

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

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Weekly Report 35 — April 6, 2015

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## Key Points

- During the reporting period, claims of combat damage to heritage sites in Syria and related in-country damage assessments continued at a slightly elevated rate, continuing a month-long trend relative to average rates documented for the previous six months. Generally, damage was reported in Idlib, Hama, and Daraa. Intensity and distribution of heritage damage correlate with combat kinetics and largely derived from collateral damage from conventional military attacks as opposed to intentional targeting or asymmetrical tactics. Media sources and in-country reports highlighted local responses to prevent damage and theft as well as *ad hoc/ pro tem* actions taken by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums. The collections of the Idlib Museum are at elevated risk of damage and/or theft following the seizure of Idlib from SARG by Jaish al-Fatah and the occupation of the museum by Islamist rebels/extremists. (pp. 41–49, 50–59, 93–103)
- In Iraq, ISIL continued its campaign of performative deliberate destructions of heritage places and the release of associated branded media highlighting ISIL attacks. The recent ISIL attack on the Mosul Museum and archaeological site of Nineveh were featured in the ISIL publication *Dabiq* 8 accompanied by what has become a typical ISIL Jihadist-Salafist ideological “justification” for these blatant war crimes. On its affiliated websites, ISIL released a new video showing the intentional destruction of ancient sculptures and standing architectural elements at the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Hatra. (pp. 13–36)

## Heritage Timeline

April 6, 2015

The **DGAM** posted a brief report on illegal excavations and other damage in **al-Taiba Town** (Daraa Governorate, Syria). This will be the first in a series of posts documenting illegal excavation activity in the eastern countryside of Daraa, based on information provided by the local community. [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0064](#). <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1649>

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

- **APSA** posted a series of images and a video showing illicit excavations and a military camp at the **Monastery of Saint Simeon** (Aleppo Governorate, Syria). **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0062**.  
<http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/en/acts-of-plundering/illegal-excavations.html>
- **APSA** posted a series of images showing the current state of the Bab Qinnasrin in the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo** (Aleppo Governorate, Syria). **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0063**.  
<http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/ar/provinces-ar/aleppo/monuments/1187-aleppo-the-bab-qenssrin-3.html>
- *David Vergili: Bethnahrin* published a blog post titled “**Islamic State continues destroying Christian heritage.**”  
<https://davidvergili.wordpress.com/2015/04/06/islamic-state-continues-destroying-christian-heritage/>

April 5, 2015

- The **DGAM** posted a brief report and a series of images (taken April 4, 2015) showing the current state of the Citadel/Roman amphitheater in the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Bosra** (Daraa Governorate, Syria). According to the report, “Bosra Antiquities” (i.e. the local DGAM staff) has returned to work (restoration and cleaning of damaged areas) in the Citadel, thanks to the “great efforts and support” of the local community.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1647>
- *Rudaw* reported that ISIL has blown up the **Virgin Mary Church** in the village of **Tell Nasiri** (western Hasakah Governorate, Syria).  
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=779145505526688>
- *The Independent* published an article titled “**Isis destroys monuments with sledgehammers and Kalashnikovs in ancient city of Iraq**” (by Lamiat Sabin).  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-ruins-monuments-with-gunfire-and-sledgehammers-in-ancient-city-of-hatra-in-iraq-10156616.html>
- *The Guardian* published an article titled “**Isis video confirms destruction at Unesco world heritage site in Hatra**” (by Kareem Shaheen).  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/05/isis-video-confirms-destruction-at-unesco-world-heritage-site-on-hatra>

April 4, 2015

*Le Monde* published an article titled “**L’Etat islamique met en scène la destruction de la cité antique d’Hatra**” (by Florence Evin).

[http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/04/04/l-etat-islamique-met-en-scene-la-destruction-de-la-cite-antique-d-hatra\\_4609857\\_3218.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/04/04/l-etat-islamique-met-en-scene-la-destruction-de-la-cite-antique-d-hatra_4609857_3218.html)

- The *International Business Times* published an article titled “**Isis video shows jihadists destroying ancient UNESCO-protected city of Hatra**” (by Umberto Bacchi).

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-video-shows-jihadists-destroying-ancient-unesco-protected-city-hatra-1494954>

April 3, 2015

**A video posted online shows ISIL militants destroying statuary and architectural elements at the site of Hatra** (Ninawa Governorate, Iraq). ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0068 UPDATE.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEZ2cpuZ5>

- *Reuters* published an article titled “**Syria says 15,000 antiquities at risk in militia-run Idlib**” (by Kinda Makieh). Citing Maamoun Abdulkarim (Director-General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria), the article claims that 15,000 antiquities stored throughout the city of Idlib are at risk of being sold on the black market, following the recent capture of the city by rebel groups. According to Abdulkarim, this is “[t]he worst catastrophe that has happened until now against the culture of Syria.”

