

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

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Weekly Report 69–70 — November 25 – December 8, 2015

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## Executive Summary

During the reporting period, various sources provided information documenting a relatively high number of heritage incidents in Syria. Within this dataset, SARG airstrikes represented the predominant destructive force with reported incidents in Aleppo, Kafr Hamra, Jisr al-Shoughour, Maraat al-Numan, Hama, Tadmor, and Al-Latamneh. The M5 Highway corridor and Tadmor continued to be the main foci for such attacks. Russian airstrikes also reportedly caused heritage damage within these operational theaters. Overall, reported heritage damage during the reporting period continued the recent trend (since May 2015) characterized by a relatively high incidence of combat damage to mosques and surrounding areas inflicted primarily by SARG airstrikes and barrel bombings.

ISIL released a video showing the execution of prisoners by child soldiers in Qalaat al-Rahbeh, a famous castle, in Deir ez-Zor Governorate. This continues the organization's practice of publicizing executions and occasionally using heritage sites for such atrocities to promote the ISIL ideological brand.

## Key Points

- A report by The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative details damage to Ebla in Syria ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0150](#)).
- In-country sources in Syria report on the condition of Tell al-Atarib in Aleppo Governorate ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0151](#)) and the Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz in Hama Governorate ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0152](#)).
- ISIL releases video of executions at Qaalat al-Rahbeh ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0153](#)).
- Russian airstrikes and clashes between ISIL militants and pro-Assad forces in and near Tadmor/ Palmyra cause extensive damage in the area ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0155](#)).
- SARG airstrikes continue in the governorates of Damascus, and Homs.
- Russian airstrikes continue in the governorates of Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Idlib, and Latakia.

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

- Religious heritage sites were damaged by airstrikes in the regions of Hama (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0154**), Aleppo (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0156**), and Idlib (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0157**).
- Ongoing airstrikes on the city of Aleppo, including portions of the Old City, caused extensive damage and high civilian casualties.

## Heritage Timeline

- December 8, 2015 *AFP* published an article entitled “**European states urge action against IS antiquities dealing.**” France, Germany, and Italy called for the EU to “crack down” on the illegal trading of antiquities that fund ISIL.  
<http://news.yahoo.com/european-states-urge-action-against-antiquities-dealing-160152942.html>
- December 4, 2015 *L'Orient Le Jour* published an article entitled “**En Syrie, c’est l’EI qui livre les permis de fouilles archéologiques**” (May Makarem).  
<https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/958737/en-syrie-cest-lei-qui-livre-les-permis-de-fouilles-archeologiques.html>
- December 4, 2015 *The New Yorker* published an article entitled “**The Real Value of the ISIS Antiquities Trade**” (by Ben Taub). The article includes information provided by ASOR CHI Academic Director, **Michael Danti**, regarding the looting and selling of antiquities by ISIL.  
<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-real-value-of-the-isis-antiquities-trade>
- *The Telegraph* published an article entitled “**ISIL antiques 'sold to western collectors' warns French finance minister**” (by David Chazan). French finance minister, Michel Sapin, demands stricter regulations to stop ISIL’s illicit trade in antiquities.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/12034421/Isil-antiques-sold-to-western-collectors-warns-French-finance-minister.html>
  - *Planet Money* aired a podcast titled “**Episode 667: Auditing ISIS**” (hosted by Stacey Vanek Smith) discussing the various ways ISIL funds its activities, including through the trafficking and sale of antiquities. The podcast includes an interview with ASOR CHI Project Manager Allison Cuneo.  
<http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=458524627>

- December 3, 2015      The **International Syrian Congress on Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (ISCACH)** began in Beirut. The program centers on the ongoing crisis in Syria. The event will run through December 6, 2015. <http://www.archeorient.mom.fr/sites/archeorient.mom.fr/files/docs/Activites/ISCACH%20%28Beirut%202015%29%20PROGRAM%20.pdf>
- December 2, 2015      **Harvard University** held an event titled “**Breaking Iconoclasm: Destroying and Rebuilding Past and Present Heritage.**” The roundtable discussion focused on the interdisciplinary approaches to iconoclasm within the context of recent archaeological events. <http://archaeology.harvard.edu/event/breaking-iconoclasm-roundtable>
- December 1, 2015      *National Geographic* published an article titled “**Antiquities Chief: Syria Needs Global Help to Save Heritage**” (by Kristin Romey). Syrian antiquities chief Maamoun Abdulkarim demands more from the international community in stopping ISIL’s destruction of cultural heritage. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/12/151201-syria-cultural-heritage-antiquities-isis-palmyra-dgam-assad/>
- November 30, 2015      **The European Union National Institutes for Culture** published an article titled “**Thinking on Policies**” (by Neil Brodie). Blogger speculates about the productivity of a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the disruption of the buying and selling of cultural antiquities and the benefit of disrupting these trade activities. <http://washington-dc.eunic-online.eu/?q=content%2Fthinking-policies-0>
- *The Economist* published an article titled “**Culture and jihad, grimly connected through the art market’s ‘blood antiquities’.**” <http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2015/11/antiquities-and-terror>
- November 29, 2015      **Heritage for Peace** published its most recent newsletter on the damage to Syrian heritage. <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-29-november-2015/>
- November 28, 2015      *Reuters* published an article titled “**Syria army says Turkey increases arms shipments to rebels.**” The Syrian Army released a statement that the Turkish government has increased military support to terrorist groups fighting President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, with one of the claims alleging that weapons are supplied in exchange for looted Syrian and Iraqi antiquities. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-idUSKBN0TH0KU20151128#mY8I3Cy2b6RSWRDU.97>

- November 26, 2015 *YaleGlobal Online* published an article titled **“ISIS Rampage: A Threat to Cultural Heritage That Belongs to All”** (by James Cuno).  
<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/isis-rampage-threat-cultural-heritage-belongs-all>
- **The Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm** held an event titled **“Cultural Heritage at Risk The Role of Museums in War and Conflict”**.  
<http://www.varldskulturmuseerna.se/files/medelhavet/Program/PRELIMINARY%20PROGRAMME%20NOV%202016.pdf>
- November 25, 2015 *National Geographic* published an article titled **“War, More Than ISIS, Is Destroying Syria’s Ancient Sites”** (by Andrew Lawler). This article reviews the collateral damage to cultural heritage sites in Syria linked to ISIL, Russian airstrikes, and other forces of the Syrian war.  
<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/151125-isis-syria-satellite-images-looting-archaeology/>
- **The Iranian Heritage Foundation** announced its conference program entitled **“Destruction of Monuments and Memory in the Middle East.”**  
[http://www.iranheritage.org/newsflash/Destruction\\_of\\_Monuments/newsflash.html](http://www.iranheritage.org/newsflash/Destruction_of_Monuments/newsflash.html)
- November 24, 2015 *Columbia GSAPP* published a video titled **“Culture and Heritage After Palmyra, Interdisciplinary Discussion.”** The video covers a gathering of Syrian antiquities experts that took place on October 29, 2015.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLm3Uf6Xtvc>

## Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo Governorate:
  - During the reporting period, local sources reported increasing Russian and possible Syrian airstrikes on the city of Aleppo, including areas of the old city of Aleppo.<sup>2</sup>
  - During the reporting period, Russian airstrikes targeted towns in the northern and western countryside of Aleppo, including Azaz and Atareb, as well as the Bab el-Salam (aka al-Salameh) border crossing near the Turkish border. The strikes in Azaz reportedly struck humanitarian aid convoys originating from Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2-S4qe8eD0> ; <https://twitter.com/abcnews/status/674187911978422272>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/29/us-mideast-crisis-syria-ariha-idUSKBN0TI07K20151129> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-november-11.html>

