

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

NEA-PSHSS-14-001

Weekly Report 89–90 — April 13–26, 2016

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Executive Summary

ASOR CHI in-country sources provided photographs showing the destruction of two gates at the archaeological site of Nineveh the Mashki Gate and another gate that was provisionally identified as the Nergal Gate. Media outlets also claim the Adad was also destroyed. No new satellite images or definitive ground-level photography was available at the time of publication. Additionally, Russia-based Arabic-language media outlets also posted video of alleged tunneling activity at Nineveh. Rumors also circulated that the Kanisat al-Sa'a, also known as the Latin Church of the Clock Tower had been destroyed by ISIL militants using explosives,² but these reports remain unconfirmed. The situation in Mosul is still developing and new information will be provided in an update during the next reporting period.

During the reporting period an electrical fire in Old Damascus resulted in significant damage to many historic buildings, including the Suq Asruniye, the Suq Meskiyeh, and the Othman Bank. Rumors originally attributed the fire to arson, but evidence points to an accident. According to local sources, the aging and poorly designed electrical system had been overloaded by modern appliances for years. The lack of maintenance and frequent power outages and shorts resulting from the conflict made the situation even more hazardous.

Aerial bombardment continued to represent the most common cause of damage to heritage assets in Syria and Iraq, with damage concentrated in Raqqa, Hama, Homs, Aleppo, and Fallujah. Furthermore, the militarization of religious sites, including a mosque in Shaddadi, Al Hasakah by ISIL and another mosque in Damascus by SARG, continues to be a common form of heritage loss in the conflict zone. The Assyrian relief of Malthai in Dohuk was also vandalized by nationalist graffiti for the second time in two months.

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.

² <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13950206000818> ;
<http://www.albaghdadia.com/iraqnews/item/51283-2016-04-25-09-22-36> ;
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/25/islamic-state-blows-up-empress-eugenies-clock-church-in-mosul/> ; <http://en.abna24.com/service/middle-east-west-asia/archive/2016/04/25/749853/story.html>

Key Points

- A photograph shows damage to al-Saha Mosque in Palmyra, Homs Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0051**).
- A church converted into a gym by ISIL militants in Shaddadi, Al Hasakah Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0052**).
- A reported SARG airstrike damaged the al-Gharbi Mosque in Tamanaa, Hama Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0053**).
- An alleged SARG airstrike severely damaged the Khaled Bin Al Walid Mosque in al-Eis, Aleppo Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0054**).
- SARG forces reportedly occupy the al-Ghoufran Mosque in Damascus, Damascus Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0055**).
- An alleged SARG airstrike struck an area near al-Firdous Mosque and a car bomb of unknown origin detonated near al-Nur Mosque in Raqqa, Raqqa Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0056**).
- Reported SARG airstrikes damaged Uthman bin Affan Mosque and al-Nur Mosque, severely damaging both mosques in Ter Maalah, Homs Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0057**).
- An electrical fire caused severe damage to Suq Asruniyeh, Suq Meskiyeh, and Othman Bank in Old Damascus, Damascus Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0058**).
- A reported SARG airstrike damaged the Zaid bin Haritha Mosque in Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate on April 22, 2016 (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0059**).
- ASOR CHI received confirmation that ISIL militants bulldozed several of the ancient gates of Nineveh in Mosul, Ninawa Governorate in mid-April (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010**).
- The Malthai Rock Reliefs located in Dohuk Governorate were vandalized for a second time (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0011**).
- Shelling of unknown origin damaged al-Firdous Mosque in Fallujah, Al Anbar Governorate on April 15, 2016 (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0012**).

Heritage Timeline

April 26, 2016

PRI published an article titled “**Space archaeologists’ and activists are using satellites to unearth history**” (by Elizabeth Shockman). Sarah Parcak discusses the role of satellite imagery in conflict zone archaeology.

<http://www.pri.org/stories/2016-04-26/space-archaeologists-and-activists-are-using-satellites-unearth-history>

- *Syria: direct* published an article titled “**Antiquities expert on Palmyra visit: Syria can’t possibly restore the destroyed artifacts**” (by Bahira al-Zarier & Maria Nelson). Syria antiquities expert Sara Nouredin travelled to Palmyra following its capture by SARG, and discusses the damage to the site.
<http://syriadirect.org/news/syrian-antiquities-expert-on-palmyra-visit-site-is-%E2%80%989830-damaged%E2%80%99/>
- *Stars and Stripes* published an article titled “**Congress OKs bill to curb antiquities looting by militants**” (by Richard Lardner). The House passed a bill that would prevent cultural artifacts removed from Syria from being sold or imported into the U.S. The Senate approved the bill earlier this month and the President is expected to sign the legislation into law.
<http://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/congress-oks-bill-to-curb-antiquities-looting-by-militants-1.406443>

April 25, 2016

UNESCO published an article titled “**UNESCO rapid assessment mission to Palmyra.**” UNESCO sent a Rapid Assessment Mission to the to Palmyra from 24 to 26 April 2016 in order to assess the overall state of conservation of Palmyra and identify the emergency safeguarding measures, including drafting a damage assessment of the site and the museum.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1485>

- *Al Baghdadia* published an article titled “**داعش الإرهابي يفجر كنيسة الساعة الأثرية وسط الموصل** (Daesh detonates historic Clock Church in Central Mosul).” ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the veracity of reports that ISIL militants have destroyed the Latin (or “Clock”) Church in Mosul.
<http://www.albaghdadia.com/iraqnews/item/51283-2016-04-25-09-22-36>
- *SANA* published an article titled “**Department of Antiquities in Hasaka: 40% of archaeological artifacts in Tal Ajajeh stolen or vandalized by terrorist organizations.**” Tell Ajaja has been extensively damaged and looted by ISIL militants, along with many other sites in Hasakah Governorate.
<http://sana.sy/en/?p=75603>

- *The Times* published an article titled “**British war graves left to crumble in the dust**” (by Martin Fletcher). The British Commonwealth War Cemetery from the First World War located in the southern Iraqi city of Amara has fallen into disrepair.
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/britains-war-graves-left-dusty-and-dishonoured-8x3czvj9s>
 - *TASS Russian News Agency* published an article titled “**Lavrov: Russia’s Hermitage Museum ready to take part in restoring Palmyra.**”
<http://tass.ru/en/politics/872302>
 - *ARA News* published an article titled “**Al-Qaeda militants bomb Christian town in Syria’s Hama**” (by Jane Jouniye). Al Nusra militants bombed the largely Christian town of Suqaylabiyah in Hama Governorate, causing damage to residential areas adjacent to the Church of Peter and Paul.
<http://aranews.net/2016/04/al-qaeda-militants-bomb-christian-village-syrias-hama/>
 - *The Conversation* published an article titled “**The Middle East heritage debate is becoming worryingly colonial**” (by Mirjam Brusius). The author argues that current theories of preservation in Middle East archaeology must evolve.
<https://theconversation.com/the-middle-east-heritage-debate-is-becoming-worryingly-colonial-57679>
 - *Herald Scotland* published an article titled “**Meet Dr. Donna Yates, the expert aiming to make antiquities-collecting socially unacceptable**” (by Russell Leadbetter). Dr. Yates lectures in Antiquities Trafficking and Art Crime at Glasgow University’s Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, and is also part of the Trafficking Culture Project, an international group that researches the contemporary global trade in looted cultural objects.
<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/homenews/14449101.Meet-Dr-Donna-Yates-the-expert-aiming-to-make-antiquities-collecting-socially-unacceptable/>
- April 24, 2016
- Sputnik Arabic* published an article titled “‘داعش’ يصل لأعظم كنوز عراقية لم يشهدها العالم من قبل (‘Daesh’ up to the greatest Iraqi treasures the world has never seen before).” The article reports that ISIL militants are digging tunnels to loot antiquities from the site of Nineveh. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010.**
http://arabic.sputniknews.com/arab_world/20160424/1018485890.html

April 23, 2016

Several media outlets published reports on a fire in the **Old City of Damascus** that damaged many shops in **Souq Al-Asruniyeh** and caused the ceiling in an **Ottoman-era bank** to collapse.

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1975>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3555287/Blaze-engulfs-shops-Syrias-historic-Old-Damascus.html>

http://orient-news.net/en/news_show/110136/0/Damascus-large-fire-re-breaks-out-in-al-Meskia

- *Russia Today* published an article titled "نفق لـ'داعش' في الموصل لتهرب الآثار" (Tunnel 'Daash' in Mosul, the smuggling of antiquities)." The article alleges that ISIL is looting antiquities from Nineveh in Mosul. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010.**
<https://arabic.rt.com/news/820301-نفق-داعش-تهريب-الآثار-المسرودة-الموصل/>

- *L'Obs* published an article titled "**Palmyre: les plus grands archéologues interpellent l'Unesco**" (by Claire Fleury). A group of archaeologists protests any arrangement between UNESCO and Russia for the restoration of monuments at Palmyra.
<http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/culture/20160422.OBS9097/palmyre-les-plus-grands-archeologues-interpellent-l-unesco.html>

April 22, 2016

BBC published a video interview titled "**My Father was Killed Defending Palmyra.**" Zenobia al-Asaad is interviewed regarding her father Khaled al-Asaad's legacy.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03qzkf2>

- **Blue Shield** published an article titled "**Blue Shield Reflections on Palmyra.**"
<http://www.ancbs.org/cms/en/home/71-reflections-palmyra-syria>
- **SNHR** published a post titled "**Regime forces targeted Zaid Bin Haretha Mosque in Al Nayrab neighborhood in Aleppo in April 22.**" A SARG airstrike damaged a mosque in Aleppo. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0059.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/22/regime-forces-targeted-zaid-bin-haretha-mosque-al-nayrab-neighborhood-aleppo-april-22/>
- *Sputnik News* published a report titled "فيديو حصري: نفق لـ'داعش' في الموصل لنهب الآثار (Exclusive video: The Tunnel for Daesh in Mosul for Looting)." A video allegedly shows a large tunnel dug by ISIL militants to loot artifacts from Nineveh. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010.**
http://arabic.sputniknews.com/arab_world/20160422/101846578/فيديو-حصري-نفق-لداعش-في-الموصل-لنهب-الآثار-2.html