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/03/us-mideast-crisis-syria-antiquities-idUSKBN0MU0YC20150403>

- UNESCO published a **report** on the conference titled “**Heritage and Cultural Diversity at Risk in Iraq and Syria**,” held in Paris on December 3, 2014.

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/conference\\_report\\_heritage\\_and\\_cultural\\_diversity\\_at\\_risk\\_in\\_iraq\\_and\\_syria/#.VR65WRPF8e6](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/conference_report_heritage_and_cultural_diversity_at_risk_in_iraq_and_syria/#.VR65WRPF8e6)

- *The Washington Post* published an article titled “**At Jordan site, drone offers glimpse of antiquities looting**” (by Sam McNeil). The article describes the use of a homemade drone to document looting at a Bronze Age cemetery in Jordan, as part of the “**Follow the Pots**” project headed by **Morag Kersel** (Assistant Professor of Anthropology, DePaul University). The article also provides a broader perspective on the international market in looted antiquities.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/technology/at-jordan-site-drone-offers-glimpse-of-antiquities-looting/2015/04/03/9ea7bfa6-d9ca-11e4-bf0b-f648b95a6488\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/technology/at-jordan-site-drone-offers-glimpse-of-antiquities-looting/2015/04/03/9ea7bfa6-d9ca-11e4-bf0b-f648b95a6488_story.html)

- *The Houston Chronicle* published an opinion piece titled “**Display of Islamic art exposes terrorists’ lie**” (by Derek Fincham). As a response to ISIL’s campaign of cultural heritage destruction — and to demonstrate the degree to which Islam values art and culture — the author encourages museums to support contemporary art from the region and to display more works of Islamic art.  
<http://www.chron.com/opinion/outlook/article/Fincham-Display-of-Islamic-art-exposes-6178172.php#comments>
- *Al Monitor* published an article titled “**Ninevah monastery hopes for liberation**” (by Saleh Elias). Drawing on interviews with local residents and others who visited the **Monastery of Markourkas or Mar Gorgis** (Nineveh Governorate, Iraq) regularly, the article highlights the sense of loss that many feel in the wake of ISIL’s occupation and vandalism of the structure in March. See **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0050** (Weekly Report 32).  
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/04/iraq-christians-mosul-saint-george-monastery-destroy.html#>
- *The Associated Press* posted an article titled “**In Iraq, a historic Christian library saved from militants**” (by Bram Janssen and Sameer N. Yacoub). The article describes an effort by the monks at **Mar Matti Monastery** (Nineveh Governorate, Iraq) to protect their library of rare Christian manuscripts from ISIL by transporting them to the city of Dohuk in the secure Kurdistan Region of Iraq.  
[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_306481/contentdetail.htm?contenttypeid=kneFTanl](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_306481/contentdetail.htm?contenttypeid=kneFTanl)
- *The New York Times* published an opinion piece titled “**Use Force to Stop ISIS’ Destruction of Art and History**” (by Hugh Eakin). Drawing on interviews with **Amr al-Azm** (Shawnee State University), **Michael Danti** (ASOR CHI Director), and **Abdulameer Al-Dafar Hamdani** (Stony Brook University), the author highlights the lack of an effective international response to the destruction of cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq and argues, ultimately, that the world must be prepared to use military force to stop the destruction.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/04/opinion/use-force-to-stop-isis-destruction-of-art-and-history.html>

April 2, 2015

The **DGAM** posted an **urgent appeal**, calling on the people of Idlib — especially “the cultural, religious and social elites” — to protect the **Idlib Museum** (Idlib Governorate, Syria) and calling on international organizations and archaeologists around the world to do everything that they can to protect Syrian cultural heritage from theft and vandalism. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0060**.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=1644>