- During the reporting period, clashes occurred between Islamist-led rebels, Kurdish YPG forces, Jaish al-Thuwar (aka The Revolutionary Army), and a coalition of Free Syrian Army groups in the area surrounding the village of Kashtar in southern Aleppo governorate. Fighters from the Fatah Halab coalition, which includes Islamist opposition forces, reportedly seized control of the villages of Keshtar and Tanab from Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on November 29.<sup>4</sup>
- On November 26, a Russian airstrike struck the al-Khafseh water treatment plant in the city of Aleppo, reducing the supply of water for 3.5 million people.<sup>5</sup>
- Between November 28-30, US-backed Syrian rebels clashed with rival militants near the town of Azaz, close to the Syrian border with Turkey, killing more than 20 people.<sup>6</sup>
- On December 1, the Kurdish YPG clashed with Syrian Islamist opposition groups in northern Aleppo. YPG forces seized the villages of Miremin and Anab in the countryside area of Afrin from Islamist fighters. In response, fighters from al-Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham attacked the YPG headquarters in the majority-Kurdish neighborhood of Sheikh Maqsoud. The YPG also targeted Islamist groups' locations in the districts of al-Shkef and Castillo.<sup>7</sup>
- On December 2, Russian airstrikes in the northern residential areas of Kafr Nasih and Ithris killed 25 people and destroyed 10 humanitarian aid vehicles. In addition, Russian airstrikes repeatedly struck the northern districts of Jarez and Kafra.<sup>8</sup>
- On December 8, Syrian government forces, with the support of Iranian troops, moved closer to a rebel-controlled highway south of Aleppo that connects rebel forces from Aleppo to Idlib. Syrian government forces have recently seized the villages of Zitan, Humaira, and Qalaaajiya, as well as the outskirts to the village of Zirba and the town of Khan Touman.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Homs Governorate:

- During the reporting period, ongoing Russian airstrikes, as well as clashes between Syrian regime forces and ISIL militants reportedly struck in and around the site of Palmyra.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.interpretermag.com/putin-in-syria-russia-hits-border-crossings-as-fighting-breaks-out-north-of-aleppo/> ; <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/195746>; <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/ypg-and-allies-clashes-syrian-opposition-groups-aleppo-633986086>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-aleppo-water-idUSKBN0TK4F020151201> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-november-25.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/11/30/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://aranews.net/2015/12/kurdish-forces-clash-with-islamist-rebels-in-aleppo/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dailysabah.com/syrian-crisis/2015/12/03/russian-airstrikes-kill-25-people-hit-humanitarian-aid-vehicles-in-syrias-aleppo>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-aleppo-idUSKBN0TR25I20151208>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/12/dozens-of-russian-airstrikes-target-tadmur-and-aleppo-countryside/> ; <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/07/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-al-eman-mosque-in-palmyra-city-in-homs-governorate-in-december-6/> ;

<https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/672944564278308864> ; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraRev1>

- During the reporting period, Russia was reported to be deploying “fixed-wing aircraft and ground support personnel” to Shayrat Military Airbase, 15.5 miles (25 km) southeast of Homs City. This action would “bolster” Russia’s military presence in central Syria, as well as increase Russian support for ongoing ground offensives in the area by the Syrian regime, particularly in their attempts to re-capture the cities of Palmyra and Qaryatain from ISIL militants.<sup>11</sup>
  - During the reporting period, the Syrian government and rebel forces in the neighborhood of Waer reportedly reached a ceasefire agreement that would allow for the evacuation of the wounded and a safe route for humanitarian aid. An agreement was reportedly reached on December 1, and included a plan for the “evacuation of opposition forces”.<sup>12</sup>
  - On November 28, a “double tap” barrel bomb attack, likely carried out by Syrian armed forces, struck a Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) supported hospital in the northern town of Zafarana, killing seven people and wounding 47 more.<sup>13</sup>
  - On November 30, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that ISIL militants executed at least 18 people accused of working with regime forces “in a public yard” in Palmyra city.<sup>14</sup>
3. Idlib Governorate:
- During the reporting period, Russia carried out ongoing airstrikes in Idlib governorate, including in the towns of Dana and Sarmada.<sup>15</sup>
  - On November 28, a Russian airstrike struck a residential area in the town of Binnish, killing 11 civilians. Another airstrike struck a humanitarian aid convoy in the town of Dana, near the Bab al-Hawa border crossing.<sup>16</sup>
  - On November 29, Russian airstrikes struck a crowded marketplace in the town of Ariha, killing at least 60 people and wounding dozens more. Ariha is controlled by the rebel-alliance known as the Army of Conquest. Russian airstrikes also reportedly hit a bakery responsible for distributing bread to 45,000 IDPs in the northern area of Saraqib.<sup>17</sup>

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[/status/672503523259584512](#) ; <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/12/clashes-in-tadmur-and-more-losses-in-idlib/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/russia-reportedly-expands-syria.html> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/12/03/Syria-activists-Russians-expanding-2nd-air-base-in-country.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/195763-negotiations-seek-syria-rebel-exit-from-homs-city> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/12/01/Syria-deal-for-rebels-to-leave-last-Homs-district-governor-.html> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/reached-truce-district-syria-homs-151202080856510.html> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/12/06/Aid-reaches-Syrian-rebel-held-area-of-Homs.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/01/syria-msf-hospital-homs-barrel-bombing>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/11/is-executes-18-in-tadmur-city/> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/11/30/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/29/us-mideast-crisis-syria-ariha-idUSKBN0TI07K20151129>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syria-russian-warplanes-kill-11-civilians-in-idlib/482669> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-november-11.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/20-killed-russian-air-strike-syrian-market-151129082103978.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/29/us-mideast-crisis-syria-ariha->

#### 4. Deir ez Zor:

- On December 2–3, British Royal Air Force jets struck six ISIL targets inside the Omar oil fields.<sup>18</sup>
- On December 3, ISIL released a video titled “To the Sons of Jews” (“الى ابناء يهود”) depicting an ‘initiation ritual’ or training for the so-called “Cubs of the Caliphate,” ISIL’s youth organization. During the initiation ritual, each child was required to run through the ruins of Qaalat al-Rahbeh castle, then find and execute a prisoner.<sup>19</sup>
- On December 7, the Syrian government reported that US-led coalition airstrikes on Saiqa camp killed three regime soldiers and wounded 13 more. US officials denied the allegation.<sup>20</sup>

#### 5. Latakia Governorate:

- During the reporting period, Russia increased its anti-aircraft defenses in Syria, moving its Moskova cruiser long-range air defense system closer to the city of Latakia. Russia also indicated that “10-20 Russian air superiority fighters” may be deployed to Syria, following the downing of a Russian fighter plane by Turkish forces.<sup>21</sup>
- On November 25, Russia conducted extensive airstrikes in Latakia governorate, one day after the shooting down of a Russian plane by Turkish forces after the plane reportedly entered Turkish airspace.<sup>22</sup>

#### 6. Raqqa Governorate:

- During the reporting period, activists and local sources reported ongoing airstrikes around Raqqa as well as the use of white phosphorous as a chemical weapon.<sup>23</sup>
- On December 6, US-led coalition airstrikes killed at least 32 ISIL militants and wounded at least 40 more around the city of Raqqa.<sup>24</sup>

#### 7. Damascus Governorate:

- During the reporting period, activists and local sources reported ongoing airstrikes in the cities of Douma, Darayya, and Damascus.<sup>25</sup>

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[idUSKBN0TI07K20151129](http://idUSKBN0TI07K20151129) ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-november-11.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-air-strikes-in-iraq>

<sup>19</sup> [http://wahareport.com/2015/12/05/syria-daily-report-](http://wahareport.com/2015/12/05/syria-daily-report-04122015/)

[https://twitter.com/Raqqa\\_SL/status/672509988393234432](https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/672509988393234432) ; <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-uses-young-boys-to-hunt-down-and-kill-prisoners-in-ruined-syrian-castle-for-gory-propaganda-a6761641.html>

<sup>20</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-soldiers-killed-us-led-coalition-airstrikes-35618627>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34950355> ; <http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russia-security-update-november-25-december-1-2015>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/195395-heavy-russia-raids-in-syria-area-where-plane-downed-says-monitor>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/11/activists-claim-white-phosphorous-is-being-used-in-raqqa-airstrikes/> ; <https://www.facebook.com/Raqqa.SI/posts/1102486019762648>

<sup>24</sup> <http://news.yahoo.com/apparent-us-coalition-raids-kill-32-fighters-syria-133624318.html>