- *Hyperallergic* published an article titled “**Excavating the Forgotten History of Palmyra**” (by Michael Press). While the many articles focus on the Roman-era history of Palmyra, it is often overlooked that the site was almost continuously inhabited until the 1930s.
<http://hyperallergic.com/292461/excavating-the-forgotten-history-of-palmyra/>
 - *Yahoo News* published an article titled “**Syrie: des archéologues polonais pour restaurer le Lion de Palmyre détruit par l'EI**” (by Maher Al Mounes). Polish archaeologists are working to assess the damage to the Lion of Al-Lat in Palmyra.
<https://fr.news.yahoo.com/syrie-arch%C3%A9ologues-polonais-restaurer-lion-palmyre-d%C3%A9truit-lei-092342444.html>
- April 21, 2016
- Voice of America* published an article titled “**Preservationists Warn Syria’s Historic Sites Still at Risk**” (by Kane Farabaugh). Amr Al Azm warns that the recapture of Palmyra should not distract from the fact that much of Syria’s heritage is in danger, especially from wide scale looting.
<http://www.voanews.com/content/preservationists-warn-syria-historic-sites-still-at-risk/3295161.html>
- *Archeologia.be* published an article titled “**Portrait d'Ali OTHMAN, Archéologue syrien en exil**” (“Portrait of Ali Othman, Syrian Archaeologist in Exile”) (by Pierre-Emmanuel Lenfant). Othman, who conducts research at the site of Sura in Raqqa Governorate, discusses what it means to be a Syrian archaeologist when he cannot currently dig in Syria.
<http://www.archeologia.be/actualite2016006.html>
- April 20, 2016
- DGAM** published an article titled “افتتاح نموذج قوس النصر التدمري في ساحة “ترافلغار بمدينة لندن” (The opening of the destroyed Triumphal Arch model in Trafalgar Square in London”). Maamoun Abdulkarim, Boris Johnson, and others attended the unveiling of the model of Palmyra’s Triumphal Arch in London.
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=1972>
- *The National* published an article titled “**Stones and lives shattered—the quest to revive Palmyra**” (by Tom Westcott).
<http://www.thenational.ae/arts-life/the-review/stones-and-lives-shattered--the-quest-to-revive-palmyra>

- *The Washington Post* published an article titled “**The problem with rebuilding a Palmyra ruin destroyed by ISIS--does it simply help Assad?**” (by Adam Taylor). The author argues that the reconstruction of a monument from Palmyra is being used as a tool for propaganda by the Syrian regime.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/04/20/the-problem-with-rebuilding-a-roman-ruin-destroyed-by-isis-does-it-simply-help-assad/>

April 19, 2016

Several media outlets published article report on the **recreation in Trafalgar Square in London of Palmyra’s destroyed Arch of Triumph.**

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2016/apr/19/palmyras-triumphal-arch-recreated-in-traffic-square>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-36070721>

<http://theartnewspaper.com/news/news/palmyra-arch-destroyed-by-isil-to-rise-again-in-the-west/>

- *National Geographic* published an article titled “**Exclusive Photos Show Destruction of Nineveh Gates by ISIS**” (by Kristin Romey). ASOR CHI’s Michael Danti confirms reports that the Mashki and Nergal Gates have been bulldozed by ISIL militants. Later satellite imagery showed the Nergal Gate intact and the Adad Gate, destroyed.
ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010.
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160419-Islamic-State-ISIS-ISIL-Nineveh-gates-Iraq-Mosul-destroyed/>

- Several media outlets published articles reporting that the **House Financial Services Committee** and the **Task Force to Investigate Terrorism Financing** held a hearing titled “**Preventing Cultural Genocide: Countering the Plunder and Sale of Priceless Cultural Antiquities by ISIS.**”

http://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/041916_tf_supplemental_hearing_memo.pdf

<http://financialservices.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=400587>

<http://www.voanews.com/content/is-terror-group-raises-millions-from-plundered-relics/3292794.html>

<https://www.rt.com/viral/340731-jihadi-isis-syria-artifacts/>

April 18, 2016

Channel 4 published a report titled “**ISIS and The Missing Treasures: Channel 4 Dispatches**” (by Simon Cox). Channel 4 discusses several cases of the seizure of artifacts suspected or proven to have been looted from Syria or Iraq, including a lintel from Nawa, Syria and an Ottoman Quran.

<http://www.channel4.com/info/press/news/isis-and-the-missing-treasures-channel-4-dispatches>

- *Voice of America* published an article titled “**Iraqi Priest Rescues Ancient Manuscripts from IS Destruction**” (by Sharon Behn). An Assyrian priest in Qaraqosh saved many priceless manuscripts and other artifacts kept in the town’s churches, just before ISIL captured the town.
<http://www.voanews.com/content/iraqi-priest-rescues-ancient-manuscripts-from-islamic-state-destruction/3290975.html>
- UNESCO published a statement titled “**Director-General of UNESCO condemns new destructions in the ancient city of Nineveh, Iraq (Mosul).**” Irina Bokova condemns the destruction of the historic gates of Mashki and Adad, and parts of the old ramparts of the archaeological site of Nineveh.
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1483>
- SNHR published a post titled “**Regime forces targeted Khaled Bin Al Walid Mosque in Al Eis town in Aleppo governorate in April 17.**” A regime airstrike damaged a mosque in al-Eis. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0054.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/18/regime-forces-targeted-khaled-bin-al-walid-mosque-al-eis-town-aleppo-governorate-april-17/>
- *Daily Sabah* published an article titled “**Turkish Culture Minister: No tolerance for antiquity smuggling from Syria.**” Responding to claims that Turkey allows the smuggling of antiquities from Syria, the Culture and Tourism Minister said these allegations were “groundless and ugly” and that to the contrary, Turkey had worked tirelessly to stop smuggling.
<http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2016/04/18/turkish-culture-minister-no-tolerance-for-antiquity-smuggling-from-syria>

April 17, 2016

The Sunday Times published an article titled “**Illegal Syrian Antiquity found on sale for £30,000 in London**” (by Robin Henry). Two scholars working with *Channel 4 News* to find looted antiquities in London antiquities shops discovered an ancient stone lintel looted from a building in Nawa in Daraa Governorate.

http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/Arts/article1688008.ece

- *Haber Turk* published an article titled “**İstanbul'da tarihi eser operasyonu: 4 şüpheli adliyede**” (“Antiquities operation in Istanbul: 4 suspects in court”). Turkish authorities seized three mosaic panels suspected to have been looted from a Syrian museum. <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1226216-istanbulda-tarihi-eser-operasyonu-4-supheli-adliyede>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q56nOzRKGE>
 - **Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently** (RBSS) published an article titled “**Fleeing Syrian Armenians Find Surer Path to Freedom**” (by Abu Mohammed). RBSS reports on the exodus of ethnic Armenians from Syria and quotes Rev. Haroutioun Selimian, the head of a relief organization for Syrian Armenians in Aleppo, as saying that 90 Armenian churches in Syria have been destroyed. <http://www.raqqa-sl.co/en/?p=1762>
 - *The Financial Times* published an article titled “**Palmyra is the site of war crimes as well as world heritage**” (by Michel Duclos). The writer argues Palmyra must be placed in the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court to investigate war crimes before plans to rebuild the archaeological site can be carried out. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/bc928af0-0318-11e6-99cb-83242733f755.html>
- April 16, 2016
- Associated Press* published an article titled “**Grim New Details of IS Destruction In Syria’s Palmyra Museum**” (by Zeina Karam). Bartosz Markowski, from the University of Warsaw, reports that most of the 200 objects which were exhibited on the ground floor of the Palmyra museum were destroyed and an unknown number have been stolen. [http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML SYRIA PALMYRA MUSEUM](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_SYRIA_PALMYRA_MUSEUM)
- *CounterCurrents.org* published an article titled “**Restoring Our Cultural Heritage In Syria —The Debate Over Why, How, When, By Whom, In What Order, & Who Pays? Intensifies!**” (by Franklin Lamb). The author discusses the current debates surrounding the restoration of the destroyed monuments at Palmyra. <http://www.countercurrents.org/lamb160416.htm>
- April 15, 2016
- The Art Newspaper* published an article titled “**Belgium eliminates federal taskforce to fight trafficking in cultural property**” (by Victoria Stapley-Brown). The Belgian Interior minister stated art and antiquities crime is ‘not considered a priority’ and local police will now be responsible for overseeing art crime investigations. <http://theartnewspaper.com/news/news/belgium-eliminates-federal-taskforce-to-fight-trafficking-in-cultural-property/>

- The **London Middle East Institute** at the **School of Oriental and African Studies** (University of London) held a conference titled “The Past in the Present of the Middle East.” Topics for discussion include cultural heritage in conflict.
<https://www.soas.ac.uk/lmei/events/15apr2016-the-past-in-the-present-of-the-middle-east.html>
- *The Conversation* published an article titled “**Ordinary Syrians are risking their lives to protect their cultural heritage**” (by Emma Cunliffe). Heritage for Peace interviewed Syrian citizens going to extraordinary lengths to protect their country’s cultural heritage.
<https://theconversation.com/ordinary-syrians-are-risking-their-lives-to-protect-their-cultural-heritage-57841>
- **SNHR** published a post titled “**Regime forces targeted Al Gharbi Mosque in Al Tamanea town in Idlib governorate in April 15.**” A mosque in al-Taman’ah was damaged severely in an airstrike. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0053.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/15/regime-forces-targeted-al-gharbi-mosque-al-tamanea-town-idlib-governorate-april-15/>
- *Sputnik News* published an article titled “**Russian Experts Plan to Prepare Palmyra Damage Assessment by July.**” Russian experts plan to submit a preliminary damage assessment of Palmyra to UNESCO by July 2016.
<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160415/1038099968/palmyra-damage-report-russia.html>
- *Sputnik News* published an article titled “**Iraq Requests Russia’s Help in Restoring Historic Sites.**” Iraq's Ambassador to Russia said that Baghdad is requesting Moscow's assistance in the restoration of historic sites and cultural heritage damaged by ISIL.
<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160415/1038079042/iraq-russia-daesh-restoring.html>

April 14, 2016

Al Sumaria published an article titled “**داعش يدمر بوابة "ادد" في الموصل**” (Daash destroys the Adad Gate and parts of the wall of Nineveh in Mosul).” A source in Mosul reported ISIL militants had bulldozed the Adad Gate and other parts of the ancient wall of Nineveh. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010.**
<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/165665/-الموصل-في-ادد-في-الموصل-واجزاءمن>