- On the Protect Syrian Archaeology Facebook page, **APSA** posted an **urgent appeal**, calling on the international community to prevent the Syrian regime from dropping barrel bombs in the vicinity of the **Idlib Museum** (Idlib Governorate, Syria) and urging members of the Jaish al-Feth (the broad rebel/extremist coalition now in control of the museum) to establish a civilian committee responsible for producing an inventory of the museum. According to the APSA statement, the archaeological collections in the museum have been completely removed and stored in crates in the basement, while the eastern wall of the museum has been damaged by a barrel bomb, rendering the museum susceptible to looting.  
<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/posts/1268496993257409:0>
- UNESCO issued a press release titled “**The Director-General of UNESCO calls for all Syrians to commit to the safeguarding of cultural Heritage in Bosra and Idlib.**” According to the statement, the Director-General has called on all parties to avoid using cultural heritage sites for military purposes and to protect them from damage. In particular, she has called on all parties to safeguard the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bosra and the museums in Idlib, Maarrat al-Numaan, and Bosra. Commending the recent agreement to “freeze combats” in the World Heritage Site of Bosra, she has called for a similar effort to create “protected cultural areas” for the museum and other sites in Idlib.  
[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/the\\_director\\_general\\_of\\_unesco\\_calls\\_for\\_all\\_syrians\\_to\\_commit\\_to\\_the\\_safeguarding\\_of\\_cultural\\_heritage\\_in\\_bosra\\_and\\_idlib](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/the_director_general_of_unesco_calls_for_all_syrians_to_commit_to_the_safeguarding_of_cultural_heritage_in_bosra_and_idlib)
- Heritage for Peace** published its newsletter ***Damage to Syria’s Heritage — 02 April 2015***, which includes a statement clarifying the organization’s position on information sharing and data verification.  
<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-02-april-2015/>
- Al Monitor* published an article titled “**Saddam Hussein’s tomb haunts Tikrit residents**” (by Shukur Khilkhal). The article outlines the many conflicting opinions held by Iraqis and others regarding Saddam Hussein’s legacy and, in particular, his tomb. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0077.**  
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-saddam-hussein-body-grave-media-buzz.html>

- **AAAS** released a report titled “**Mosul, Iraq: Destruction of Nebi Yunis (Tomb of the Prophet Jonah).**” The report uses a series of satellite images to document the destruction of the shrine and the subsequent clearing of rubble and grading of the site to remove all traces of the shrine.  
<http://www.aaas.org/report/mosul-iraq-destruction-nebi-yunis-tomb-prophet-jonah>

April 1, 2015

INTERPOL issued a press release titled “**Protecting cultural heritage requires a global response, says INTERPOL Chief.**” According to the statement, at a recent meeting convened by UNESCO, INTERPOL Secretary General Jürgen Stock highlighted the need for an international effort to combat the illicit trade in cultural heritage by terrorist groups and also INTERPOL’s role in “centralizing information on stolen cultural heritage and assisting member countries in identifying, locating and repatriating trafficked items.”

<http://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-media/News/2015/N2015-034>

- **APSA** posted a YouTube video showing damage in the area around the **Idlib Museum** (Idlib Governorate, Syria), attributed to “bombing with TNT barrels.” **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0060.**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv1x5It7pdI&index=1&list=UUAIWkoCIJ4VIFP1A3fC3G5Q>
- **APSA** posted a series of images showing the current state of the exterior and interior of the **Idlib Museum** (Idlib Governorate, Syria), alongside links to two videos posted previously on YouTube. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0060.**  
<http://apsa2011.com/index.php/ar/provinces-ar/idlib/2013-05-25-00-55-58/1184-idlib-archaeological-museum-danger-3.html>
- The **DGAM** posted a series of images showing combat-related damage to the **waterwheel** (*noria*) located on the Orontes River in front of **Qalaat Shaizar** (Hama Governorate, Syria). **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0059.**  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1643>
- **SAFE** announced its “**Unite for Global Heritage**” campaign, an effort to raise global awareness about looting and the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq through a series of events held around the world during the month of April.  
<http://savingantiquities.org/unite-for-global-heritage/>

March 31, 2015

The **DGAM** reported that ongoing combat in northern Hama Governorate (Syria) has caused severe damage to the Mamluk-era site of **Qalaat Shaizar** (Hama Governorate, Syria). **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0059**.

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1641>

- **APSA** posted a YouTube video showing illegal excavations at the site of **Tell Tcholema Foqani** (Hassakeh Governorate, Syria). **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0061**.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLSt7zW8FYI&feature=youtu.be>
- On the Association for the Protect Syrian Archaeology Facebook page, **APSA** posted a photo of the **Idlib Museum** (Idlib Governorate, Syria), accompanied by a statement reporting that some people have attempted to break into the museum warehouses and urging the citizens of Idlib to protect the museum from looting. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0060**.  
<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/a.324921080948343.76891.324869057620212/1267609663346142/?type=1>
- **APSA** posted a YouTube video reporting on the state of the **Idlib Museum** (Idlib Governorate, Syria). **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0060**.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4A5lUL5TjJo&feature=youtu.be>
- *Hyperallergic* posted an article titled “**Syria Has Reputedly Hidden Away 99% of its Cultural Heritage Artifacts**” (by Laura C. Mallonee). According to the article, Maamoun Abdulkarim (Director-General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria) claims that 99% of the objects held in the country’s museums (300,000 artifacts and thousands of manuscripts held in 34 museums) have been hidden away to protect them from looting and destruction.  
<http://hyperallergic.com/195019/syria-has-reputedly-hidden-away-99-of-its-cultural-heritage-artifacts/>
- *Slate* published an article titled “**Satellite Images Don’t Lie: What it’s like to be an archaeologist watching ISIS and other groups destroy important sites in the Middle East**” (by Stephen H. Savage). In the article, Dr. Stephen Savage (Institute for Humanities Research, Arizona State) uses satellite imagery to highlight the degree to which archaeological sites across the Middle East have been transformed into military installations and, by extension, military targets.  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future\\_tense/2015/03/satellite\\_images\\_show\\_isis\\_other\\_groups\\_destroying\\_archaeological\\_sites.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2015/03/satellite_images_show_isis_other_groups_destroying_archaeological_sites.html)