- On December 4, Syrian regime airstrikes killed at least 35 civilians in the towns of Jisreen and Kfar Batna in the region of Eastern Ghouta.<sup>26</sup>
8. Daraa Governorate:
- On December 3, the Free Syrian Army-aligned Southern Front coalition began a new offensive to capture an artillery base near the village of Jidyah.<sup>27</sup>
  - On December 7, over 100 fighters from Al-Nusra Front turned themselves in to regime forces.<sup>28</sup>
9. Hasakah Governorate:
- On December 1, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) reported the seizure of territory from ISIL in the southern villages of Rusafa and Qana. The SDF continues to advance toward the ISIL-stronghold of Shaddadi.<sup>29</sup>
  - On December 7, airstrikes carried out by unknown forces killed at least 26 civilians in the village of al-Khan, near al-Hawl.<sup>30</sup>

**Key Points:**

- During the reporting period, Russian airstrikes targeted rebel-held areas in the governorates of Aleppo, Idlib, and Hama.<sup>31</sup>
- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Abu Kamal, Ayn Isa, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakah, Al-Hawl, Mar'a, and Raqqa.<sup>32</sup>
- On December 2, the UK House of Commons voted in favor of conducting airstrikes in Syria against ISIL targets. Airstrikes began within hours of the vote.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> <https://twitter.com/SyriaCivilDef/status/671010484599001088> ; <https://twitter.com/SyrCoalition/status/672804375807590400> ; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/672082397329039360> ; <https://twitter.com/AEJKhalil/status/672024481116897280>

<sup>26</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/12/04/Syrian-regime-raids-near-Damascus-kill-35-civilians-.html>

<sup>27</sup> <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/566327-fsa-coalition-launches-new-south-syria-offensive>

<sup>28</sup> <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/566342-nusra-fighters-surrender-to-regime-in-south-syria>

<sup>29</sup> <http://aranews.net/2015/12/u-s-backed-syrian-democratic-forces-recapture-new-areas-from-isis/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35031531>

<sup>31</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-november-25.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631252/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631383/military-strikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631447/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631451/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631494/coalition-airstrikes-hit-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631639/coalition-airstrikes-target-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632065/coalition-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632483/coalition-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632951/anti-isil-strikes-continue-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632983/military-strikes-strike-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632990/military-strikes-strike-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/633119/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/633308/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34992032> ; <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-air-strikes-in-iraq> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-35014665>



- On December 2, ISIL militants released a video that appeared to show the beheading of a man, accused of being a Russian spy, who had been captured by the group last year.<sup>34</sup>
- On December 4, it was reported that Russia had deployed its most advanced T-90 tanks in Syria, hinting that Russia intends to enter into a ground war.<sup>35</sup>
- On December 8, discussions between representatives of Syrian opposition groups began in Riyadh. The talks will continue through December 10.<sup>36</sup>
- On December 8, Syrian Kurdish groups began their own two-day conference in the town of Al-Malikiyeh in Hasakah governorate to discuss Syria's future after being excluded from the Syrian opposition talks in Riyadh.<sup>37</sup>

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

1. Kirkuk Governorate:
  - On November 28, a suicide bomber in an explosive-laden vehicle killed six people at a checkpoint in the town of Tuz Khurmatu. No group has yet taken responsibility for the attack. Tuz Khurmatu was previously the scene of deadly clashes between Shiite and Kurdish forces.<sup>38</sup>
2. Ninewa Governorate:
  - During the reporting period, mass graves continued to be uncovered in and around the town of Sinjar following the recapture of the town by Kurdish and Yezidi forces.<sup>39</sup>
  - During the reporting period, it was announced that Turkey will have “a permanent military base” in the area of Bashiqa (near the city of Mosul). The agreement for the military base was reached between KRG and Turkish officials, without the participation of the central Iraqi government, for the purpose of training Kurdish forces and fighting ISIL militants. On December 4, Turkey deployed an “armored battalion” to a military camp in Mount Bashiqa, less than ten miles from Mosul. The Iraqi government demanded the “immediate withdrawal” of ‘illegal’ and ‘hostile’ Turkish forces, and threatened to take their complaint to the U.N. Security Council.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/12/2/isil-video-purportedly-shows-killing-of-russian-spy.html>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/12034237/Russia-sends-its-most-advanced-tanks-to-Syria-frontline.html>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/syrian-rebels-meet-saudi-capital-riyadh-ahead-possible-peace-talks-402431> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/12/01/world/middleeast/01reuters-mideast-crisis-syria-saudi.html> ; <http://english.aawsat.com/2015/12/article55345694/55345694>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/196344-kurds-plan-syria-summit-after-exclusion-from-saudi-meet> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35035232>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Nov-28/325035-suicide-bomber-kills-six-in-flashpoint-iraq-town.ashx>

<sup>39</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/11/29/Iraqis-find-three-more-mass-graves-in-formerly-ISIS-held-Sinjar.html> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34954233>

<sup>40</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/turkey-unilaterally-deploys-battalion.html> ; <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-military-to-have-a-base-in-iraqs-mosul.aspx> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/world/middleeast/influx-of-turkish-troops-angers->

3. Anbar Governorate:
  - During the reporting period, Iraqi forces continued to prepare for an upcoming offense on the city of Ramadi. Iraqi forces have been dropping leaflets since November 29, warning residents in Ramadi to leave the city.<sup>41</sup>
  - On December 8, Iraqi forces recaptured the large southwestern area of Tamin from ISIL militants and entered the Anbar Operations Command military headquarters in Ramadi.<sup>42</sup>
4. Salah ad Din:
  - During the reporting period, rockets struck various areas in central Samarra, killing two civilians and wounding 12 more.<sup>43</sup>
5. Baghdad Governorate:
  - On November 30, a suicide bomber attack against Shi'a pilgrims in the southern neighborhood of al-Shaab neighborhood killed 9 people and wounded 21 others.<sup>44</sup>

#### Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Albu Hayat, Baghdadi, Beiji, Fallujah, Habbaniyah, Hit, Huwayjah, Kisik, Makhmur, Mosul, Ramadi, Qaim, Qayyarah, Sinjar, Sultan Abdallah, and Tal Afar.<sup>45</sup>
- On December 1, US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter announced that the US would deploy a “specialized force” of about 200 troops to Iraq to assist Iraqi and Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the fight against ISIL. The “specialized expeditionary targeting force” would operate inside Iraq with the freedom to move into Syria. The Iraqi government and several Shiite

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[iraqi-officials.html](#) ; <http://www.newsweek.com/turkey-stop-sending-soldiers-iraq-after-baghdad-protests-401698>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34964094> ; <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-prevents-civilians-from-fleeing-ramadi-1449003873> ; <http://bigstory.ap.org/eb4ff0cd2a3448bdb3dc4bb79359f9af>

<sup>42</sup> <http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-forces-retake-large-part-ramadi-city-officials-135004268.html> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35038983> ; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iraqi-troops-close-in-on-ramadi-retake-army-headquarters/2015/12/08/fa1ccd76-9dbb-11e5-9ad2-568d814bbf3b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iraqi-troops-close-in-on-ramadi-retake-army-headquarters/2015/12/08/fa1ccd76-9dbb-11e5-9ad2-568d814bbf3b_story.html)

<sup>43</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-december-3-7-2015.html>

<sup>44</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/12/iraq-situation-report-november-20.html>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631252/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631383/military-strikes-continue-against-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631398/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631447/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631451/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631494/coalition-airstrikes-hit-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/631639/coalition-airstrikes-target-isil-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632065/coalition-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632483/coalition-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632951/anti-isil-strikes-continue-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632983/military-strikes-strike-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/632990/military-strikes-strike-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/633119/military-strikes-hit-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq> ; <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/633308/military-strikes-target-isil-terrorists-in-syria-iraq>

militias have expressed their disapproval for the move, with Shiite militias vowing to attack any U.S. troops in Iraq.<sup>46</sup>