- Cleveland* published an article titled “**Shawnee State University’s Amr Al-Azm aids the fight against ISIS looting in Syria (photos)**” (by Steven Litt). By documenting and publicizing the flow of antiquities from Syria, Al-Azm hopes to prevent their future sale to collectors or museums during and after the civil war.
http://www.cleveland.com/arts/index.ssf/2016/04/shawnee_state_universitys_amr.html
 - Al Hayat* published an article titled “الحياة - «داعش» يهدم بوابتين آشوريتين ويختطف مئة مدني (Daesh Destroys Two Assyrian Gates and Kidnaps 100 Citizens).” ISIL has kidnapped 100 people from Fallujah and destroyed the Adad and Mashki Gates, two of the ancient gates of Nineveh. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010**.
<http://www.alhayat.com/m/story/15062463>
 - Yale News* published an article titled “**Grand challenges for cultural heritage databases, from preservation to best practices**” (by Jim Shelton). An April 12 panel discussion at Yale University discussed the ways in which new technology is transforming the preservation of cultural heritage.
<http://news.yale.edu/2016/04/14/grand-challenges-cultural-heritage-databases-preservation-best-practices>
- April 13, 2016
- UNESCO published an article titled “**UNESCO reiterates call for unity and coordination to protect Syrian Cultural Heritage.**”
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1475>
 - The DGAM published an article titled “**Statement: The road to resurrecting Palmyra.**” According to the DGAM, it is “currently assessing the damage inflicted on the ancient city along with its museum in order to be able to set plans and visions for emergency and urgent intervention through adopting a clear and scientific method.”
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1968>
 - Yale News* published an article titled “**Looting and destruction of antiquities as a calculated strategy**” (by Mike Cummings). Jason Lyall, an associate professor of political science at Yale University, argues that targeting of cultural heritage sites is a calculated strategy in pursuit of broader political and territorial ambitions.
<http://news.yale.edu/2016/04/13/looting-and-destruction-antiquities-calculated-strategy>

- Several media outlets published articles reporting that ISIL militants destroyed the **Mashqi Gate**, part of the ancient wall of Nineveh. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010.**
http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2016/04/13/Islamic-State-destroys-gates-of-Nineveh-near-Mosul/5101460553830/
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-destroys-gates-ancient-city-nineveh-mosul-a6980686.html>
- Several media outlets published articles reporting that the **U.S. Senate voted to ban imports of Syrian art and antiquities.** The bill's provisions would fulfill commitments the U.S. supported at the United Nations Security Council more than a year ago to combat the trade in illegal antiquities.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/14/world/middleeast/senate-votes-to-ban-imports-of-syrian-art-and-antiquities.html>
<http://theartnewspaper.com/news/news/us-senate-blocks-the-import-of-art-and-artefacts-from-syria/>
- The Antiquities Coalition** published a report titled “**#CultureUnderThreat: Recommendations for the U.S. Government.**” The #Culture Under Threat task force details threats to culture in the Middle East and North Africa and puts forth recommendations to address the ongoing crisis.
<http://taskforce.theantiquitiescoalition.org/>
- Al Aan* published an article titled “**داعش يعرض تمثال زنوبيا للبيع مقابل ألف دولار (Daesh displays a statue of Zenobia for sale for \$100,000).**” A member of ISIL in Raqqa is selling a small statue, allegedly of Zenobia and excavated at Palmyra, for \$100k.
<http://www.alaan.tv/news/world-news/152477/isis-daesh-offers-zenobia-statue-sale-100-thousand-dollars>
- SANA* published an article titled “**UNESCO unanimously adopts Russian draft resolution on Palmyra restoration.**” The resolution titled “On the role of UNESCO in restoring and preserving Palmyra and other Syrian cultural heritage sites”, was put forth during the within the 199th session of the organization’s executive council.
<http://sana.sy/en/?p=74426>
- Heritage for Peace** published its bi-weekly newsletter titled “**Damage to Syria’s Heritage: 13 April 2016.**”
<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-13-april-2016/>

- *Counterpunch* published an article titled “**Iran and Russia Join the Global Alliance to Preserve Syria’s Endangered Heritage**” (by Franklin Lamb). Iran announced it is ready to take part in the restoration of Palmyra.
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/04/13/iran-and-russia-join-the-global-alliance-to-preserve-syrias-endangered-heritage/>
- **The Oriental Institute** at the University of Chicago published an article titled “**Palmyra Reliefs on Auction in Raqqa.**” A recent news article stated a Palmyrene relief put up for auction by ISIL in Raqqa sold for \$150,000, nearly double the sale price for a similar item sold at auction in 2008.
<https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/mantis/news>

Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo Governorate:
 - During the reporting period clashes between opposition and pro-regime forces were ongoing for control of Castello Road, currently a major supply route for opposition forces.³
 - During the first half of the reporting period, clashes occurred between Al Nusra Front and pro-regime forces in the area of Handarat, north of the city of Aleppo. Pro-regime forces also clashed with ISIL militants southeast of the city.⁴
 - On April 14, ISIL militants overran as many as 10 camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northern Aleppo, forcing at least 30,000 to flee to neighboring camps or to the town of Azzaz.⁵
 - On April 16, ISIL launched an offensive in the southern area of Aleppo Governorate, capturing 10 villages east of the town of Khanaser and stealing “a cache weapons and ammunition provided by Iran.”⁶
 - On April 17, reported SARG airstrikes and clashes between several armed groups in the city of Aleppo killed 22 civilians.⁷

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/fighting-surges-in-syria-amid-apparent-collapse-of-truce-backed-by-us-russia/2016/04/14/b64e6f3e-024a-11e6-8bb1-f124a43f84dc_story.html ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Apr-25/349170-isis-claims-responsibility-for-explosion-at-syria-army-checkpoint-in-damascus-amaq-news-agency.ashx>

⁴ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/04/15/Surge-in-violence-kills-more-than-200-in-Aleppo-.html> ; <https://www.yahoo.com/news/syria-army-fights-two-fronts-near-aleppo-monitor-090047017.html>

⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/14/turkey-open-borders-syrians-fleeing-isis> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/04/14/ISIS-seizes-Syria-villages-near-Turkish-border.html> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/syrians-fleeing-turkey-isis-attacks-160415083643212.html>

⁶ <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/syria-situation-report-april-16-22-2016>

⁷ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Apr-17/347775-11-civilians-dead-in-attacks-in-syrias-aleppo-monitor.ashx> ; <http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2016/04/17/syria-shelling-kills-10-children-in-aleppo-as-violence-rises.html>

- On April 19, reported SARG airstrikes struck Salaheddin neighborhood in the city of Aleppo, as well as the town of Al-Bab, resulting in casualties.⁸
- On April 20, ISIL militants carried out an attack against the opposition-held Mar'a line, "displacing tens of thousands of civilians" along the Syrian-Turkish border.⁹
- On April 22, the Syrian emergency aid group known as the White Helmets reported more than 20 airstrikes in Aleppo Governorate. The airstrikes killed at least 25 people and wounded 40 more.¹⁰
- On April 23, airstrikes of unknown origin killed at least 12 civilians in the city of Aleppo.¹¹
- On April 23, ISIL militants captured the towns of Kafr Ghan, Tel Hussein, and Biraghida near the Syrian-Turkish border from opposition fighters from al-Sham Corps and al-Hamza Brigade.¹²
- On April 24, SARG forces foiled an attack by opposition fighters in the neighborhood of Rashidin, killing more than 100 fighters. SARG airstrikes hit a market in the neighborhood of Sakhour, killing 17 civilians.¹³
- On April 25, SNHR reported that regime airstrikes struck the "main water line" in the neighborhood of Al Saleheen in the city of Aleppo, rendering the critical water line inoperable. Syrian activists also reported that rebel bombardment of SARG-held areas of the city of Aleppo resulted in the deaths of 19 civilians and the wounding of 120 more.¹⁴
- On April 26, airstrikes on opposition-held areas in the city of Aleppo and the town of al-Atarab killed at least 19 civilians, including 5 members of the White Helmets.¹⁵

⁸ <https://twitter.com/ShaaamNewsEn/status/722491519261917185> ; <https://twitter.com/snhr/status/722519700652089344> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/aleppo-clashes-displace-40-000-syrians-160420131736518.html>

⁹ <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/syria-situation-report-april-16-22-2016>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/SyriaCivilDef/status/723467823146766337> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0XJ0Z2> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/syria-air-strikes-aleppo-160422111650638.html> ; <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/killed-airstrikes-syrias-aleppo-38591659> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Apr-23/348892-13-killed-east-of-damascus-in-syria-govt-bombing-over-22-injured-activists.ashx>

¹¹ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Apr-23/348892-13-killed-east-of-damascus-in-syria-govt-bombing-over-22-injured-activists.ashx>

¹² <http://aranews.net/2016/04/19886/>

¹³ <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Apr-25/349109-rebel-attack-foiled-in-aleppos-rashidin-neighborhood.ashx> ; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/27/syria-civilian-deaths-rising-attacks-resume>

¹⁴ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/25/regime-forces-targeted-main-water-line-al-saleheen-neighborhood-aleppo-city-april-24/> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Apr-25/349172-at-least-6-dead-in-govt-rebel-attacks-on-syrias-aleppo.ashx>

¹⁵ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Apr-26/349288-airstrikes-kill-five-rescue-workers-near-syrias-aleppo-activist.ashx> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0XN0M3> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/syria-rescue-workers-killed-aleppo-air-strikes-160426063757412.html>

2. Idlib Governorate:
 - During the reporting period, reports surfaced of ongoing local uprisings against Al Nusra Front across Idlib Governorate.¹⁶
 - On April 19, two airstrikes, of either Russian or SARG origin, struck local marketplaces in the opposition-held towns of Kafr Nubl and Ma'arat al-Numan, killing at least 50 civilians.¹⁷
3. Damascus Governorate:
 - On April 13, ISIL militants advanced into the Palestinian district of Yarmouk in the city of Damascus, capturing an estimated 70 percent of the area from Al Nusra Front.¹⁸
 - On April 22, a SARG warplane crashed over ISIL-held territory, southwest of the Damascus airport. The pilot was reportedly captured by ISIL militants.¹⁹
 - On April 25, an car bomb allegedly planted by ISIL detonated at a security checkpoint on the outskirts of the district of Sayyida Zeinab, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens more.²⁰
4. As-Suwayda Governorate:
 - On April 14, ISIL claimed that it had “shot down a [SARG] warplane” near a military base.²¹
 - On April 17, as many as 200 protesters from the Druze community staged a anti-regime demonstration in the city of Suwayda.²²
5. Latakia Governorate:
 - During the reporting period, heavy airstrikes were reported across northern areas of Latakia Governorate as SARG and opposition forces clashed over territory.²³
 - On April 20, SARG forces reportedly carried out “air and artillery strikes” in the Syrian Turkmen villages of Kelez, Sallur, and Karaman in northwestern Latakia Governorate.²⁴

¹⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/al-qaeda-affiliate-faces-unusual-backlash-from-fed-up-syrians/2016/04/13/4dac1c6a-fab6-11e5-813a-90ab563f0dde_story.html