- *RT* published an article titled “**Legislators call for US Treasury sanctions against dealers of looted Syrian antiquities.**” According to the article, four members of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee have written a letter to acting US Treasury Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Adam Szubin, urging him to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2199 (adopted in February 2015) by imposing sanctions on the importation of cultural property removed illegally from Syria. <http://rt.com/usa/245669-treasury-sanctions-syrian-artifacts/>

- *Middle East Online* posted an article titled “**Ancient Libyan treasures now in ISIS' sights.**” According to the article, Libyan historians and archaeologists fear that the cultural heritage of the country, which includes five UNESCO World Heritage Sites, could soon become a target for ISIL. Islamist extremists have already carried out deliberate destructions of heritage in Libya. <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=70751>

March 30, 2015

**ISIL released Issue No. 8 of its magazine *Dabiq***, which featured an article titled “**Erasing the Legacy of a Ruined Nation**” (pp. 22–24). In attempting to justify the **destruction of the Mosul Museum**, the article celebrates the anger that the destruction provoked and condemns the effort to portray the destroyed “statues and ruins” as “part of a cultural heritage and identity that Muslims of Iraq should embrace and be proud of.”

- *The Wall Street Journal* published an article titled “**West Seeks Tighter Curbs on Trade in Antiquities Looted by Islamic State**” (by Joe Parkinson and Duncan Mavin). The article outlines a number of different efforts underway in the US and Europe to combat the international trade in illicit antiquities. These efforts include the introduction of new legal packages, the allocation of additional resources for training and enforcement, and the creation of uniformed task forces dedicated to cultural heritage protection. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/west-seeks-tighter-curbs-on-trade-in-looted-antiquities-1427761561>

- *Al Gherbal* published an article (in Arabic) by Cheikhmous Ali and Salim Ali, documenting damage to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**. <http://www.algherbal.com/2015/03/30/2084/>

March 29, 2015

*Malaysian Insider* published an opinion piece titled “**What does the Quran say about destroying art?**” (by Harun Yahya). <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/sideviews/article/what-does-the-quran-say-about-destroying-art-harun-yahya>

March 28, 2015

*Bernama* published an article titled “**Hungary Offers To Restore Monuments Destroyed In Iraq.**” According to the article, “Istvan Ajgaater, Unity of Science and Culture official at the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in a press conference **the Hungarian government had sought approval from Iraqi authorities to restore the monuments.**”

[http://www.bernama.com.my/bernama/v8/wn/newsworld.php?id=1121027#.VRiavIb\\_LPs.twitter](http://www.bernama.com.my/bernama/v8/wn/newsworld.php?id=1121027#.VRiavIb_LPs.twitter)

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The **DGAM** posted a brief report and a series of images showing minor, combat-related damage to historical monuments in the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Bosra**. According to the report, more severe damage occurred in the residential area surrounding the al-Omari Mosque, the Souq, and the eastern side of the ancient city. The report cites continued communication between the DGAM staff in Bosra and the local community toward the goal of protecting the site from further damage.

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1633>

March 26, 2015

*L'Orient-Le Jour* published an article titled “**Comment le trafic d'antiquités fait vivre l'EI et anéantit la civilisation assyrienne**” (by Antoine Ajoury). Based on an interview with Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly, the article discusses the looting and destruction of cultural heritage by ISIL, the international market for illicit antiquities, and the impact on the Assyrian Christian community in Iraq.

<http://www.lorientlejour.com/article/918178/comment-le-traffic-dantiquites-fait-vivre-lei-et-aneantit-la-civilisation-assyrienne.html>

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*Syria Direct* published a blog post titled “**Busra a-Sham LCC: With historic city encircled, ‘retreat was not an option.’**”

<http://syriadirect.org/main/36-interviews/1945-busra-a-sham-lcc-with-historic-city-encircled-retreat-was-not-an-option>

March 12, 2015

*Die Zeit* published an article titled “**Blutige Kunst: Ungehindert wütet der "Islamische Staat" gegen das Kulturerbe des Orients – und verkauft es auch in den Westen**” (by Evelyn Finger). The article includes an interview with **Adelheid Otto** (Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology, Munich), who calls on politicians to consider immediate military intervention to assist the Iraqis and Syrians who are risking their lives to protect their cultural heritage from ISIL.