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

- During the reporting period, ISIL Iraqi commanders from Syria were reported to be arriving in the Libyan coastal city of Sirte. ISIL militants now govern the city with a reported “5,000-strong contingent”.<sup>47</sup>
- During the reporting period, German defense officials announced their plans to send up to six “Tornado reconnaissance jets” and 1,200 troops to the Middle East to “man aircraft and ships in the battle against [ISIL]”. The German jets will operate from Turkey’s Incirlik Air Base.<sup>48</sup>
- On November 28, two attackers shot dead four Egyptian security forces on a road near the Saqqara pyramids in Giza. ISIL-affiliate Sinai State took responsibility for the shooting.<sup>49</sup>
- On December 1, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted, for the first time, that Israeli forces have carried out operations in Syria to “prevent [Syria] from becoming a front against us... [and to] prevent weapons...being moved from Syria to Lebanon”.<sup>50</sup>
- On December 1, Libyan air strikes, carried out by Libya’s internationally recognized government, struck ISIL positions near the oil hub town of Ajdabiya in an attempt to prevent ISIL from capturing the town.<sup>51</sup>
- On December 6, a car bombing in the Yemeni city of Aden killed the newly appointed Governor Jaafar Saad and six bodyguards. ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>52</sup>

## **Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Analysis**

Multiple new satellite images were released in late November and are still being analyzed, including satellite coverage of Aleppo, Latakia, Apamea, and Kobani. The new Aleppo image has been much anticipated owing to reports of extensive combat damage occurring within the confines of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. While ASOR CHI has continued to report on events in Aleppo, we have lacked accompanying satellite imagery to support those reports for approximately one year. However, two new images of Aleppo and its surrounding areas were recently added to the Digital Globe platform — one image was taken on August 19, 2015 and the other on November 22, 2015. The image from August is very helpful as it was taken by the newer Worldview 3 satellite and has a

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34977977> ; <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/u-s-to-deploy-more-special-forces-to-iraq-and-syria/> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/12/02/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-usa-idUSKBN0TL1U120151202>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-entrenches-in-sirte-libya-1448798153> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/world/middleeast/isis-grip-on-libyan-city-gives-it-a-fallback-option.html>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d15a27d8-96b5-11e5-95c7-d47aa298f769.html> ; <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/02/americas-wingman-returns-to-the-fight/>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/28/us-egypt-gunmen-idUSKBN0TH04U20151128>

<sup>50</sup> <http://news.yahoo.com/israel-pm-admits-forces-operating-war-hit-syria-194312782.html>

<sup>51</sup> <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/172356/World/Region/Libyan-air-strikes-hit-ISIS-forces-pushing-eastwar.aspx>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/06/middleeast/yemen-aden-governor-killed/>

30 cm resolution while the other images of Aleppo have been Worldview 2 satellite images, which have a 50 cm resolution. This means that many of the details that are often lost to pixilation are visible on the August image.

The ASOR CHI Geospatial Team has found that satellite imagery is not the best way to spot new damage within urban environments. Damaging forces must heavily impact a building to leave visible traces identifiable on satellite imagery. Combat damage to buildings from gunfire, fire, and occupation is difficult to spot from the air as damages to the area are lost unless the roof is compromised. Thus, the new satellite imagery is best used to analyze the damage to buildings caused by large explosive blasts, primarily tunnel and barrel bombs.

The majority of the visible damage to the city of Aleppo occurred between the satellite images taken December 15, 2014 and August 18, 2015. The imagery provided below is annotated to reflect the following heritage sites:

1. Endowment of Ibshir Pasha
2. Ibshir Pasha Mosque
3. Khan Hatab
4. Hammam Bahram Pasha
5. Qastal Ozdmer
6. Maronite Church
7. Beit Ghazale
8. Greek Catholic Church
9. Greek Orthodox Church
10. Historic Coffee House

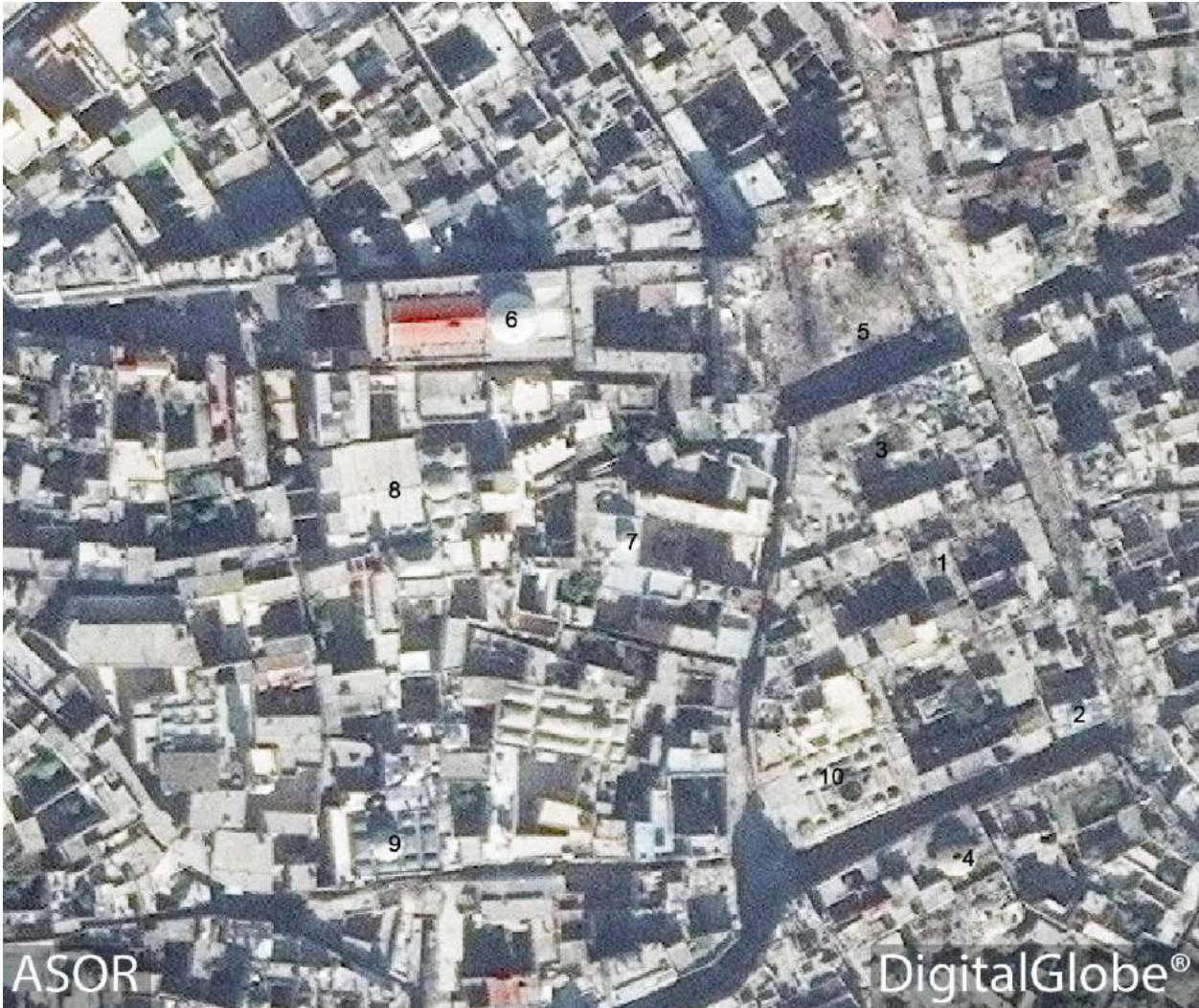
This damage is centered in the Jdeide Quarter and affected multiple buildings especially in the Endowment of Ibshir Pasha, which includes the Ibshir Pasha Mosque (#2) and the Khan Hatab (#3), and also affected the nearby Hammam Bahram Pasha (#4). These tunnel bombings and ongoing combat damage were reported by ASOR CHI in May 2015 (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0081** from **Weekly Report 40**). ). Based on the satellite imagery, the bombings destroyed the Khan Hatab and the majority of the Endowment while severely damaging the historic coffee house (#10) and the Hammam Bahram Pasha. The Ibshir Pasha Mosque structure appears to be relatively intact, possibly with minor damage from the nearby explosions.

Directly north of the Endowment of Ibshir Pasha, the Qastal Ozdmer (#5) was previously destroyed between August 10, 2014 and October 22, 2014. The area was completely cleared of debris by December 15, 2014. That empty space was then hit by another explosion between December and August and is now a large crater.