¹⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36084848> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/syria-war-scores-killed-idlib-markets-air-strikes-160419152351407.html> ; <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/19/regime-forces-targeted-local-market-maaret-al-numan-idlib-governorate-april-19/> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idlib-idUSKCN0XG1XT>

¹⁸ <http://www.albawaba.com//news/plo-syria%E2%80%99s-yarmouk-camp-almost-fully-controlled-daesh-828546> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-yarmouk-idUSKCN0XD0T5> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-april-16-22-2016>

¹⁹ <http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-warplane-idINKCN0XJ100> ; <http://www.newsweek.com/syria-plane-isis-damascus-azzam-eid-hama-islamic-state-451714>

²⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-damascus-idUSKCN0XM0MK> ; <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-damascus-shiite-sayyida-zeinab-suicide-bomb-attack-isis/>

²¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/fighting-surges-in-syria-amid-apparent-collapse-of-truce-backed-by-us-russia/2016/04/14/b64e6f3e-024a-11e6-8bb1-f124a43f84dc_story.html

²² <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-april-16-22-2016>

²³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/fighting-surges-in-syria-amid-apparent-collapse-of-truce-backed-by-us-russia/2016/04/14/b64e6f3e-024a-11e6-8bb1-f124a43f84dc_story.html ; <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-latakia-idUKKCN0XF0V4> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-fighting-idUSL5N17M2VR>

²⁴ <http://www.dailysabah.com/syrian-crisis/2016/04/20/assad-regime-attacks-turkmens-in-northwest-syria-forest-fires-erupt-amid-clashes>

6. Homs Governorate:
 - During the reporting period, heavy SARG airstrikes were reported across Homs Governorate.²⁵
 - On April 21, Russia announced that it had cleared the ancient city of Palmyra of all mines and other explosives left behind by ISIL.²⁶
 - On April 26, local sources reported that ISIL militants had recaptured several areas to the north and northwest of the city of Palmyra.²⁷
7. Hama Governorate:
 - On April 18, Salafi opposition forces, including Jund al-Aqsa and the Turkistan Islamic Movement, launched an offensive against SARG forces in the northwestern countryside of Hama, taking over the majority of the town of Khirbat al-Naqus located in the strategic Sahl al-Ghab plain.²⁸
8. Rif Dimashq Governorate:
 - On April 19, reported SARG shelling struck the town of Bala, killing at least seven people.²⁹
 - On April 20, local reports stated that ISIL militants were pulling out from the town of Ad Dumair, north of the capital Damascus, reportedly after reaching an agreement with members of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).³⁰
9. Deir ez Zor Governorate:
 - On April 19, SARG airstrikes damaged the village of Husseinayah.³¹
 - On April 19-20, ISIL militants overran areas in the city of Deir Ez Zor and advanced on the regime-held air base.³²
10. Hasakah Governorate:
 - On April 20-23, clashes occurred between SARG forces and Kurdish police forces (aka Asayish) in the city of Qamishli, located on the Syrian border with Turkey. ISIL militants claimed responsibility for a car bomb that detonated inside the city.³³
 - On April 23, the US-led coalition reportedly conducted airstrikes on an ISIL headquarters near the town of Marghada, reportedly killing dozens of ISIL militants.³⁴
11. Daraa Governorate:
 - On April 19, three Free Syrian Army (FSA) factions merged to form the 'Division of Decisiveness'.³⁵

²⁵ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/fighting-surges-in-syria-amid-apparent-collapse-of-truce-backed-by-us-russia/2016/04/14/b64e6f3e-024a-11e6-8bb1-f124a43f84dc_story.html ; <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-latakia-idUKKCN0XF0V4> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-fighting-idUSL5N17M2VR>

²⁶ <http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-syria-crisis-palmyra-demining-idINKCN0XI26Z>

²⁷ <https://twitter.com/PalmyraRev1/status/724955832736161792>

²⁸ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-latakia-idUKKCN0XF0V4> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-april-16-22-2016>

²⁹ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/19/victims-died-regime-forces-shelling-bala-town-damascus-suburbs-governorate-april-19/> ; <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2016/04/19/human-losses-in-reef-dimashq/>

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZr8rY64Mbw> ; <https://twitter.com/IvanSidorenko1/status/722786351687401473> ; <https://www.yahoo.com/news/latest-syrian-group-says-ceasefire-effectively-over-105156771.html>

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/ShaaamNewsNetwork/posts/1003481399699635>

³² <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Apr-20/348329-isis-tightens-noose-on-government-enclave-in-eastern-syria-activist.ashx>

³³ <http://aranews.net/2016/04/clashes-erupt-syrian-regime-kurdish-forces-qamishli/>

³⁴ <http://aranews.net/2016/04/19886/>

Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Abu Kamal, al-Hawl, Deir ez Zor, Manbij, Mara, Raqqa, and Washiyah.³⁶
- During the reporting period, the new round of Syrian Peace talks came to a halt when the Higher Negotiations Committee announced their withdrawal from the talks citing ongoing violations in the ceasefire by the Assad regime.³⁷
- On April 13, voting for parliamentary elections took place in government controlled areas of Syria. Syrian opposition forces dismissed the elections as illegitimate.³⁸
- On April 18-19, ten opposition groups formed the 'Rad al-Mazalem' Operation Room, in order to begin a new offensive against SARG-held territories.³⁹
- On April 20, the Wall Street Journal reported that Russia had been deploying artillery units to the northern governorates of Latakia and Aleppo in support of SARG regime advances.⁴⁰
- On April 21, Russia announced that it had sent troops to fight with an unnamed group of Kurdish forces around Aleppo Governorate.⁴¹
- On April 22, the White Helmets reported airstrikes in Aleppo, Idlib, Homs, and Damascus Governorates.⁴²
- On April 25, President Barack Obama announced that "up to 250 additional" US military personnel would be deployed to Syria, including special forces, to aid both Kurdish YPG and vetted Syrian opposition forces in the fight against ISIL.⁴³

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

1. Baghdad Governorate:
 - During the reporting period, protests continued in Baghdad against stalled reformative measures in the Iraqi parliament. Supporters of influential Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr staged protests in both the capital of Baghdad and in the southern areas of Iraq.⁴⁴

³⁵ <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-april-16-22-2016> ; <http://www.newsweek.com/syria-ceasefire-sham-helps-assad-cling-power-450832>

³⁶ See: "US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq". *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [720818](#), [721931](#), [722826](#), [722901](#), [723033](#), [729625](#), [738422](#), [739486](#), [740693](#), [741313](#), [741395](#), [741515](#), [742676](#)

³⁷ <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-04-15/syrian-government-delegation-arrives-in-geneva-for-talks> ; <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/12/syrian-rebels-commit-to-peace-talks-despite-regime-offensive> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-latakia-idUSKCN0XF0VN> ; <http://europa.newsweek.com/syria-ceasefire-geneva-peace-talks-high-negotiations-committee-449981> ; <https://www.yahoo.com/news/latest-russia-paused-talks-risk-return-war-120150066.html>

³⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-vote-idUSKCN0XA15D>

³⁹ <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-april-16-22-2016>

⁴⁰ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-moves-artillery-to-northern-syria-u-s-officials-say-1461153190>

⁴¹ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-pursues-ties-with-kurds-to-keep-foothold-in-region-1461239887>

⁴² <https://twitter.com/SyriaCivilDef/status/723480584060854273>

⁴³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-usa-syria-idUSKCN0XL0ZE>

⁴⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-politics-idUSKCN0XA0WY> ; <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/04/13/Iraq-s-parliament-meets-over-PM-s-cabinet-plans-protesters-block-streets.html> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/04/14/Iraq-parliament-cancels-voting-session-on-new-cabinet-citing-lack-of-quorum.html> ; <https://www.yahoo.com/news/thousands-iraqis-answer-sadrs-call-protest-082202233.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-politics-idUSKCN0XN1AG> ; <http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-iraq-politics-idINKCN0XN27W>

- On April 13, a bombing struck the Rasheed market in the neighborhood of Abu Dshir in the southern Baghdad district of al-Darwa, killing one person and wounding five others.⁴⁵
 - On April 14, a bombing struck the al-Tobi area in western Baghdad, “killing one person and wounding seven others.”⁴⁶ Another bombing struck the district of Mahmudiya, killing two people and injuring seven others.⁴⁷
 - On April 22, an ISIL suicide bomber attacked a Shia mosque in the district of al-Radwaniya, southwest of Baghdad, killing at least 33 people and wounding at least 8 more. Another bomb detonated in the area of Abu Ghraib, killing two and wounding nine more.⁴⁸
 - On April 23, two separate car bomb attacks in Baghdad struck areas near security forces in the southern area of Arab al-Jabuur and the northern district of al-Husseiniyah. Civilian casualties were reported.⁴⁹
 - On April 25, a car bomb detonated in the predominantly Shia-district of Baghdad al-Jadida, killing at least 11 people and wounding 39 more. Another car bomb struck an army convoy in Latifiyah, south of the capital of Baghdad, killing six people.⁵⁰
2. Ninawa Governorate:
- On April 14, a team of Italian specialists arrived at the Mosul Dam to prepare the area for incoming engineers from the Trevi Group.⁵¹
 - On April 17, local sources report US-led coalition forces carried out several airstrikes on ISIL headquarters in the district of Hamadaniya, reportedly killing ISIL’s local governor of the area.⁵²
 - On April 17, Kurdish security sources report “troops from the US-led coalition” conducted a helicopter raid in the town of Badush, seizing at least one unidentified ISIL member from a vehicle.⁵³
 - On April 18, Kurdish security sources report US and Kurdish commandos conducted a helicopter raid, killing ISIL military emir, Abd Shabib al-Jabouri (aka Abu Saif).⁵⁴
 - On April 18, Iraqi security and Kurdish Peshmerga forces captured the ISIL-held villages of Nawaran and Barima, northeast of the city of Mosul.⁵⁵
3. Al Anbar Governorate:
- On April 14, the Iraqi Army declared the town of Hit as “completely liberated” from ISIL militants.⁵⁶

⁴⁵ <http://en.abna24.com/service/middle-east-west-asia/archive/2016/04/13/747052/story.html>

⁴⁶ <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/8-people-killed-wounded-bomb-blast-west-baghdad-3/>

⁴⁷ <http://en.abna24.com/service/middle-east-west-asia/archive/2016/04/13/747052/story.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-bomb-idUSKCN0XJ18Y> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/04/iraq-situation-report-april-12-25-2016.html>

⁴⁹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0XK0M6>

⁵⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0XM1IV> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/04/iraq-situation-report-april-12-25-2016.html>