<http://www.zeit.de/2015/11/islamischer-staat-kultur-kulturerbe>

## Military and Political Context

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

1. Yarmouk Refugee Camp, Damascus
  - On April 1, ISIL took control of large parts of the Palestinian Yarmouk Refugee Camp in southern Damascus, greatly worsening the humanitarian situation in this urban neighborhood with 18,000 people currently trapped inside.<sup>2</sup> Palestinian fighters and allied Syrian rebels have continued fighting with ISIL for control of areas in the camp.<sup>3</sup>
2. Nasib Border Crossing, Jordanian Border
  - On April 1, several rebel groups captured the Nasib border crossing, Syria's main crossing into Jordan, from the Syrian government.<sup>4</sup>
  - On April 2, Syrian government planes bombed areas around the Nasib crossing.<sup>5</sup>
3. Mabouja, Hama Province
  - On March 31, ISIL executed at least 37 civilians in the village of Mabouja about 40 miles east of the city of Hama.<sup>6</sup>
4. Al-Hasakah Area, Al-Hasakah Province
  - During the reporting period, coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around al-Hasakah.<sup>7</sup>
5. Kobani Area
  - During the reporting period, coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Kobani.<sup>8</sup>

Other key points:

- After seizing the city of Idlib from government control on March 28, a coalition of Islamist rebel groups, including Jabhat al-Nusra but not ISIL, has promised to administer the city jointly. Idlib is the second provincial capital (after Raqqa) that has fallen out of the control of the Syrian government.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32147888>;  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2015/04/isil-seizes-yarmouk-district-damascus-150401133003826.html>; <http://syriahr.com/en/2015/04/the-clashes-continue-in-al-yarmouk-camp-and-is-takes-control-over-wide-parts-of-it/>; background: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/mar/05/how-yarmouk-refugee-camp-became-worst-place-syria>

<sup>3</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/04/02/ISIS-retakes-parts-of-Damascus-refugee-camp-monitor-.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/02/us-mideast-crisis-syria-jordan-idUSKBN0MTORY20150402>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/02/us-mideast-crisis-syria-jordan-idUSKBN0MTORY20150402>

<sup>6</sup> <http://syriahr.com/en/2015/03/is-kills-30-civilians-in-the-eastern-countryside-of-hama/>;  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/31/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN0MR13020150331>;  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32133200>;  
<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/3/31/islamic-state-attacks-syrian-village-kills-37.html>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/syrian-opposition-tries-to-govern-newly-won-idlib-city-1427845224>; New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/02/world/middleeast/syria-isis-advances-in-hama-and-damascus.html?src=xps>; Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/28/us-mideast-crisis-idlib-control-idUSKBN0M00M020150328>



- In an interview published on March 31 in the Russian government newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said that Russia has been delivering his government weapons throughout the conflict.<sup>10</sup>

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

1. Tikrit, Salahuddin Province
  - During the reporting period, Iraqi security forces and allied Shiite Popular Mobilization militias, with the support of coalition airstrikes, have seized from ISIL almost all of Tikrit except for the northern neighborhood of Qadisiya, which is the last major stronghold of ISIL in the city.<sup>11</sup>
  - On April 1, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi paraded the Iraqi flag through the center of the city in the company of allied fighters and journalists.<sup>12</sup>
  - Reports of widespread looting perpetrated by some members of the Shiite paramilitaries and lynching of Sunni extremists immediately followed the victory and lasted for days.<sup>13</sup> Shiite militia forces were then ordered to leave Tikrit with Iraqi security forces left in charge of the area.<sup>14</sup>
2. Ramadi Area, Anbar Province
  - During the reporting period, Iraqi security forces and tribal fighters clashed with ISIL fighters in areas west of Ramadi.<sup>15</sup>
3. Baghdad Area
  - During the reporting period, bomb attacks in and around Baghdad killed at least 32 people and injured dozens more.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/30/us-syria-crisis-russia-arms-idUSKBN0MQ0RK20150330>

<sup>11</sup> Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/02/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN0MS3NC20150402>; BBC <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32153836>; S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: March 31-April 1, 2015," <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iraq-situation-report-march-31-april-1-2015>; S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi "Iraq Situation Report: April 2-3, 2015," <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iraq-situation-report-april-2-3-2015>; S. Adnan and P. Martin "Iraq Situation Report: April 4-6, 2015," <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/04/iraq-situation-report-april-4-6-2015.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://twitter.com/HaiderAlAbadi/status/583261835555663872>

<sup>13</sup> Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/03/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-tikrit-special-re-idUSKBN0MU1DP20150403>