In addition to the aforementioned severely damaged area, other sites in the Jdeide Quarter were also affected by the ongoing urban conflict. This includes the Maronite Church (#6) where the roof has partially collapsed as seen in the image from August 18, 2015. The Beit Ghazale (#7) has also been damaged, particularly the southern wall and courtyard, likely due to large explosives. The Greek Catholic Church (#8) and the Greek Orthodox Church (#9) also show damage to their roofs.

Within other areas of the city, there were no other large visible destructions to heritage sites. The areas of the citadel and the Suqs west of the citadel appear relatively unchanged. Rubble from

earlier destructions has not been cleared, and no repairs appear to have been made to the many destroyed buildings in that area or elsewhere in the city.



Jdeide Quarter in Aleppo. Sites featured are: 1. Endowment of Ibshir Pasha; 2. Ibshir Pasha Mosque; 3. Khan Hatab; 4. Hammam Bahram Pasha; 5. Qastal Ozdmer; 6. Maronite Church; 7. Beit Ghazale; 8. Greek Catholic Church; 9. Greek Orthodox Church; 10. Historic Coffee House (DigitalGlobe; December 15, 2014)



Jdeide Quarter in Aleppo. Sites featured are: 1. Endowment of Ibshir Pasha; 2. Ibshir Pasha Mosque; 3. Khan Hatab; 4. Hammam Bahram Pasha; 5. Qastal Ozdmer; 6. Maronite Church; 7. Beit Ghazale; 8. Greek Catholic Church; 9. Greek Orthodox Church; 10. Historic Coffee House (DigitalGlobe; August 18, 2015)



Jdeide Quarter in Aleppo. Sites featured are: 1. Endowment of Ibshir Pasha; 2. Ibshir Pasha Mosque; 3. Khan Hatab; 4. Hammam Bahram Pasha; 5. Qastal Ozdmer; 6. Maronite Church; 7. Beit Ghazale; 8. Greek Catholic Church; 9. Greek Orthodox Church; 10. Historic Coffee House (DigitalGlobe; November 22, 2015)

## Incident Reports: Syria

**SHI 15-0150**

**Report Date:** November 25, 2015

**Site Name:** Ebla (Tell Mardikh)

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

**Location:** Idlib Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Ebla, also known as Tell Mardikh, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in Idlib Governorate. The ancient city formed the center of an important kingdom in the Early Bronze Age. Several thousand cuneiform tablets, written in both Eblaite and Sumerian, were found here dating between 2500–2300 BC. The remains of an elevated outer city rampart (h. 20m) and fortifications of the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1600 BC) surround the 50-hectare site comprising a high mound (citadel) surrounded by a lower mound (lower city). Both areas have been scientifically excavated by an Italian expedition led by Paolo Matthiae. The high mound is located at the center of the site, where excavations have revealed several royal palaces, temples, courts, monumental staircases, and burials. The site was the center of a vast trading network linking Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean littoral to Mesopotamia.<sup>53</sup>

**Site Date:** 3500 BCE–7th century CE

**Incident Summary:** Russian airstrikes damaged the eastern slope of the acropolis.

**Incident Source and Description:** Around 1:00 PM local time on October 1, 2015, a Russian Air Force bombing campaign reportedly damaged the archaeological sites of Shinshara, Serjilla, and Ebla (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-137**).<sup>54</sup> Evidence from multiple sources indicates that Shinshara was indeed struck by Russian Air Force missiles, but initial reports as to the status of Serjilla and Ebla were unclear.

The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative has produced a brief, illustrated report of the damage at Ebla (appended to this report). The report indicates that Russian airstrikes struck the eastern side of the acropolis, causing damage and leaving a hole in the acropolis slope. Images in the report detail the Ebla site as well as the damage to the eastern slope.

The most recent DigitalGlobe satellite imagery of Ebla was taken on August 4, 2014, showing small embankments on site, particularly in the northern portion that has been being built since 2013. There is evidence of previous looting in the area since the beginning of the conflict, but the pace of looting slowed in 2014 (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-101**).

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.aaas.org/page/ancient-history-modern-destruction-assessing-status-syria-s-tentative-world-heritage-sites-7#Ebla>

<sup>54</sup> <http://en.etilaf.org/all-news/news/russia-airstrikes-hit-2000-years-old-serjila-town.html>



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

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

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

APSA:

[https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/ms.c.eJwzNDGzMD0yABKm5uam5oZ6hlABS2MjExMjY3O4gDIeHRfcwAKiwglA1mQNzw~-~-\\_.bps.a.1468628663244240.1073741914.324869057620212/1468628686577571/?type=3&theater](https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/ms.c.eJwzNDGzMD0yABKm5uam5oZ6hlABS2MjExMjY3O4gDIeHRfcwAKiwglA1mQNzw~-~-_.bps.a.1468628663244240.1073741914.324869057620212/1468628686577571/?type=3&theater)

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

DGAM:

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

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

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

UNESCO:

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



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

## The Day After “Heritage Protection Initiative”

### Site Monitors Project:

### Rapid Assessment Report of the Russian airstrike on Ebla 12 Nov 2015



On 12 Nov 2015 at 11 pm "Russian warplanes carried out an air raid on the archaeological site of Ebla exactly at the eastern side of the acropolis causing some damage and left a hole on the acropolis slope.

### Damage to Site:



The eastern slope where the Russian air attack took place



The eastern slope where the Russian air attack took place



The eastern slope of the acropolis in Ebla



The eastern slope showing damage from the Russian air attack



The eastern slope the damages from the Russian air attack



The eastern slope the damages from the Russian air attack



The eastern slope the damages from the Russian air attack



The remnants of the Russian rocket

The site was visited on Friday 13 Nov 2015 by the team leader for the Site Monitors Project Eng. Abdul Rahman Yahiya and Archaeologist Mohammed Al-Battal. Damage from the raid has been documented and a copy of the report has been lodged with the local Court.

Report prepared by:

Eng. Abdul Rahman Yahiya

**Site Monitors project Manager**

**Dr.Amr Al-Azm**



## SHI 15-0151

**Report Date:** December 2, 2015

**Site Name:** Tell al-Atarib (Darib, at-Ta'ib, تل الاتارب)

**Date of Incident:** Reported November 30, 2015

**Location:** Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** According to Burns: "The site was mentioned in the Assyrian archives of the ninth century BC. Atareb was known as Litarba in Byzantine times and became the nearest point to Aleppo fortified and defended by the Crusaders, later destroyed by the Zengids."<sup>1</sup>

**Site Date:** Early Iron Age to the twelfth century CE

**Incident Summary:** In-country sources conduct ground-truthing assessment of the site and report looting, grazing, and combat damage.

**Incident Source and Description:** According to a report submitted to ASOR CHI in-country sources:

"Since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, the site faced strikes by GoS [Government of Syria] forces (artillery and light-to-medium-weapons) during battles fought between GoS and AOGs [Armed Opposition Groups] several times in the period between June and November of 2012 upon the liberation of the town of GoS forces. The city and the site in particular faced renewed clashes between AOGs and ISIS during the latter's presence in the region between Oct 2013 to March 2014. These clashes resulted in the expulsion of ISIS forces from al-Atareb and the surrounding countryside. These clashes caused the site to be struck several times with artillery and heavy weaponry. At a number of places at the site we noticed a number of medium-heavy machine gun rounds in addition to remnants of bombs and shells. We assume these to be the product of continued air strikes by GoS forces and the clashes mentioned above.

A villager from near the hill, told us about the clashes that occurred near the hill in addition to the intentional targeting of the nearby residential areas by GoS air forces. These clashes and strikes negatively impacted the site, damaging parts. A member of the local media office in the city, told us of GoS forces attempted to use the hill as a strategic point from which to deploy their snipers and artillery to target the city during their occupation of the site. We noticed uncontrolled growth of plant life on the hill around the archaeological sites which could upset the site. We also noticed that some locals had built structures on the hill and nearby. The digging and construction led to some damage to the site.

We met with one of the individuals who constructed a home on the hill, and we asked him when those homes were built and how they were permitted near archaeological sites. He responded: "Some of the homes were built more than 10 years ago. Most of the homes near or on the hill itself were built in recent years as a result of reduced oversight and the events after 2011."