⁵¹ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/904f2ee32627419db91d8eb61762cfd9/italian-team-arrives-part-mosul-dam-repair-project>

⁵² <http://aranews.net/2016/04/isis-governor-hamadaniya-killed-coalition-airstrike-northern-iraq/> ; <http://en.abna24.com/service/middle-east-west-asia/archive/2016/04/18/748252/story.html>

⁵³ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-raid-idUSKCN0XF1HT>

⁵⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-raid-idUSKCN0XF1HT>

⁵⁵ <http://aranews.net/2016/04/peshmerga-forces-sunni-militias-capture-two-villages-near-mosul/> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-raid-idUSKCN0XF1HT> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/04/iraq-situation-report-april-12-25-2016.html>

⁵⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36049780>

4. Salah ad Din Governorate:
 - On April 24-25, clashes occurred between Kurdish and Shia Turkmen fighters in the town of Tuz Khurmatu, severing the main road from the capital of Baghdad to the north of Iraq.⁵⁷
5. Diyala Governorate:
 - On April 20, Iraqi security forces began clearing operations between the towns of al-Zur and Muqdadiyah to root out any remaining ISIL cells.⁵⁸
 - On April 21, ISIL militants fired mortar shells at al-Ibara and Abu Saida, northeast of the city of Baquba resulting in casualties.⁵⁹

Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Baghdadi, Beiji, Fallujah, Habbaniyah, Haditha, Hit, Huwayjah, Irbil, Kirkuk, Kisik, Mosul, Qaim, Qayyarah, Ramadi, Rutbah, Sinjar, Sultan Abdallah, Tal Afar, and Waleed.⁶⁰
- On April 18, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that the US will send 200 additional US troops to Iraq to assist in the fight against ISIL. Kurdish Peshmerga forces will also receive 400 million USD in assistance.⁶¹
- On April 18, Russia delivered three “Su-25” fighter jets to the Iraqi army in order to give it an advantage in fighting against ISIL and other ‘terrorist groups’.⁶²
- On April 21, Russia announced that it was “providing weapons to Iraqi Kurds” to assist in their fight against ISIL in Iraq.⁶³

Other significant political and military events during the reporting period:

- On April 26, the US Department of Defense confirmed that “two separate Army High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems [HIMARS]” would be deployed to Turkey in order to target ISIL in Syria and Iraq.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-tuz-idUSKCN0XM1YV> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-tuz-idUSKCN0XL06X> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/04/iraq-situation-report-april-12-25-2016.html>

⁵⁸ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/04/iraq-situation-report-april-12-25-2016.html>

⁵⁹ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/04/iraq-situation-report-april-12-25-2016.html>

⁶⁰ See: “US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq”. *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [720818](#), [721931](#), [722826](#), [722901](#), [723033](#), [738422](#), [739486](#), [740693](#), [741313](#), [741395](#), [741515](#), [742676](#), [743726](#)

⁶¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36075452>

⁶² <http://tass.ru/en/defense/870506>

⁶³ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-pursues-ties-with-kurds-to-keep-foothold-in-region-1461239887>

⁶⁴ <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/743374/additional-troops-new-technology-enhance-counter-isil-battle> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/743229/department-of-defense-press-briefing-by-maj-gen-gersten-via-teleconference-from> ; <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/27/a-look-at-the-u-s-rockets-about-to-rock-isis-in-mosul>

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 16-0051

Report Date: April 12, 2016

Site Name: Al Saha Mosque (جامع الساحة)

Date of Incident: Unknown

Location: Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown, likely modern

Incident Summary: Photographs show damage to mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On April 12, Palmyra Coordination released a photograph of Al Saha Mosque in the city of Palmyra, reporting that the mosque had been bombed by Russian airstrikes and then looted by SARG forces.⁶⁵ The group did not specify a date on which either event occurred. ASOR CHI is unable to independently verify these claims; however, Russian airstrikes have been frequent in Palmyra since the start of the Russian intervention in Syria on September 30, 2015. Airstrikes dramatically increased in the weeks leading up to the recapture of the city of Palmyra by SARG and pro-regime forces.⁶⁶

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of the Al Saha Mosque, other heritage sites within the city of Palmyra, and heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of all periods of cultural heritage of Palmyra and the Tadmor area given its significance as UNESCO World Heritage Site and its vulnerable civilian population.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Palmyra Coordination: <https://twitter.com/PalmyraRev1/status/720007131576012802>

⁶⁵ <https://twitter.com/PalmyraRev1/status/720007131576012802>

⁶⁶ For additional information see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0155 in Weekly Report 69-70, SHI 15-0160 in Weekly Report 71-72, SHI 16-0020 in Weekly Report 79-80, SHI 16-0029 in Weekly Report 81-82, SHI 15-0160 in Weekly Report 83-84, SHI 16-0035 in Weekly Report 83-84, SHI 15-0160 in Weekly Report 87-88**



Damage to Al Saha Mosque (Palmyra Coordination; Date Unknown)



Damage to Al Saha Mosque (Palmyra Coordination; April 12, 2016)



Damage to Al Saha Mosque (Palmyra Coordination; February 27, 2016)

SHI 16-0052

Report Date: April 13, 2016

Site Name: Unnamed Church

Date of Incident: Unknown

Location: Al Shaddadi, Hasakah Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Unnamed church, described by the BBC as the only church in the town.

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Video footage shows unidentified church repurposed as a gym for ISIL members.

Incident Source and Description: On April 13, 2016 a video report published by the BBC showed footage of the now liberated town of Shaddadi. The video footage includes scenes from, what is described by the reporter, as the only church in the town that had been repurposed by ISIL as a gymnasium for its members.⁶⁷

The town of Shaddadi was liberated by Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in February 2016 after three years of occupation by Al Nusra Front and later by ISIL militants. Shaddadi was considered one of ISIL's strongholds in Hasakah Governorate prior to its recapture by the SDF.

Pattern: Military activity: reuse of cultural heritage structure.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI continues to monitor the status of cultural heritage sites following the recapture of territory from ISIL and other armed groups in Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36032235>

⁶⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36032235>



Video still of unnamed church in Al Shadadi (BBC; April 13, 2016)

SHI 16-0053

Report Date: April 15, 2016

Site Name: Al Gharbi Mosque (المسجد الغربي)

Date of Incident: April 15, 2016

Location: Al Tamanaa Town, Idlib Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: SARG airstrikes fired missiles causing severe damage to mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On April 15, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that SARG “warplanes fired missiles on Al Gharbi Mosque” in the town of Al Tamanaa, causing severe damage.⁶⁸ Regime “shelling” on the town continued on April 20, 2016.⁶⁹ During the reporting period, airstrikes and shelling attributed to SARG forces has been frequent over opposition-held areas of Idlib with several strikes hitting civilian areas.⁷⁰

Since the cessation of hostilities on February 27, 2016 at least one place of worship has received collateral damage in Idlib Governorate (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0051 in Weekly Report 87-88**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

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

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR:

April 15, 2016: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/15/regime-forces-targeted-al-gharbi-mosque-al-tamanaa-town-idlib-governorate-april-15/>

April 20, 2016: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/20/victims-died-regime-forces-shelling-al-tamanaa-town-idlib-governorate-april-20/>

⁶⁸ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/15/regime-forces-targeted-al-gharbi-mosque-al-tamanaa-town-idlib-governorate-april-15/>

⁶⁹ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/20/victims-died-regime-forces-shelling-al-tamanaa-town-idlib-governorate-april-20/>

⁷⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36084848>



Damage to the interior of Al Gharbi Mosque (SNHR; April 15, 2016)

SHI 16-0054

Report Date: April 18, 2016

Site Name: Khaled Bin Al Walid Mosque (مسجد خالد بن الوليد)

Date of Incident: April 17, 2016

Location: Al Eis Town, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Reported SARG airstrikes severely damage mosque and minaret.

Incident Source and Description: On April 18, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that SARG aircraft fired missiles on Khaled Bin Al Walid Mosque in the town of Al Eis in Aleppo Governorate, destroying the minaret and rendering the mosque inoperable.⁷¹ Video footage uploaded online on April 3, 2016 of a sermon occurring at the Khalid Bin Al Walid Mosque shows minimal interior damage to the mosque; only a few broken windows are apparent. However, much of the interior appears to have been repurposed as a sleeping quarters as blankets and other small items line the floor. The same footage from outside of the mosque shows the exterior to be intact, including the dome and the minaret.⁷²

Since the cessation of hostilities on February 27, 2016 at least one place of worship has received collateral damage in Aleppo Governorate (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0040** in **Weekly Report 85-86**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of the Khalid Bin Al Walid Mosque as well as the condition of other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

All4Syria: <http://all4syria.info/Archive/304201>

SNHR:

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/18/regime-forces-targeted-khaled-bin-al-walid-mosque-al-eis-town-aleppo-governorate-april-17/>

⁷¹ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/18/regime-forces-targeted-khaled-bin-al-walid-mosque-al-eis-town-aleppo-governorate-april-17/>

⁷² <http://all4syria.info/Archive/304201>



Video still of Khaled Bin Al Walid Mosque prior to airstrike damage to the mosque and minaret (All4Syria; April 3, 2016)



Video still of the interior of Khaled Bin Al Walid Mosque showing minimal damage and possible use as sleeping quarters (All4Syria; April 3, 2016)



Twitter photograph of reported damage to Khaled Bin Al Walid Mosque, showing what was once the top of the minaret. (Abu Bakr/Twitter: April 17, 2016)⁷³

⁷³ <https://twitter.com/Abobakr33A/status/721772451160567808>

SHI 16-0055

Report Date: April 18, 2016

Site Name: Al Ghoufran Mosque (مسجد الغفران)

Date of Incident: April 18, 2016

Location: Al Qaboun Neighborhood, Damascus, Damascus Governorate

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: SARG forces stationed inside mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On April 18, 2016 the Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC) reported that SARG forces had stationed themselves inside Al Ghoufran Mosque in the Damascus neighborhood of Al Qaboun.⁷⁴ A video released by Qasioun News Agency and shared by SHRC shows at least one possible soldier stationed on the minaret of the mosque. The footage also shows light damage to the mosque, including a hole through one side of the dome.

Pattern: Military activity: occupation.

