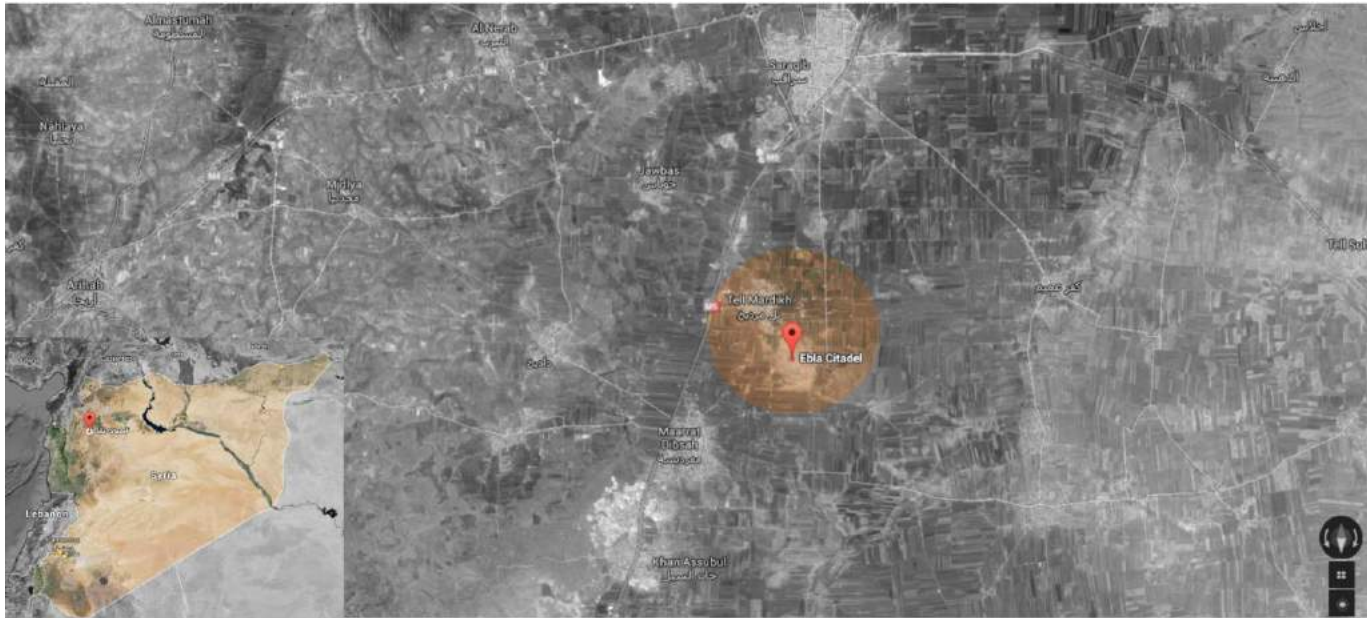
Stone Quarrying

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

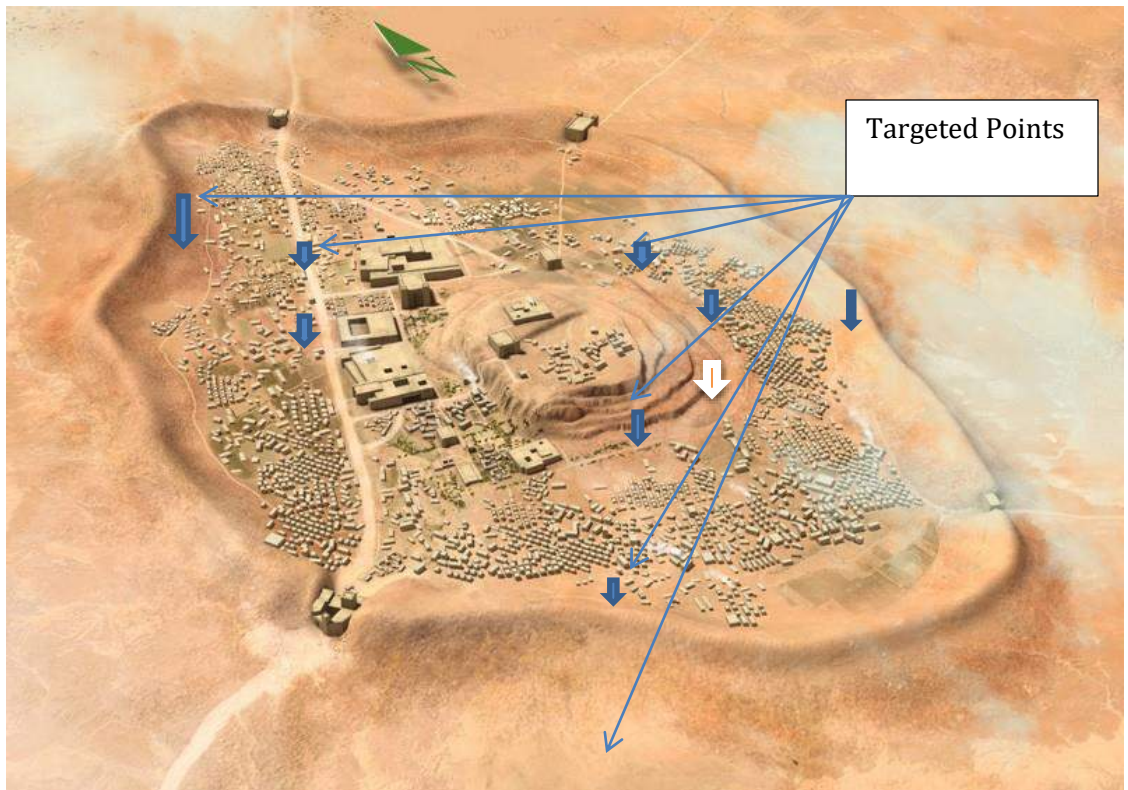


The Day After “Heritage Protection Initiative”
Site Monitors Project:
Rapid Assessment Report of the Russian Airstrike on Ebla

February 2016



On 02/25/2016 at 9:30 AM, the Russian air force carried out five airstrikes targeting the eastern side of the archeological site of Ebla. Another five