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<sup>1</sup> Burns, R. 2009. *Monuments of Syria: A guide*. I.B. Tauris. pp. 266

We also noted signs of illegal excavation presumably undertaken to find antiquities for sale on the black market by smugglers and traders. Those excavations upset areas of the archaeological hill. We asked a nearby resident, who was responsible for the excavations. He said that before 2011, excavations occurred in secret out of fear for the security apparatus, but they took place nonetheless. Since the chaos of 2011 illegal excavations increased significantly by people not from the city. He said they could not prevent them from digging due to the lack of weapons and strength on the part of the revolutionary police.

We also noticed that some residents have kept livestock at the site which has negatively impacted the site. Locals told us that tourism completely ended following the events of 2011. There is no agency responsible or interested in the archaeological hill and therefore no projects to protect it.”

**Pattern:** Military activity: gunfire/light weaponry; Military activity: vehicles/heavy weaponry; Military activity: occupation/militarization; Illegal excavation; Development disturbances; Agricultural disturbances.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of Tell al-Atarib via in-country sources and will conduct similar on-site assessments when possible.

**Sources:**

Scholarly:

Burns, Ross (2009) *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. I. B. Tauris; Revised and expanded edition.



Al-Atareb, older domed house at the base of the hill (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, view of the collapse from on top of the ancient hill (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, view of the collapse from on top of the ancient hill (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, ancient theater on the shoulder of the hill (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, ancient theater on the shoulder of the hill (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, ancient theater on the shoulder of the hill (Reported November 30, 2015)



al-Atareb, carved architectural element from the ancient theater (Reported November 30, 2015)



al-Atareb, carved architectural element from the ancient theater (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, carved architectural element from the ancient theater (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, carved architectural element from the ancient theater (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, exposed stone basin (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, exposed basin (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, exposed basin (Reported November 30, 2015)





Al-Atareb, evidence of digging in search of antiquities (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, evidence of digging in search of antiquities (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, evidence of digging in search of antiquities (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, evidence of digging in search of antiquities (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, damage from gunfire (Reported November 30, 2015)



Al-Atareb, damage from gunfire (Reported November 30, 2015)

**SHI 15-0152**

**Report Date:** December 2, 2015

**Site Name:** Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz

**Date of Incident:** Reported November 30, 2015

**Location:** Dayr as-Sharqi, Idlib Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Tomb of Umayyad Caliph Omar bin Abdul Aziz located within the city of Dayr as-Sharqi, formerly named Deir al-Naqira or Deir Samaan. The tomb dates back to the year 722 CE when the Umayyad Caliph died from poison in this village and was buried on the “5th of Rajab in the year 101 AH.” The tomb remained in the open without any buildings surrounding it until Saladin Ayyubi passed through it in the year 584H (1206 CE) and ordered a shrine built, which consists of the grave of the Caliph and the grave of his wife Fatimah bint Abdul Malik and next to it, on the northern side, the grave of Abu Zakaria Yahya bin al-Mansura. According to in-country sources, the “Ottomans” had previously conducted restoration and repair work on the site and recently the Syrian Ministry of Culture carried out a construction project on the white dome in the middle of the shrine, which was funded by the Republic of Turkey.

**Site Date:** original structure built 722 CE, larger structure built 1206 CE

**Incident Summary:** In-country sources conduct ground-truthing assessment of the site since it was damaged by SARG shelling.

**Incident Source and Description:** According to a report submitted to ASOR CHI in-country sources:

“At the beginning of our visit to the archaeological site, we faced one of the guards of the site, who belonged to one of the local armed groups. We did not know beforehand that a guard had been placed at the entrance to the site. We received permission to enter the site and photograph the interior and to begin our assessment. We began to wander around the inside and take photographs and make important notes. Then two people came in who I think were military leaders in the village. They demanded us, under threat of arms, to stop photographing and to leave the site immediately. He justified his harsh refusal of our photography in the village because the archaeological site had been bombed by GoS [Government of Syria] air strikes a few days before we visited. He said that the bombardment had come after a visit by journalists from one the news channels or agencies who had visited the site to take pictures and prepare a visual report of the site and he believes that the bombing came after report was published on their channel and on social media. After that the people of the village decided to prevent all agencies from photographing or reporting on their village. According to his claim, they are afraid of being targeted by GoS airplanes. There was nothing we could do except agree to their demand to stop photographing, so we stopped exploring the site and we left the village with the few pictures that we had taken before they prevented us from further photography.

The archaeological site was exposed to artillery bombardment by the regime in July 2013, which resulted in partial damage. The bombardment hit the site’s white dome from the western side. It led to the destruction of the glass of the wooden windows and the

shattering of many of the wooden windows. They are from more than 100 years ago according to the account of one of the nearby residents to the shrine. We saw horizontal and vertical cracks in the walls of the dome from the inside. Also, the cracks in the walls are primarily from the inside and we saw many of them in the western and southern walls, as well in the southwestern corner from the interior. It was not permitted for us to photograph the cracks. "Every one of the cracks is the result of great pressure from shell explosions that hit the white dome. There were no cracks previously," according to the account of an employee of the shrine.

We witnessed many revolutionary and religious phrases written on the exterior perimeter wall of the shrine. We don't know when the exterior wall was constructed. But according to a witness who is one of the neighbors of the shrine, "the wall was restored and renovated approximately 10 years ago by the Syrian Ministry of Culture of with support and financing from the government of Turkey" Neighbors of the shrine spoke with us about several attempts by the Islamic State to destroy the shrine and demolish it when the organization was in the Idleb region in the first month of 2014. According to the leader of the organization and from the organizations dogma, graves, shrines, and mausoleums are idols and shirk God the creator. The sites need to be demolished and destroyed, according to the leader of ISIS. The people of the region have resisted the many attempts of the members of ISIS to destroy graves, shrines, and mausoleums. Fighting factions expelled ISIS from all regions of Idleb in the middle of 2014. So, the danger from ISIS has ended for the shrine. We also noticed care for the site in terms of cleanliness. The interior of the place is clean and there are no piles of trash outside as well as baskets for trash and garbage distributed in the area. We also noticed care for the trees in the garden of the shrine and its surrounding area. There was also a lack of random growth of plants in the ancient walls of the shrine. We spoke with the neighboring people of the shrine about the decreasing number of visitors after the outbreak of events in 2011. They barely see one or more visitors to the site weekly. Before 2011, 100 tourists from Syria and other countries visited the site on a weekly basis. The week before our visit, the village was exposed to air bombing by GoS airplanes on 18/11/2015. The regime has been bombing a civilian neighborhood very close to the archaeological place for a long time, according to the account of the people of the village. The bombing has led to physical damages and to the shattering of what remains from the windows of the archaeological place. One of the residents of the village recounted for us, "the air bombing that afflicts places in the village has negative impacts on the site because of the ground vibrations and the resulting high air pressure from the barrel bombs. Cracks cause fractures in the houses of the civilians and archaeological places as well. The continuation of strikes will lead to an increase in the cracks and fractures. As a result, the buildings and the homes in the village, including the place of the Caliph Omar bin Abdul Aziz, are threatened with collapse. We visited the cemetery located near the shrine of the Umayyad Caliph and in it there are a number of historical graves and from their appearance it seems that these graves date back more than 200 years. We are not able to know the extent or exact history of this cemetery because of the large number of ancient graves deformed by air, time, and other factors. However, we have been able to distinguish that many of the graves were coming from 1738, due to the date of death listed on the graves. Some of the graves are vulnerable to damage as a result of rocket fragments and barrel bombs that the Syrian Army targeted the city with frequently. We also saw that there were modern graves next to the ancient graves from the people of Deir al-Sharqi."