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

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Qasioun News Agency: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PF4eB0LUk0>

SNHR: <http://www.shrc.org/?p=25376>

⁷⁴ <http://www.shrc.org/?p=25376>



Video still of Al Ghoufran Mosque (SCHR; April 18, 2016)



Video still of Al Ghoufran Mosque (SCHR; April 18, 2016)



Video still of possible SARG fighter stationed on the minaret of Al Ghoufran Mosque (SHRC; April 18, 2016)

SHI 16-0056

Report Date: April 18, 2016; April 26, 2016

Site Name: al-Firdous Mosque (جامع الفردوس); al-Nur Mosque (Bassel Mosque; مسجد النور)

Date of Incident: April 18, 2016; April 26, 2016

Location: Raqqa, Raqqa Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Al Firdous Mosque: Unknown; Al Nur Mosque: 1990s CE

Incident Summary: Reported SARG airstrikes struck the area around Al Firdous Mosque, damage unknown; Car explosion near al-Nur Mosque, damage unknown.

Incident Source and Description: On April 18, 2016 the activist group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently (RBSS) reported that two SARG airstrikes struck an area south of Al Firdous Mosque.⁷⁵ The extent of the damage to the mosque is unknown. Casualties were reported as a result of the airstrikes, which occurred following the Friday afternoon prayer.

Al Firdous Mosque has been damaged by an airstrike in at least one prior incident. In April 2013, video footage showed airstrike damage to the mosque at a time when Syrian opposition groups still controlled the city.⁷⁶ However, in 2015 video footage emerged of sermons occurring within the mosque: the building appeared to be undamaged or, at a minimum, in working condition.⁷⁷

On April 26, 2016 RBSS reported that a car explosion occurred near (to the west of) al-Nur Mosque causing unknown damage to the mosque.⁷⁸ RBSS later confirmed that the explosion was the result of a drone strike that struck a car occupied by two ISIL militants.⁷⁹ A US-led coalition airstrike previously struck a car outside of al-Nur Mosque on April 1, 2016 causing damage to the mosque (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0046** in **Weekly Report 87-88**).

Pattern: Military Activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on Al Firdous Mosque as well as Al Nur Mosque and will continue to monitor heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

⁷⁵ https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/722070686924206080

⁷⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kr0MxTS_TA

⁷⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-5ZYgqfrMw>

⁷⁸ https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/724957453029355520

⁷⁹ https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/725054107996807171

Sources:

Online Reporting:

ESyria:

<http://www.esyria.sy/eraqqa/index.php?p=stories&category=places&filename=200904061130021>

Local Coordination Committee of Syria:

<https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1371710939522705>

Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently:

April 18, 2016: https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/722070686924206080

April 26, 2016: https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/724957453029355520

April 26, 2016: https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/725054107996807171

Raqqa Unified Media Centre: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kr0MxTS_TA



Photograph of Al Firdous Mosque prior to damage (ESyria; 2009)



Photograph of Al Firdous Mosque prior to damage (ESyria; 2009)

SHI 16-0057

Report Date: April 19, 2016

Site Name: Uthman bin Affan Mosque (جامع عثمان بن عفان); al-Nur Mosque (مسجد النور)

Date of Incident: Uthman bin Affan Mosque: Unknown; al-Nur Mosque: April 19, 2016

Location: Ter Maalah, Homs Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Uthman bin Affan Mosque; al-Nur Mosque — constructed in 2002 (its minaret was later added in 2008), the al-Nur Mosque was built to resemble the Khalid ibn al-Walid Mosque in Homs.⁸⁰

Site Date: Uthman bin Affan Mosque: Unknown; al-Nur Mosque: 2002 CE

Incident Summary: Reported SARG airstrikes damage mosques in Ter Maalah.

Incident Source and Description: On April 18, 2016 Ter Maalah Direct published photographs of the Uthman bin Affan Mosque in Ter Maalah that showed significant amounts of damage. Large sections of the eastern and western walls of the building have collapsed.⁸¹ The exact date of this damage is unknown, however, Ter Maalah has been shelled by SARG forces on multiple occasions throughout April 2016.⁸²

On April 19, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that a SARG helicopter had dropped a barrel bomb on al-Nur Mosque in Ter Maalah, severely damaging the mosque.⁸³ In addition, SARG airstrikes reportedly have hit Ter Maalah almost daily since April 12, 2016.⁸⁴

Al-Nur Mosque suffered significant damage prior to this latest attack as a result of at least two previous airstrikes. On October 15 and 19, 2015 Russian airstrikes reportedly struck the mosque, killing at least 20 civilians and severely damaging the building.⁸⁵ On November 3, 2015 Ter Maalah News Network posted a video on YouTube showing damage to the interior of the mosque as a result of these airstrikes. Debris litters the floor and there are several large holes in the walls and ceiling.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ <http://tirma3la.montadalitihad.com/t90-topic>

⁸¹ <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/964319306993365>

⁸² <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/videos/vb.498922596866374/960478514044111/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/961629580595671>; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/photos/a.498936286865005.1073741828.498922596866374/963286777096618/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/videos/963478777077418/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/964597520298877>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGrXCcCmzWs>

⁸³ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/19/regime-forces-targeted-al-nour-mosque-teir-maala-town-homs-governorate-april-19/>

⁸⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/videos/vb.498922596866374/960478514044111/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/961629580595671>; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/photos/a.498936286865005.1073741828.498922596866374/963286777096618/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/videos/963478777077418/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/964597520298877>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGrXCcCmzWs>

⁸⁵ <http://www.souriat.com/2015/10/11719.html>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9T7C4gXEs34>

⁸⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Phbz8zjvkWc>

On March 22, 2016 Ter Maalah Direct posted photographs of the mosque on Facebook.⁸⁷ The windows in one of the domes appear to have shattered, and glass and other debris litters the floor. Some sections of the roof appear to have collapsed. It is unclear if this is new damage, or damage from the October 2015 airstrikes. Ter Maalah News Network posted a video on April 12, 2016 showing severe structural damage to the mosque.⁸⁸ Part of the mosque's minaret broke off and fell through the ceiling of the mosque. Most of the windows appear to have been blown out. It is unclear if this was the result of another airstrike or of previous damage to the building. A March 22, 2016 photo shows the minaret still standing, although it appears structurally unsound.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of the Uthman bin Affan Mosque and al-Nur Mosque in Ter Maalah, as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Eye on Homeland: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGrXCcCmzWs>

Homs Media Center: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9T7C4gXEs34>

Ter Maalah Direct:

April 11, 2016:

<https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/videos/vb.498922596866374/960478514044111/>

April 14, 2016:

<https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/961629580595671>

April 17, 2016:

<https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/photos/a.498936286865005.1073741828.498922596866374/963286777096618/> ; <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/videos/963478777077418/>

April 18, 2016:

<https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/96439;306993365>

April 19, 2016: <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/96459752029887>

March 22, 2016: <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/944610338964262>

Ter Maalah News Network:

April 12, 2016:

<https://www.facebook.com/Terma3la.News.s/photos/pb.867655356621329.-2207520000.1460697240./1005677502819113/> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gq-zzxLnn7w>

⁸⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/Termaala.mubasher/posts/944610338964262>

⁸⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/Terma3la.News.s/photos/pb.867655356621329.-2207520000.1460697240./1005677502819113/> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gq-zzxLnn7w>

SNHR:

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/19/regime-forces-targeted-al-nour-mosque-teir-maala-town-homs-governorate-april-19/>

Souriat: <http://www.souriat.com/2015/10/11719.html>



Severe damage to Uthman bin Affan Mosque (Ter Maalah Direct; April 18, 2016)



Severe damage to al-Nur Mosque, including collapse of minaret (April 15, 2016)



Severe damage to al-Nur Mosque, including collapse of minaret (Ter Maalah Direct; April 18, 2016)



Severe damage to al-Nur Mosque (Ter Maalah News Network; April 12, 2016)



Severe damage to al-Nur Mosque, including partial collapse (Ter Maalah Direct; March 22, 2016)



Severe damage to al-Nur Mosque, including partial collapse (Ter Maalah Direct; March 22, 2016)



Severe damage to al-Nur Mosque and its minaret (Ter Maalah Direct; March 22, 2016)



Panoramic view of damage to interior of al-Nur Mosque (Ter Maalah Direct; March 9, 2016)



Damage to interior of al-Nur Mosque following airstrike (Souriat; October 20, 2015)



Damage to interior of al-Nur Mosque following airstrike (Souriat; October 20, 2015)



Damage to exterior of al-Nur Mosque following airstrike (Souriat; October 20, 2015)

SHI 16-0058

Report Date: April 23, 2016

Site Name:

- Suq Asruniyeh ('Asruniya; سوق العصريونية)
- Suq Meskiyeh (سوق المسكية)
- Othman Bank (Ottoman Bank; Markadouhou Bank Building; البنك العثماني)

Date of Incident: April 23-24, 2016

Location: Damascus, Damascus Governorate, Syria

Site Description:

- Suq Asruniyeh - This suq contains many shops selling large appliances and other supplies for the home, as well as children's toys. According to the DGAM, the suq was named for the al-Asruniyeh Madrasa, which was established nearby in the 12th-century CE by jurist Sharaf ad-Din Abdullah ibn Abu 'Asrun (d. 1189 CE).⁸⁹
- Suq Meskiyeh - This marketplace is near Suq Asruniyeh and Meskiyeh Square, and located on the western side of the Umayyad Mosque. It contains shops selling Qurans.⁹⁰ According to the DGAM, until the 1980s Suq Meskiyeh had been renowned for hundreds of years for its locally made perfumes.⁹¹
- Othman Bank - The Othman (Ottoman) Bank was constructed in 1895 CE during the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II.⁹²

Site Date:

- Suq Asruniyeh - ca. 1500 CE
- Suq Meskiyeh - ca. 1500 CE
- Othman Bank - 1895 CE

Incident Summary: An electrical fire caused extensive damage in Old Damascus.

Incident Source and Description: On April 23, 2016 the DGAM reported that a major electrical fire had broken out in the early morning of that same day in the Suq Asruniyeh.⁹³ The Othman Bank, located in or near Suq Asruniyeh, was also critically damaged. The DGAM reported that the building's ceiling collapsed. The fire took seven hours to extinguish, and ultimately destroyed or

⁸⁹ http://www.oidmg.org/weber/stefan%20Weber_Homepage%20startseite/transformation%20of%20an%20arab.pdf ; <http://archnet.org/system/publications/contents/5487/original/DPC2232.pdf?1384793230> ; <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1975>

⁹⁰ Burns (2009): 100

⁹¹ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/damages/eplace.php?placeid=26#>

⁹² <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1975>

⁹³ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1975>

damaged around 70 shops.⁹⁴ Another fire broke out on the evening of April 23, 2016 in nearby Suq al-Meskiyeh, causing more damage to shops.⁹⁵

According to an ASOR CHI source, many buildings in the Old City of Damascus contain unsafe electrical systems. The current conflict has exacerbated these issues because frequent, localized power failures have increased the risk of electrical fire, shocks, and short circuits in Damascus and other areas of the country. Moreover, the fire in Suq Asruniyeh was difficult to extinguish because of the flammable nature of the goods being sold and the fact that the fire began early in the morning when the suq was closed. As such, fire and rescue did not arrive immediately.