<sup>14</sup> Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/04/us-mideast-crisis-tikrit-looting-idUSKBN0MV0JE20150404>

<sup>15</sup> S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: March 31-April 1, 2015," <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iraq-situation-report-march-31-april-1-2015>

<sup>16</sup> AP, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/03/30/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>; AP, <http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-suicide-blast-hits-bus-iranian-pilgrims-kills-104117828.html>; AP, [http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML\\_IRAQ?SITE=AP](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_IRAQ?SITE=AP); S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: March 28-March 30, 2015," <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iraq-situation-report-march-28-30-2015>; S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: March 31-April 1, 2015," <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iraq-situation-report-march-31-april-1-2015>; S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi "Iraq Situation Report: April 2-3, 2015," <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iraq-situation-report-april-2-3-2015>; S. Adnan and P. Martin "Iraq Situation Report: April 4-6, 2015," <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/04/iraq-situation-report-april-4-6-2015.html>



Other key points:

- On a March 30 visit to Iraq, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon condemned alleged “summary killings, abductions and destruction of property perpetrated by forces and militias fighting alongside Iraqi armed forces,” referring to the Shiite militias supporting the Iraqi government to fight ISIL.<sup>17</sup>
- With the end of the operation to retake Tikrit in sight, the focus of the fighting in Iraq will likely shift soon. An anonymous U.S. military official told a small group of reporters that the city of Baiji, which is about 25 miles north of Tikrit and has an important oil refinery, will likely be the next city from which the Iraqi government and its allies will seek to clear ISIL.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/30/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-un-idUSKBN0MQ0G120150330>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/02/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-usa-idUSKBN0MT2N620150402>

## Incident Reports: Iraq

### IHI 15-0068 UPDATE

**Report Date:** March 6, 2015; updated April 4, 2015

**Site Name:** Hatra

**Date of Incident:** March 7, 2015 (reported); April 4, 2015 (reports confirmed)

**Location:** 68 miles southwest of Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

#### Coordinates:

**Site Description:** The city of Hatra — a large fortified urban center — was built by the Seleucid Empire in the third or second centuries BCE and was later conquered by the Parthians. During the first and second centuries CE it rose to prominence as a religious center and as a major trading city along the Silk Road. Roman Emperors Trajan and Septimius Severus unsuccessfully attempted to capture the city in 116 CE and 198 CE, respectively. Hatra eventually formed an alliance with the Romans in 230 CE, during the reign of Emperor Gordian III, but the city was conquered in 241 CE and destroyed by Ardashir I (226-42 CE), founder of the Sassanid dynasty.

The surviving remains of Hatra date between the first century BCE and the second century CE. The city is approximately 2 km in diameter and was protected by two large fortification walls, separated by a wide ditch with four fortified gates. The city center is marked by a temple complex dedicated to several Greco-Roman, Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Aramean, and Arabian deities, with monumental architectural remains blending Hellenistic, Roman, and Middle Eastern traditions. The archaeological site was successfully inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985.

**Site Date:** 3rd/2nd century BCE – 241 CE

**Source of Destruction:** ISIL vandalism.

**Pattern:** On February 27, 2015, the AFP reported that Hatra was at risk in light of recent events at the Mosul Museum (IHI 15-0034) and the site of Nineveh (IHI 15-0033).<sup>19</sup> On March 7, 2015, the Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities released a statement confirming that Hatra was indeed attacked.<sup>20</sup>

On April 3, 2015, ISIL released a video that details the destruction of multiple pieces of stone statuary and decorative architectural elements at Hatra.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the situation.

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<sup>19</sup><http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Feb-27/288983-fears-mount-for-iraq-heritage-after-isis-museum-rampage.ashx>

<sup>20</sup>[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1549002925354038&id=1492622900992041](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1549002925354038&id=1492622900992041)

## **Sources:**

### Online Reporting:

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/07/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-hatra-idUSKBN0M30GR20150307>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/08/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-hatra-idUSKBN0M400320150308>

NY Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/08/world/middleeast/jihadists-may-have-wrecked-an-ancient-iraqi-site.html>

UNESCO statement: [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/destruction\\_of\\_hatra\\_marks\\_a\\_turning\\_point\\_in\\_the\\_cultural\\_cleansing\\_underway\\_in\\_iraq\\_say\\_heads\\_of\\_unesco\\_and\\_isesco/#.VPtDabOG\\_qP](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/destruction_of_hatra_marks_a_turning_point_in_the_cultural_cleansing_underway_in_iraq_say_heads_of_unesco_and_isesco/#.VPtDabOG_qP)

Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11515774/Islamic-State-militants-damage-Hatra-archaeological-site-with-sledgehammers.html>