airstrikes were carried out the next day on Friday 2/26/2016 at 3:30 PM causing serious damage to the western and southern sides of the archeological site. The TDA-HPI site monitoring team conducted a site inspection and documented the following damage shown in the photos below.









Damage caused by Russian airstrikes on the eastern side of the site





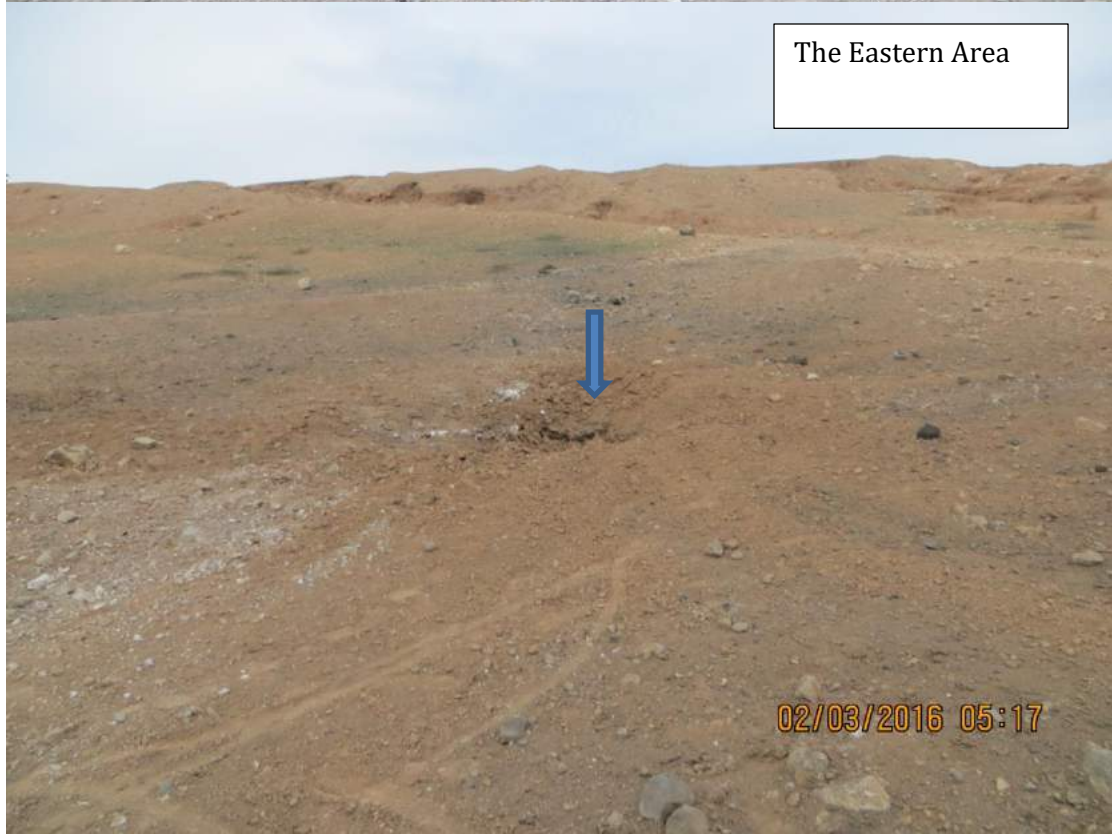
Large crater caused by Russian airstrike