Pattern: Site management.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor cultural heritage sites in and around Damascus.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/damages/eplace.php?placeid=26#>
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1975>
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1974>

Khaled al-Homsi: <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/726616325888610305>

Orient News: http://orient-news.net/en/news_show/110136/0/Damascus-large-fire-re-breaks-out-in-al-Meskia

Ruptly: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpgGLaVet2g>

SANA: <http://sana.sy/en/?p=75361>

Scholarly:

Burns, R. (2009) *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. London: I.B. Tauris.

⁹⁴ <http://sana.sy/en/?p=75361>

⁹⁵ http://orient-news.net/en/news_show/110136/0/Damascus-large-fire-re-breaks-out-in-al-Meskia ; <https://www.facebook.com/dimashq.now/posts/907714412687505>



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



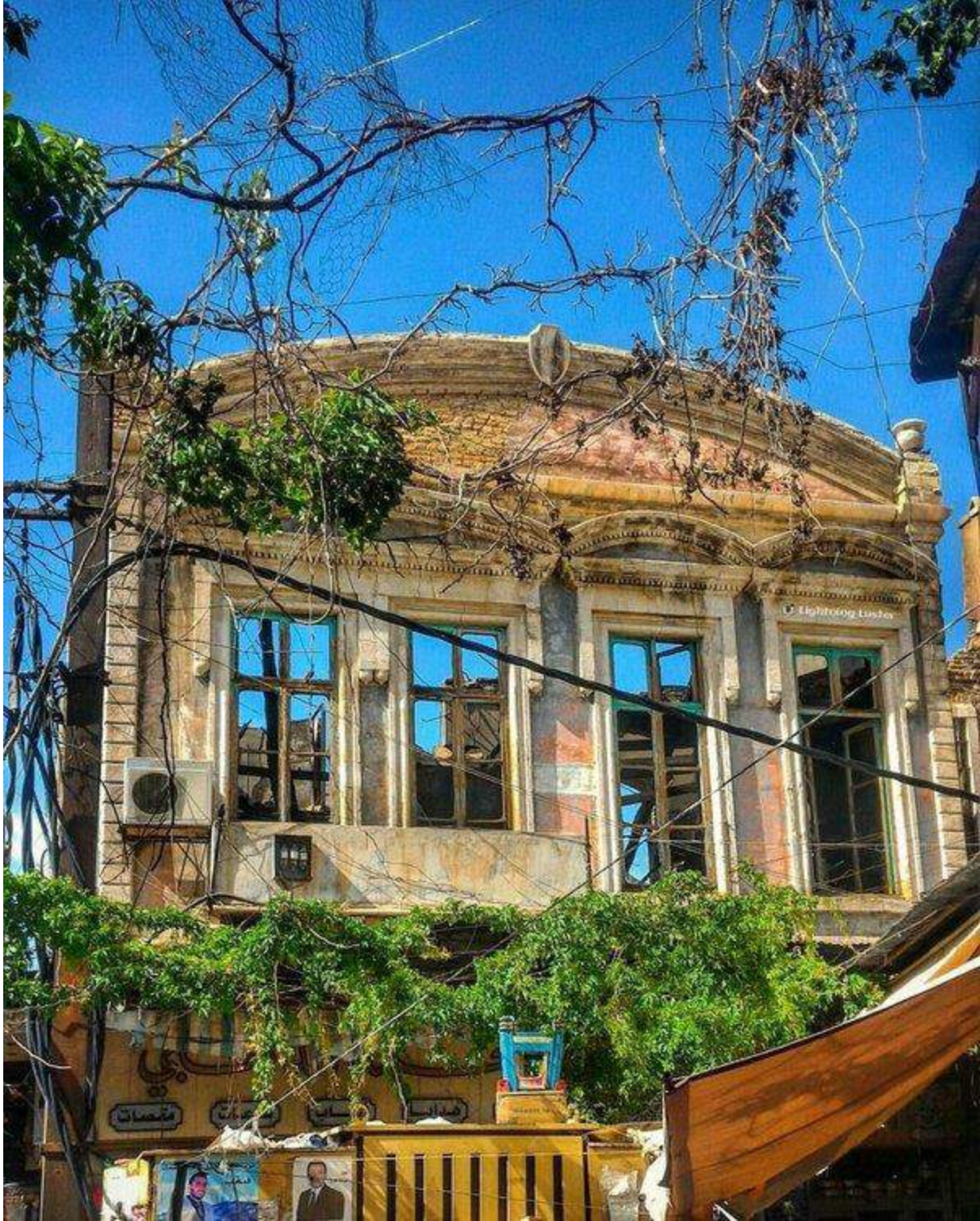
Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Fire in Suq Asruniyeh area (DGAM; April 23, 2016)



Othman Bank in Suq Asruniyeh, damaged by fire (Khaled al-Homsi Twitter; April 30, 2016)

SHI 16-0059

Report Date: April 22, 2016

Site Name: Zaid bin Haritha Mosque (مسجد زيد بن حارثة)

Date of Incident: April 22, 2016

Location: Bab al-Nayrab Neighborhood, Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: SARG airstrike damages mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On April 22, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that a SARG airstrike caused unspecified damage to the Zaid bin Haritha Mosque in the Bab al-Nayrab neighborhood of Aleppo.⁹⁶ No photographs of the damage were available at the time of publication.

Since the cessation of hostilities on February 27, 2016 at least one place of worship has received collateral damage in the city of Aleppo (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0040** in **Weekly Report 85-86**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of the Zaid bin Haritha 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/2016/04/22/regime-forces-targeted-zaid-bin-haretha-mosque-al-nayrab-neighborhood-aleppo-april-22/>

⁹⁶ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/04/22/regime-forces-targeted-zaid-bin-haretha-mosque-al-nayrab-neighborhood-aleppo-april-22/>

Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 16-0010

Report Date: April 14, 2016

Site Name: Nineveh including the Mashki Gate (بوابة المسقى), Adad Gate (بوابة ادد), and Nergal Gate (بوابة نركال)

Date of Incident: Mashki Gate: April 10, 2016; Adad and Nergal Gates: April 14, 2016

Location: Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

Site Description:

- Mashki Gate (بوابة المسقى) - The Mashki Gate is dated to the reign of Sennacherib (701-681 BCE). Located on the Tigris River, the gate's name may be translated as the "Gate of Watering Places." The exterior of the gate included stone steps leading down to the river, an indication that livestock would be driven through this gate to drink. Excavation and reconstruction of the gate took place between 1967-1971 under the auspices of the Iraq Department of Antiquities. The interior of the gate was excavated by David Stronach of UC Berkeley in 1989-1990.⁹⁷
- Adad Gate (بوابة ادد) - The Adad Gate, named for the storm-god Adad or Hadad, is located east of the Nergal Gate, on the northern side of Nineveh. Excavations at this site turned up large tiles dating to the reign of Sennacherib (701-681 BCE).⁹⁸ This gate was excavated and reconstructed by the University of Mosul in the 1960s.⁹⁹ The reconstruction is a mixture of concrete and mudbrick.¹⁰⁰
- Nergal Gate (بوابة نركال) - The Nergal Gate, named for the god Nergal, was located on the northern side of Nineveh. The gate was reconstructed by Iraq's Department of Antiquities in the 1950s in order to protect winged bulls located there and create a local museum.¹⁰¹ Dating to the reign of Sennacherib, A.H. Layard, one of the first archaeologists to explore Nineveh, offers this description of the gate: It was apparently the remains of a gate leading into this quarter of the city, and part of a building, with fragments of two colossal winged figures, had already been discovered in it . . . Following the rows of limestone slabs, from the south side of the mound, and passing through two halls or chambers, we came at length to the opposite entrance. This gateway, facing the open country, was formed by a pair of majestic human-headed bulls, fourteen feet in length, and still entire, though cracked and injured by fire.¹⁰²

Site Date: 700-681 BCE (Assyrian)

Incident Summary: ISIL militants level two of the gates of Nineveh and damage segments of the fortification wall.

⁹⁷ Madhloum 1968: 24:45

⁹⁸ Madhloum 1966: 22

⁹⁹ Sulaiman 1971: 45-97

¹⁰⁰ el-Wailly 1966: a-j

¹⁰¹ al-Asil 1956: 3-9

¹⁰² Layard 1853:120

Incident Source and Description: On April 10, 2016 the Iraqi activist group Mosulyoon reported that ISIL militants destroyed the Mashki Gate at Nineveh using earthmovers.¹⁰³ According to other news sources, local activists in Mosul reported the damage to the Mashki Gate and provided unconfirmed reports that the “stones” from the gate were being sold by ISIL.¹⁰⁴

On April 14, 2016 Al Masdar and other news outlets reported that ISIL destroyed the Adad Gate and other portions of the ancient wall of Nineveh.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the Facebook group Endangered Heritage Sites in Iraq reported that ISIL militants had also destroyed the Nergal Gate.¹⁰⁶ The Nergal Gate previously suffered significant damage by ISIL militants, who in February 2015 released a video in which militants defaced the winged bulls at the gate with sledgehammers and drills (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0033** in **Weekly Report 30**).¹⁰⁷

An in-country ASOR CHI source provided photographs reportedly showing the destruction of the Mashki and Nergal Gates, taken from inside a moving vehicle from the road outside the walls of the ancient site. The images of the Mashki Gate show the structure in ruins and a sign identifying the structure. In the other photograph, an earthmover is leveling the mound of the fortification wall and moving toward the Nergal Gate. At the time, the photographer assumed the gate has been destroyed. No photographs of the destruction of the Adad Gate were available at the time of publication.

Sputnik Arabic and Russia Today also reported that ISIL militants were digging tunnels within the archaeological boundaries at Nineveh and provided a video of the activity. ASOR CHI has not been able to independently corroborate the authenticity and accuracy of these reports at the time of publication and will provide an updated assessment as more information becomes available

The site of Nineveh and the surrounding area has been subject to urban development by ISIL authorities. For further details, see **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0095** in **Weekly Report 59–60**, **IHI 15-0097** in **Weekly Report 67–68**, and **IHI 15-0097 UPDATE** in **Weekly Report 79–80**.

Pattern: Military activity; intentional destruction; Development disturbances; Illegal excavation.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports of the bulldozing of all three gates and will continue to monitor reports of damage this and other cultural heritage sites in the city of Mosul and in Ninawa Governorate. ASOR CHI will investigate reports of looting at Nineveh with in-country sources.