**Pattern:** Military operations: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of the Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz via in-country sources and will conduct similar on-site assessments when available.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Sky News Arabic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqoTtUp-FxI>

Report from Al-Jazeera: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnSo6Ed2z6Q>



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz, exterior of the shrine viewed from the western side showing the bombardment of the roof (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)





Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)



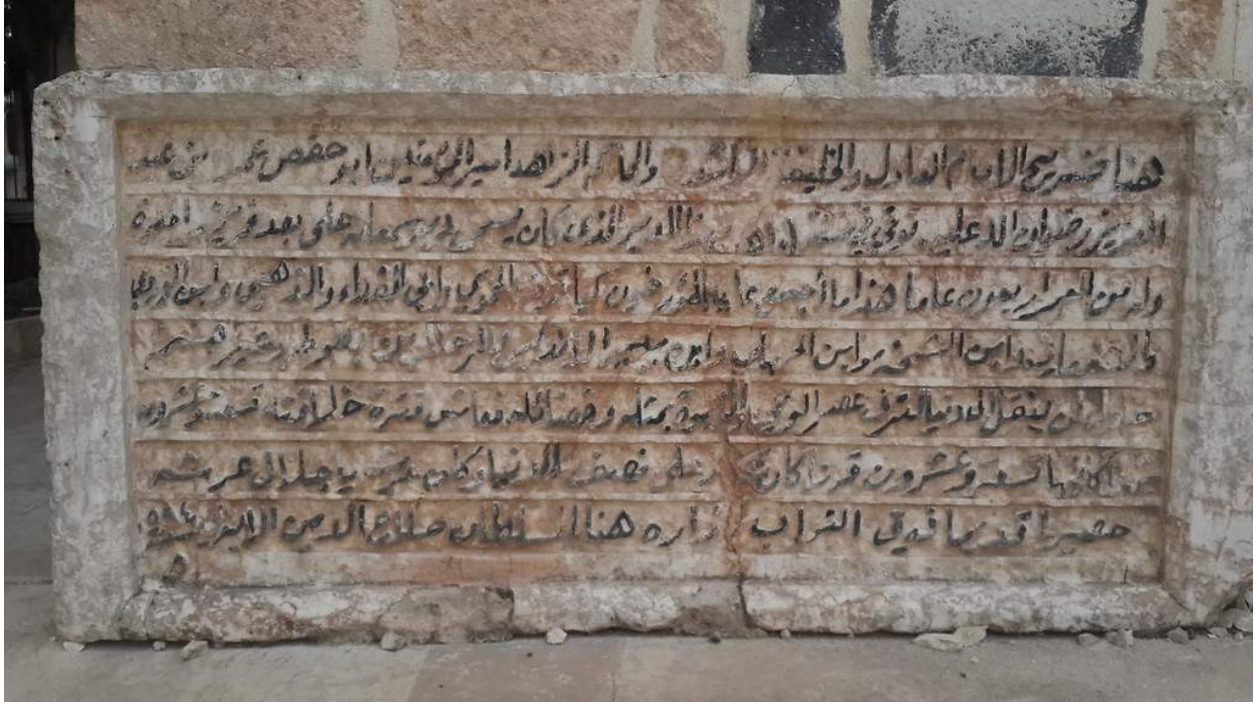
Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz, detail of window (Reported November 30, 2015)



Tomb of Omar Bin Abdul Aziz, detail of inscription (Reported November 30, 2015)



**SHI 15-0153**

**Report Date:** December 7, 2015

**Site Name:** Qaalat Rahbeh (CHI #913)

**Date of Incident:** December 3, 2015

**Location:** Mayadin, Deir ez Zor Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:** 35.004991 N, 40.423284 E

**Site Description:** According to Burns:

“The first fort was constructed on this spot by Malik Ibn Tauk during the caliphate of al-Mamun (813-33) but was destroyed by an earthquake in 1157. A new castle was built by al-Mujahid Assad al-Din Shirkuh, an amir of Homs (r 1186-1240) and uncle of Saladin, as part of the latter’s grand design for the unification of Syria under a single Muslim ruler (a goal largely realised in 1154). This was part of a program of castle-building, all in the style common to Islamic fortifications, in areas of central Syria controlled by Homs (Qaalat Shmemis, Qaalat Shirkuh,). In 1264, the Mamluk ruler, Baybars, appointed an Egyptian as governor. As the successive Mongol invasions ravaged Syria (1260-1400) the fort’s usefulness lapsed in the face of damage inflicted by invaders.”

“Qaalat Rahba concentrates on a central mound, ringed by a high but simple set of walls (a pentagon roughly 270 m by 95 m) rising from a huge ditch...The central enclosure echoes the five-sided shape of the outer wall on a smaller scale (c60 m by 30 m). This donjon had its largest side to the west and was on three levels, the lowers comprising a large cistern. Six construction phases ending probably in the 14th century have been identified with a tendency to replace mud brick with conglomerate stone in later phases. Some of the brickwork in geometric designs is characteristic of an early phase of Arab architecture heavily influenced by Mesopotomia and Persia.”<sup>2</sup>

**Site Date:** Arab Occupation, early 1100s CE

**Incident Summary:** ISIL releases video of executions at Qaalat al-Rahbeh.

**Incident Source and Description:** On December 3, ISIL released a video titled “To the Sons of Jews” (“البناء بنو اليهود”) depicting an ‘initiation ritual’ or training for the so-called “Cubs of the Caliphate”, ISIL’s youth organization.<sup>3</sup> During the initiation ritual, each child was required to run through the ruins of Qaalat al-Rahbeh, search out an ISIL prisoner, and execute him. Each child in the video is seen wearing a mask and carrying a pistol. The last child is shown beheading the final prisoner.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Burns, Ross *The Monuments of Syria* pp. 238

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-uses-young-boys-to-hunt-down-and-kill-prisoners-in-ruined-syrian-castle-for-gory-propaganda-a6761641.html> ; <http://wahareport.com/2015/12/05/syria-daily-report-04122015/> ; [https://twitter.com/Raqqa\\_SL/status/672509988393234432](https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/672509988393234432)

<sup>4</sup> Out of respect for the victims and their families, ASOR CHI will not reproduce images of the executions.

Throughout the conflict, Qaalat al-Rahbeh has been the scene of military bombardment, looting, and executions. There have been several reports of ongoing incidents at the site, they are as follows:

From 2012-2014, multiple incidents of bombardment, illicit digging, vandalism occurred at or near the site (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0078**; **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0098**; **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0104**).<sup>5</sup>

In December 2013, illicit digging for antiquities underneath Qaaalat al-Rahbeh was reported.<sup>6</sup>

In July 2015, ISIL militants executed four Syrian soldiers near Qaalat al-Rahbeh, releasing footage of the execution in a video. The castle is clearly visible in the background of the execution site.<sup>7</sup>

In September 2015, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that ISIL militants executed three men by throwing them off the high wall of Qaaalat al-Rahbeh.<sup>8</sup>

On November 26, 2015, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that ISIL vehicles entered Qaalat al-Rahbeh. Witnesses reported seeing five dead bodies being dropped into a hole. Later, ISIL militants left its headquarters in the city of Mayadin, following targeted airstrikes by Russian and Syrian warplanes.<sup>9</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: reuse of ancient/historic structure; Military activity: gunfire/light weaponry

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition and military use of the site and retrieve further information and on the ground observations as they become available. The use of a cultural heritage site as a stage for the execution of military prisoners is both an affront to human decency and a violation of numerous international humanitarian laws and the laws of war.

#### Sources:

Online Reporting:

Independent:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-uses-young-boys-to-hunt-down-and-kill-prisoners-in-ruined-syrian-castle-for-gory-propaganda-a6761641.html>

The Waha Report: <http://wahareport.com/2015/12/05/syria-daily-report-04122015/>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBkjLjmK2kQ> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEJXKXRmx8M> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4pXd478x14&list=WL&index=100>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-08-may-2014/> ; <http://www.3ayn-almadina.com/غیرالتنقیب>

[الرحبة قلعة في المشروع](#)

<sup>7</sup> <http://aranews.net/2015/07/isis-executes-four-syrian-soldiers-in-deir-ez-zor/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/09/is-executes-3-people-in-al-miadin-city/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/11/is-executes-5-people-in-a-castle-in-al-miadin-city/>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/Raqqa\\_SL/status/672509988393234432](https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/672509988393234432)  
[https://twitter.com/Raqqa\\_SL/status/672510405659508740](https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/672510405659508740)

Scholarly:

Burns, Ross (2009) *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. I. B. Tauris; Revised and expanded edition.