02/03/2016 05:17

The Eastern Area



02/03/2016 05:17



















Site Monitors Project Manager

Amr Al-Azm

Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 16-0006

Report Date: February 26, 2016

Site Name: al-Rasul al-Azam Mosque (جامع الرسول الاعظم)

Date of Incident: February 25, 2016

Location: Baghdad, Baghdad Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Shia Mosque

Site Date: Unknown, possibly modern

Incident Summary: Two ISIL suicide bombings damage a Shia mosque in Baghdad.

Incident Source and Description: On February 25, 2016 two successive suicide bombings occurred at the Shia al-Rasul al-Azam Mosque in the mainly-Shia neighborhood of Shulaa in northwestern Baghdad. According to a witness, the first bomber detonated his vest inside the mosque next to the minbar, killing several worshippers. When emergency personnel and others rushed to the mosque, a second suicide bomber detonated his vest in the crowd.¹²⁴ In total, at least 15 people were killed and 50 others wounded. At least four of the dead were emergency personnel.¹²⁵

ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place one day before a large protest in Baghdad (called for by Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr) was to occur. The protest occurred on February 26, 2016 and called for improved public services and an end to corruption.¹²⁶

Photos provided by Reuters show a large amount of debris in the interior of the mosque, but there does not appear to be any serious structural damage to the building.¹²⁷

ISIL, which equates Shia Muslims to apostates, has frequently targeted Shia populations and Shia institutions and aims to incite Shia-Sunni conflict in the Shia-majority country. On January 11, 2016 ISIL carried out attacks on a mall in Baghdad and a cafe in Muqdadiyah (both frequented by Shias), killing nearly 50 people and wounding many more. Shia militias quickly responded by attacking up to twelve Sunni mosques in Muqdadiyah (See **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0002** in **Weekly Report 75-76**).¹²⁸

¹²⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/video/2016/02/26/at-least-15-dead-in-baghdad-mosque-blast>

¹²⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0VY2AH>

¹²⁶ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/25/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-fatal-baghdad-mosque-explosion>

¹²⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0VY2AH>

¹²⁸ <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-01-12/iraqi-pm-vows-to-expel-is-after-deadly-mall-attack>

ASOR CHI has documented several other recent incidents of sectarian violence in Iraq that have resulted in the destruction of cultural heritage (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0099** in **Weekly Report 67-68** and **IHI 16-0001** in **Weekly Report 73-74**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI remains concerned with the ongoing violence and sectarian tensions perpetrated and encouraged by ISIL in Iraq and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Reuters:

<http://www.reuters.com/video/2016/02/26/at-least-15-dead-in-baghdad-mosque-blast?videoId=367532284>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0VY2AH>

The Guardian:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/25/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-for-fatal-baghdad-mosque-explosion>

US News and World Report:

<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-01-12/iraqi-pm-vows-to-expel-is-after-deadly-mall-attack>



Interior of Rasul al-Azam Mosque showing material and structural damage (Reuters/Khalid al-Mousily; February 26, 2016)



Interior of Rasul al-Azam Mosque showing material and structural damage (Reuters/Khalid al-Mousily; February 26, 2016)



Exterior of Rasul al-Azam Mosque (Reuters/Khalid al-Mousily; February 26, 2016)



Interior of Rasul al-Azam Mosque showing material and structural damage (Reuters/Khalid al-Mousily; February 26, 2016)