¹⁰³ <https://www.facebook.com/mosulyoon/posts/973626796066385:0>

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-destroys-gates-ancient-city-nineveh-mosul-a6980686.html> ; <http://aranews.net/2016/04/isis-destroys-archaeological-symbol-mosul-dates-7th-century-bc/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-ruins-priceless-historical-sites-iraq/> ;

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/165665/داعش-يهدم-بوابة-ادد-في-الموصل-وأجزاء-من>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IraqiSitesUnderThread/permalink/1712046705743564/>

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/27/world/middleeast/historians-pore-over-isis-video-of-smashed-statues-for-clues-to-whats-been-lost.html>

Sources:

Online Reporting:

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http://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-daesh-destruye-puerta-mashqi-historica-ciudad-asiria-ninive-201604122311_noticia.html

ARA News: <http://aranews.net/2016/04/isis-destroys-archaeological-symbol-mosul-dates-7th-century-bc/>

Assyrian Media Network: <https://www.facebook.com/Assyrian.M.N/posts/591523854347199:0>

Al-Hayat: <http://www.alhayat.com/m/story/15062463>

Independent: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-destroys-gates-ancient-city-nineveh-mosul-a6980686.html>

Al Masdar: <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/isis-ruins-priceless-historical-sites-iraq/>

Al Mawsiliat Fadaiya: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErPWXrqdfjw>

Mosulyoon: <https://www.facebook.com/mosulyoon/posts/973626796066385:0>

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<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160419-Islamic-State-ISIS-ISIL-Nineveh-gates-Iraq-Mosul-destroyed/>

New York Times:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/27/world/middleeast/historians-pore-over-isis-video-of-smashed-statues-for-clues-to-whats-been-lost.html>

Radio Nawa: <http://www.radionawa.com/arabic/videoview.aspx?v=214>

Rudaw: <http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=208881>

Al Sumaria: <http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/165665/داعش-يهدم-بوابة-المدن-في-الموصل-وأجزاء-من-الأثار>

Sputnik Arabic:

April 22, 2016: http://arabic.sputniknews.com/arab_world/20160422/1018465782/-فيديو-حصري-نفق-لداعش-في-الموصل-لنهب-الأثار.html

April 24, 2016: http://arabic.sputniknews.com/arab_world/20160424/1018485890.html

Russia Today: <https://arabic.rt.com/news/820301-نفق-داعش-تهرب-الأثار-المسرقة-الموصل>

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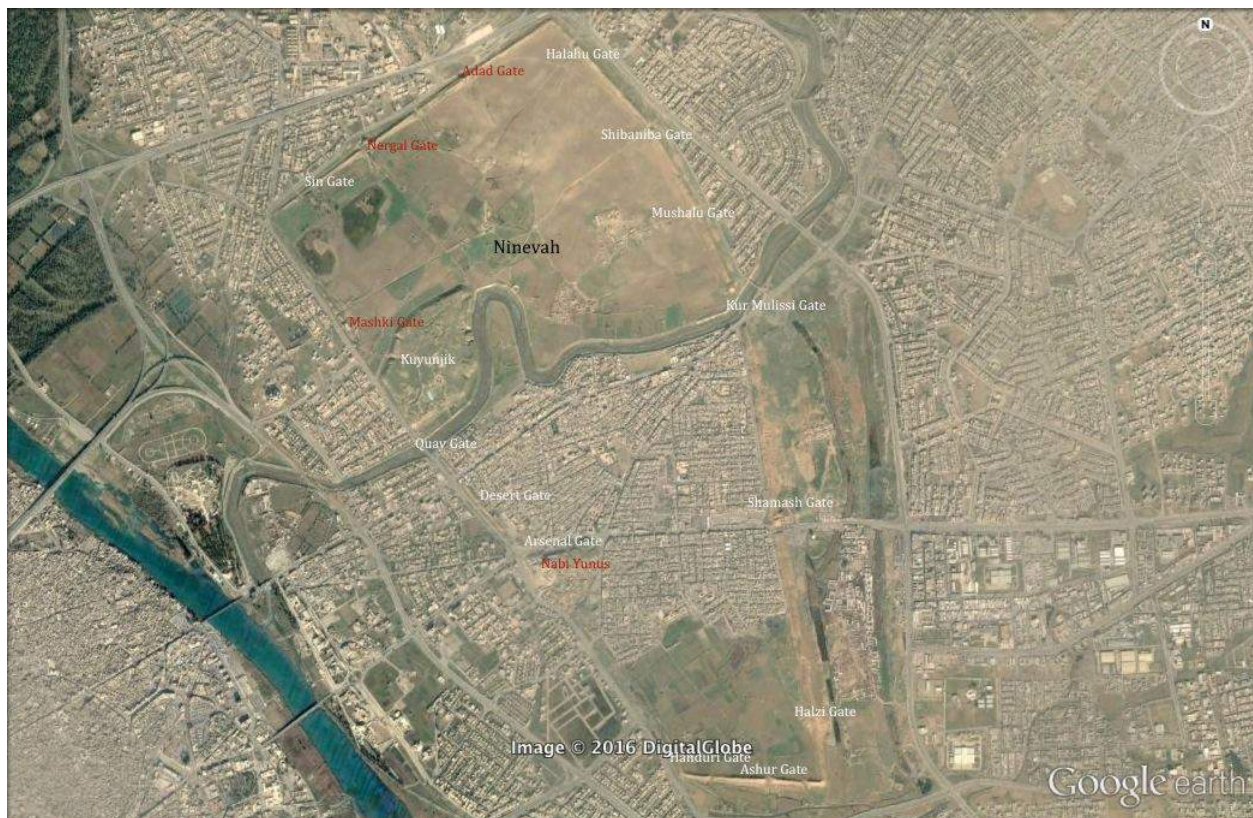
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Sulaiman, 'Amer. 1971. *Adab al-Rafidain*. 1. 45-9.

el-Wailly, F. (1966) "Forward" *Sumer* 22: a-j.



The site of Nineveh, with destroyed monuments in red (ASOR CHI/Google Earth; 2004)



Damage to Mashki Gate (ASOR CHI Sources; received April 14, 2016)



Area of the Nergal Gate with working earthmover in foreground leveling the mound by the gate as well as the site wall (ASOR CHI Sources; received April 14, 2016)



Video still of alleged looting tunnel at Nineveh (Sputnik Arabic; April 22, 2016)



Screenshot of Google Map marking the location of the alleged looting tunnel at Nineveh (Sputnik Arabic; April 22, 2016)

IHI 16-0011

Report Date: April 9, 2016

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

Date of Incident: between February 2015 and April 9, 2016

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. 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.¹⁰⁸ The scenes depict “a relatively small figure of the king as a worshipper facing right toward a line of five large gods and two goddesses mounted on animals and fantastic beasts, including from right to left, the gods Ashur, Ninlil, Sin, Anu or Enlil, Shamash, Adad, and Ishtar. Another figure of the king, facing left, is depicted at the end of the row of deities, creating a composition of divine figures flanked by two identical royal images.”¹⁰⁹ 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.¹¹⁰

All four relief panels 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.¹¹¹ 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.¹¹²

Site Date: ca. 680s BCE

Incident Summary: Assyrian reliefs were vandalized with spray paint a second time.

Incident Source and Description: On April 9, 2016 local hikers found a second Kurdish flag was spray painted on the Malthai reliefs. The previous vandalism was discovered in late February 2016, which was publicized by the Assyrian International News Agency.¹¹³ AINA based this report on a photograph posted on Twitter with the caption, “The Maltai Assyrian relief in Duhok was recently vandalized as well.”¹¹⁴ This earlier damage likely took place sometime between late December 2015 and late February 2016. Previous images from the February 2016 damage are cropped in such a way that it is difficult to determine if the second graffiti was present at the time. However, given

¹⁰⁸ http://archmap.org/archmap_2/Site/Collection?resource=233&building_id=2689

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2014/assyria-to-iberia/blog/posts/rock-reliefs>

¹¹⁰ Ur 2005: 327

¹¹¹ http://archmap.org/archmap_2/Site/Collection?building_id=2689

¹¹² <https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2016/02/23/iraq-krq-dohuk-maltai-peshmerga-destruction-false-claims/>

¹¹³ <http://www.aina.org/news/20160223023140.htm>

¹¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/amirani87/status/701731045142568960>

that the purpose of these reports was to bring attention to the graffiti, it would seem more likely that second flag would have also been publicized if it had been present at the time.

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 and attempt to narrow the window of time when both events took place.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

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Vandalism and graffiti on Malthai Rock Relief (Twitter; February 22, 2016)



Vandalism and graffiti on Malthai Rock Relief (Facebook; February 22, 2016)



Second flag graffito on Malthai Rock Relief (ASOR CHI in-country sources; April 9, 2016)



Two spray paint flags on Malthai Rock Relief (ASOR CHI in-country sources; April 9, 2016)

IHI 16-0012

Report Date: April 16, 2016

Site Name: Al Firdous Mosque (جامع الفردوس)

Date of Incident: April 15, 2016

Location: Fallujah City, Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Shelling damages mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On April 16, 2016 ISIL-affiliated Amaq News Agency released a video of damage caused to Al Firdous Mosque in the city of Fallujah reportedly caused by artillery shelling.¹¹⁵ Video footage shows extensive damage to the exterior of the mosque as well as material damage to the interior. If artillery shelling is the cause of this damage, it is likely to be shelling launched by Iraqi forces. However, on April 16, 2016 the US-led coalition reported striking an ISIL tactical unit near Fallujah, leading to the possibility that this damage was caused by some form of airstrike as opposed to artillery fire.¹¹⁶ The coalition has previously struck mosques that they have identified as ISIL-related targets in Iraq.¹¹⁷

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of the Al Firdous Mosque as well as heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

US Department of Defense: <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/722826/inherent-resolve-strikes-target-isil-in-syria-iraq>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OA-sfPdEy8U>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OA-sfPdEy8U>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/722826/inherent-resolve-strikes-target-isil-in-syria-iraq>

¹¹⁷ For additional reports on US-led coalition airstrikes on religious sites in Iraq see: **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0008** in **Weekly Report 83-84**; **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0009** in **Weekly Report 85-86**



Al Firdous Mosque (Mohammed Tafash/Panoramio; 2008)



Video still of damage to Al Firdous Mosque (YouTube; April 16, 2016)



Video still of damage to Al Firdous Mosque (YouTube; April 16, 2016)



Video still of damage to Al Firdous Mosque (YouTube; April 16, 2016)