Le Monde: [http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/04/04/l-etat-islamique-met-en-scene-la-destruction-de-la-cite-antique-d-hatra\\_4609857\\_3218.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/04/04/l-etat-islamique-met-en-scene-la-destruction-de-la-cite-antique-d-hatra_4609857_3218.html)

AP: <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/bcdd18ddfe5143f08e5e2335e19e5af9/video-islamic-state-group-shot-hammered-away-iraqs-hatra>

The Independent (UK): <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-ruins-monuments-with-gunfire-and-sledgehammers-in-ancient-city-of-hatra-in-iraq-10156616.html>

### Videos of vandalism:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=396&v=J6PHVdXGXkU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEZ2cpuZ5> (removed)

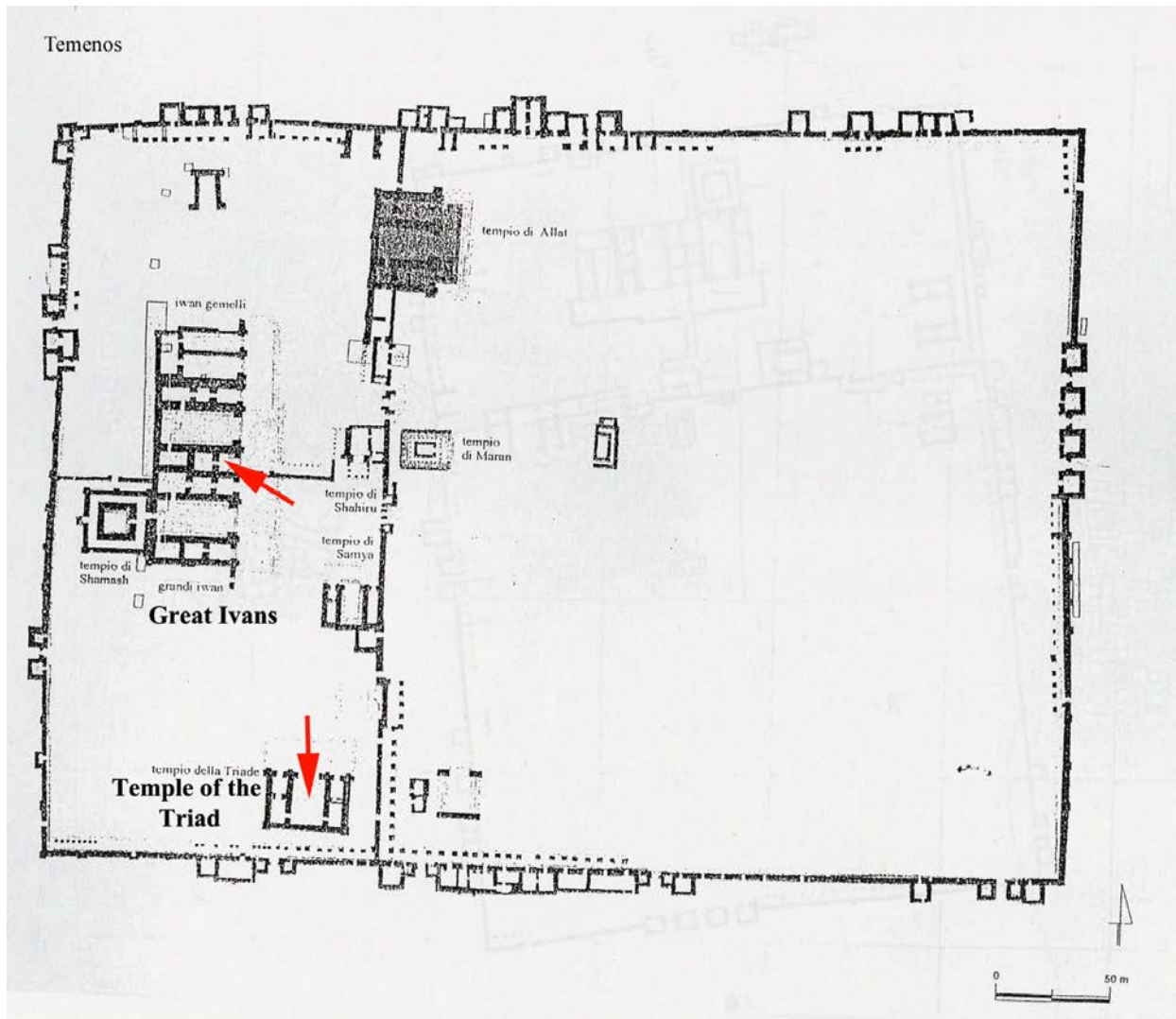
### Scholarly:

UNESCO World Heritage Listing: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/277>



The ruins of Hatra on December 25, 2013 (Digital Globe).