IHI 16-0007

Report Date: February 29, 2016

Site Name: Unnamed Shia Mosque in Muqdadiya

Date of Incident: February 29, 2016

Location: Palestine Neighborhood, Muqdadiya City, Diyala Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Shia Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Suicide attack on a funeral inside of mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On February 29, 2016 an ISIL militant detonated a suicide vest during a funeral service. Damage to the mosque overall is unknown but initial photographs of the inside of the mosque show significant material damage. The structure itself is still standing.¹²⁹

According to Reuters, the suicide bomber attacked a funeral for either the relative of a commander or a member of a Shia militia. Six Shia militia commanders were among more than 40 people killed in the attack, including four from Asaib Ahl al-Haq and two from Badr Organization.¹³⁰

As of the end of the current reporting period, local sources began reporting instances of reprisal attacks against Sunni targets in the area as well as an attack on a local police station.

ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reports of reprisal attacks in Muqdadiya, as this is a recurring pattern of sectarian violence in the area. On January 11, 2016 ISIL militants carried out two attacks on the city of Muqdadiya, killing at least 23 people, including members of the Shia Popular Mobilization Front. In the aftermath of that attack, Shia militias carried out revenge attacks, killing Sunnis and firebombing their homes, shops, and mosques (see **CHI Incident Report 16-0002** in **Weekly Report 75-76** and **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0002 UPDATE** in **Weekly Report 77-78**).

Since the invasion of US forces in Iraq and the toppling of Saddam Hussein, sectarian violence has been commonplace in many areas across the country. Both Shia and Sunni groups have staged attacks against one another. The rise of ISIL has increased the number of sectarian attacks, as the group views Shia Muslims as apostates. As a result, religious sites on both sides have frequently come under attack by both ISIL militants and militias. ASOR CHI has documented several incidents of sectarian violence since the start of ISIL's campaign in Iraq that have resulted in the destruction of cultural heritage (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0077** in **Weekly Report 35**, **IHI 15-0099** in **Weekly Report 75-76**, **IHI 16-0001** in **Weekly Report 73-74**, **IHI 16-0002** in **Weekly Report 75-76**, **IHI 16-0002 UPDATE** in **Weekly Report 77-78**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

¹²⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/02/29/world/middleeast/ap-ml-islamic-state.html>

¹³⁰ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUKKCN0W21U8>

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI has continued to monitor the ongoing situation in Muqdadia and has compiled the newest reports regarding the January 11, 2016, as well as the February 29, 2016 attacks. ASOR CHI will continue to document any additional information regarding the mosques targeted in Muqdadia as will monitor incidents involving sectarian violence in Diyala Governorate.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Al Jazeera:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/02/iraq-deadly-wave-violence-continues-160229133948757.html>

New York Times:

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/02/29/world/middleeast/ap-ml-islamic-state.html>

Reuters:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUKKCN0W21UA>



Damage to the interior of the Shia Mosque (Reuters; March 1, 2016)



Interior of the Shia Mosque in Muqdadia showing material damage (Reuters; March 1, 2016)



Interior of the Shia Mosque in Muqdadia showing material damage (Reuters; March 1, 2016)



Interior of the Shia Mosque in Muqdadiya showing material damage (Reuters; March 1, 2016)

IHI 16-0005

Report Date: February 23, 2016

Site Name: Malthai Rock Reliefs; Malthai, Maltaya, Ma'altaya

Date of Incident: 2010 or later

Location: Malthai Village, Dohuk, Dohuk Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: The Malthai Reliefs are a series of four Neo-Assyrian bas-reliefs carved into the cliff-side above the village of Malthai (in the suburbs of Dohuk) on the south bank of Rubar-e Dohuk River. Three reliefs are grouped close together while the fourth is ca. 50 meters to their right. Each relief is 6 meters long and 2 meters high, and the same composition of nine figures is repeated on each panel with small variations.¹³¹ The scenes depict the king as a worshipper facing right toward a line of five deities — Assur, Ninlil, Sin, Anu (or Enlil), Shamash, Adad, and Ishtar — mounted on animals. Another figure of the king is depicted at the end of this row of deities, so that the line of divinities is flanked on either side by two identical royal images.¹³² The king depicted is Sennacherib (reigned ca. 704–681 BCE), who had these and other rock reliefs carved at strategic points along his northern canal system.¹³³

All four reliefs have sustained damage, but little of this is recent. Sometime during the first to third centuries CE, for example, large holes were cut in two of the panels to make tombs. Another panel was damaged in the 1920s when antiquities thieves cut out part of another of the reliefs. This stolen section was later recovered and is now in the Iraq Museum in Baghdad.¹³⁴ The small holes seen on all four reliefs are apparently due to the porosity of the rock, and are not bullet-holes or otherwise manmade as has recently been claimed.¹³⁵

Site Date: ca. 680s BCE

Incident Summary: Vandalism at Neo-Assyrian site of Malthai.