Qaalat al-Rahbeh, image still of from ISIL training video (Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently; December 3, 2015)



Qaalat al-Rahbeh satellite image (Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently; December 3, 2015)



Qaalat al-Rahbehh (Raqqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently; December 3, 2015)

**SHI 15-0154**

**Report Date:** December 8, 2015

**Site Name:** Al Kabir Mosque

**Date of Incident:** December 6, 2015

**Location:** Al Latamneh, Hama Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosque

**Site Date:** Unknown, possibly modern

**Incident Summary:** Missile strikes by SARG forces damages ceiling, rendering mosque unusable.

**Incident Source and Description:** On December 6, SARG warplanes fired missiles that struck Al Kabir mosque. The strikes damaged the ceiling and made the mosque unusable.<sup>10</sup>

**Pattern:** Military operations: explosives

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the exact location and dating for the site, as well as retrieve further information and ground-based observations of the damage as it becomes available.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Syrian Network for Human Rights: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/07/15235/>

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<sup>10</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/07/15235/>



Damage to Al Kabir Mosque (Syrian Network for Human Rights; December 6, 2015)

**SHI 15-0155**

**Report Date:** December 8, 2015

**Site Name:** Al Eman Mosque and Al Furqan Mosque

**Date of Incident:** Ongoing

**Location:** Tadmor, Homs Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosques

**Site Date:** Unknown, likely modern

**Incident Summary:** Airstrikes by SARG forces damage two mosques.

**Incident Source and Description:** On December 6, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that SARG warplanes fired missiles on Al Eman Mosque in Tadmor, causing extreme damage.<sup>11</sup> Other activists reported that Russian airstrikes were responsible for an airstrike on Al Eman Mosque.<sup>12</sup> Previously in November, SNHR reported two instances of SARG forces targeting this particular mosque.<sup>13</sup>

On December 8, SNHR reported that SARG shelling had targeted Al Furqan Mosque, destroying the mosque almost completely.<sup>14</sup> Activists on Twitter also reported the strikes.<sup>15</sup> SARG shelling, on the same day, also hit the Mohammad Marei Al Tawab School in Tadmor, causing partial damage.<sup>16</sup> Previously in August, SNHR reported that SARG shelling had targeted the mosque and caused destruction.<sup>17</sup>

Activists on social media also indicated that recent Russian airstrikes on Palmyra have severely damaged the area, possibly the ancient site as well.<sup>18</sup>

**Pattern:** Military operations: explosives.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/07/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-al-eman-mosque-in-palmyra-city-in-homs-governorate-in-december-6/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/674763420126810112>

<sup>13</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/11/23/14847/> ; <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/11/29/15037/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/09/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-al-furqan-mosque-in-palmyra-city-in-homs-governorate-in-december-8/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://twitter.com/PalmyraRev1/status/674340979428696064>

<sup>16</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/09/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-mohammad-marei-al-tawab-school-in-palmyra-city-in-homs-governorate-in-december-8/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/08/19/government-forces-targeted-a-mosque-in-palmyra-in-homs-in-august-19/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://twitter.com/hadialbahra/status/670701823662141440> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/12/dozens-of-russian-airstrikes-target-tadmur-and-aleppo-countryside/> ; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/672944564278308864> ; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraRev1/status/672503523259584512>

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the exact location and dating of the mosques, as well as retrieve further information and on the ground observations of the damage as it becomes available.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Syrian Network For Human Rights (December 9, 2015):

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/09/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-al-furqan-mosque-in-palmyra-city-in-homs-governorate-in-december-8/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (December 9, 2015)

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/09/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-mohammad-marei-al-tawab-school-in-palmyra-city-in-homs-governorate-in-december-8/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (December 7, 2015):

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/07/regime-forces-shelling-targeted-al-eman-mosque-in-palmyra-city-in-homs-governorate-in-december-6/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (November 29, 2015):

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/11/29/15037/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (November 22, 2015):

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/11/23/14847/>



Al Eman Mosque (Twitter, <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/674763420126810112> ; December 9, 2015)





Al Eman damaged (Twitter, <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/674763420126810112> ; December 9, 2015)

**SHI 15-0156**

**Report Date:** December 8, 2015

**Site Name:** Al Rawda Mosque; Al Ghoufran Mosque; Unidentified Mosque

**Date of Incident:** November 24, 2015; December 5, 2015; December 7, 2015

**Location:** Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosques

**Site Date:** Unknown, all these mosques are likely modern

**Incident Summary:** Ongoing shelling and artillery damage to multiple mosques near Aleppo.

**Incident Source and Description:** The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that on November 24, 2015 opposition rockets fired from the Bani Zaid neighborhood struck Al Rawda Mosque in the Al Moukambo neighborhood of Aleppo and inflicted damage.<sup>19</sup>

On December 5, 2015 SNHR posted imagery of damage caused by rockets and artillery that struck Al Ghoufran Mosque in Al Khaldiyyeh neighborhood of Aleppo.<sup>20</sup>

On December 7, 2015 SNHR reported that Syrian regime warplanes fired missiles near a mosque in Kafr Hamra city, causing damage.<sup>21</sup> Video footage from the airstrikes recorded the damage surrounding the mosque.<sup>22</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the exact identification and dating for these mosques and retrieve additional information from in-country sources as it becomes available.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Syrian Network for Human Rights (November 25, 2015):

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/11/25/14918/>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (December 6, 2015):

<https://twitter.com/snhr/status/673447355635601410>

Syrian Network for Human Rights (December 7, 2015):

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/07/15267/>

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<sup>19</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/11/25/14918/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://twitter.com/snhr/status/673447355635601410>

<sup>21</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/07/15267/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8JZoTlwWfQ>

Hretan City Media: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8JZoTlwWfQ>



Damage to Al Rawda Mosque (Syrian Network for Human Rights; November 25, 2015)



*SNHR: local made rocket-shells fired on Al Ghoufran Mosque in Al Khaldiye neighborhood in Aleppo city fired by artillery located in armed opposition territory, damaging it and its fence, December 5*

Damage to Al Ghoufran Mosque (Syrian Network for Human Rights; December 5, 2015)



*SNHR: regime warplanes missiles fired near a mosque in Kafr Hamra city in Aleppo governorate, causing a massacre, and severely damaging it, December 7, 2015.*

Damage surrounding mosque in Kafr Hamra (Syrian Network for Human Rights; December 7, 2015)



Damage surrounding mosque in Kafr Hamra (Hretan City Media; December 7, 2015)



Damage surrounding mosque in Kafr Hamra (Hretan City Media; December 7, 2015)



Damage surrounding mosque in Kafr Hamra (Hretan City Media; December 7, 2015)

**SHI 15-0157**

**Report Date:** December 8, 2015

**Site Name:** Qashqara Mosque; Unidentified Mosque; Bab Al Hawa Mosque

**Date of Incident:** November 18, 2015; November 26, 2015; December 7, 2015;

**Location:** Idlib Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosque

**Site Date:** Unknown

**Incident Summary:** Airstrikes by SARG forces cause minor damage to mosques.

**Incident Source and Description:** On November 18, 2015 the Syrian Network For Human Rights (SNHR) reported that SARG missiles struck Qashqar Mosque in the city of Jisr Al Shoughour, rendering it unusable.<sup>23</sup>

SNHR reported on November 26, 2015 that SARG missiles struck an unidentified mosque in the city of Maraat Al-Numan and caused damage.<sup>24</sup>

On December 7, 2015 Syrian regime airstrikes fired a missile near Bab Al Hawa Mosque in the city of Jisr Al Shoughour. Video footage posted on YouTube by the account “الشغور جسر تنسب القبة” shows the mosque as it struck the building.<sup>25</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the dating for the mosque, as well as retrieve further information and on the ground observations of the damage as it becomes available.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Syrian Network For Human Rights: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/12/07/15271/>

Jisr Al Shughour News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvfeFWPBZYg>

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<sup>23</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/11/18/regime-forces-targeted-qashqara-mosque-in-jisr-al-shoughour-city-in-idlib-governorate-in-november-18/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://twitter.com/snhr/status/669959560837361669>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvfeFWPBZYg>



Possible image of the exterior of Bab Al Hawa Mosque with visible damage to the exterior wall (Jisr Al Shughour News; December 7, 2015)



**SNHR: regime warplanes missiles fired on a mosque in Ma'aret Al Numan city in Idlib governorate, causing damages, November 26, 2015.**

Damage to unidentified mosque in Mara'at Al-Numan (Syrian Network for Human Rights; November 26, 2015).