Incident Source and Description: On February 23, 2016 the Assyrian International News Agency reported that an Assyrian archaeological site in northern Iraq had been vandalized, with a Kurdish flag spray-painted on one of the relief panels.¹³⁶ AINA's information was based on a photo posted on Twitter by Adam Mirani with the caption, "The Maltai Assyrian relief in Duhok was recently vandalized as well."¹³⁷ The damage likely took place recently; ASOR CHI contacts visited the site in late December 2015 and the flag painting was not present. Mutual contacts have been to the site more recently and infer that the vandalism appears within the past four weeks.

Online commentary also alleged that the site had been used as target practice by KRG Peshmerga forces and large parts of panels were cut and removed from the relief, rumors which gained a great

¹³¹ http://archmap.org/archmap_2/Site/Collection?resource=233&building_id=2689

¹³² <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2014/assyria-to-iberia/blog/posts/rock-reliefs>

¹³³ Ur 2005: 327

¹³⁴ http://archmap.org/archmap_2/Site/Collection?building_id=2689

¹³⁵ <https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2016/02/23/iraq-krp-dohuk-maltai-peshmerga-destruction-false-claims/>

¹³⁶ <http://www.aina.org/news/20160223023140.htm>

¹³⁷ <https://twitter.com/amirani87/status/701731045142568960>

deal of traction on social media. These allegations are incorrect and the repeater of this false information retracted the claim, but the rumor that Peshmerga recently shot at the Assyrian reliefs at Malthai continues to persist.¹³⁸ This is in part due to allegations that Peshmerga forces shot the Assyrian inscriptions and reliefs at the site of Khinnis in 2006,¹³⁹ and it appears that the two reports became conflated. The “bullet holes” at Malthai are in fact geological in nature and have been present at the site for decades. Furthermore, the openings in the Malthai reliefs are also historical: two are from 1st–3rd century CE tombs and the third was “was cut by antiquities thieves and part of its figure 3 is now in the Iraq Museum.”¹⁴⁰ While there is a Peshmerga outpost close to the site, it is not currently occupied. The area is open to the public and has been a popular picnic spot for locals. At the time of publication it appears the only recent damage to the site of Malthai is the graffiti.

Pattern: Vandalism; Site management.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of Malthai and remote sites vulnerable to vandalism. ASOR CHI strongly cautions against potentially sensationalizing reporting of heritage destruction and advocates for neutral and objective efforts at raising public awareness, and this incident illustrates the need for corroborating and vetting information before repeating it, particularly when sourced from social media.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Assyrian International News Agency:
<http://www.aina.org//news/20160223023140.htm>

Conflict Antiquities:
<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2016/02/23/iraq-kr-g-dohuk-maltai-peshmerga-destruction-false-claims/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/amirani87/status/701731045142568960>

Scholarly:

Bahrani, Zainab. “Maltai Reliefs” *The Archmap Project, Iraq*. Updated May 8, 2014. Columbia University.
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Malko, Helen. “Neo-Assyrian Rock Reliefs: Ideology and Landscapes of an Empire.” Metmuseum.org.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2014/assyria-to-iberia/blog/posts/rock-reliefs>

Ur, Jason. “Sennacherib's Northern Assyrian Canals: New Insights from Satellite Imagery and Aerial Photography.” *Iraq* 67 (2005). pp. 317-345.
http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~jasonur/pdf/Ur_Iraq67_2005.pdf

¹³⁸ <https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2016/02/23/iraq-kr-g-dohuk-maltai-peshmerga-destruction-false-claims/>

¹³⁹ <http://www.aina.org/reports/oaaa.pdf> ; <http://www.ipsnews.net/2006/06/iraq-priceless-assyrian-relics-used-for-target-practice/>

¹⁴⁰ http://archmap.org/archmap_2/Site/Collection?site=233&building_id=2689



Graffiti on the Malthai Rock Relief (Twitter; February 22, 2016)