Hatra, plan showing areas of vandalism (provided by Paolo Brusasco)



Hatra, screenshot of vandalism (posted on social media)



Hatra in 2010 (Photo by S.E. Botts)





Hatra, screenshot of vandalism (posted on social media)



Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)





Hatra, screenshot of vandalism (posted on social media).



Hatra in 2010 (Photo by S.E. Botts)



Hatra, screenshot of vandalism (posted on social media)



Hatra in 2010 (Photo by S.E. Botts)





Hatra, screenshot of vandalism (posted on social media)



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Hatra in 2009 (Photo by M.G. Caslen, provided by S.E. Botts)



Hatra in 2009 (Photo by M.G. Caslen, provided by S.E. Botts)



Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M.Prophit, provided by S.E. Botts)



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Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M.Prophit, provided by S.E. Botts)



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Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)

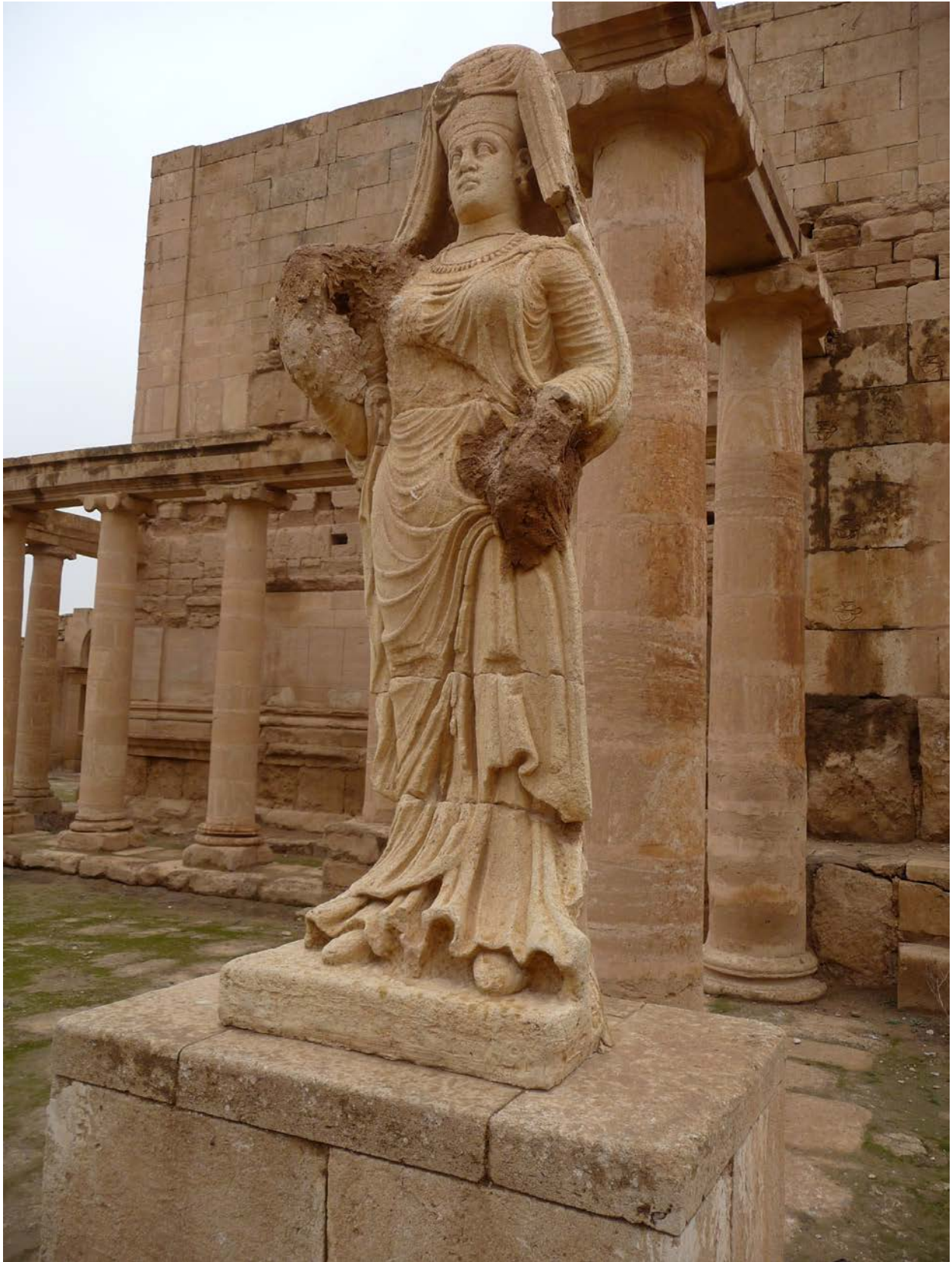


Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)



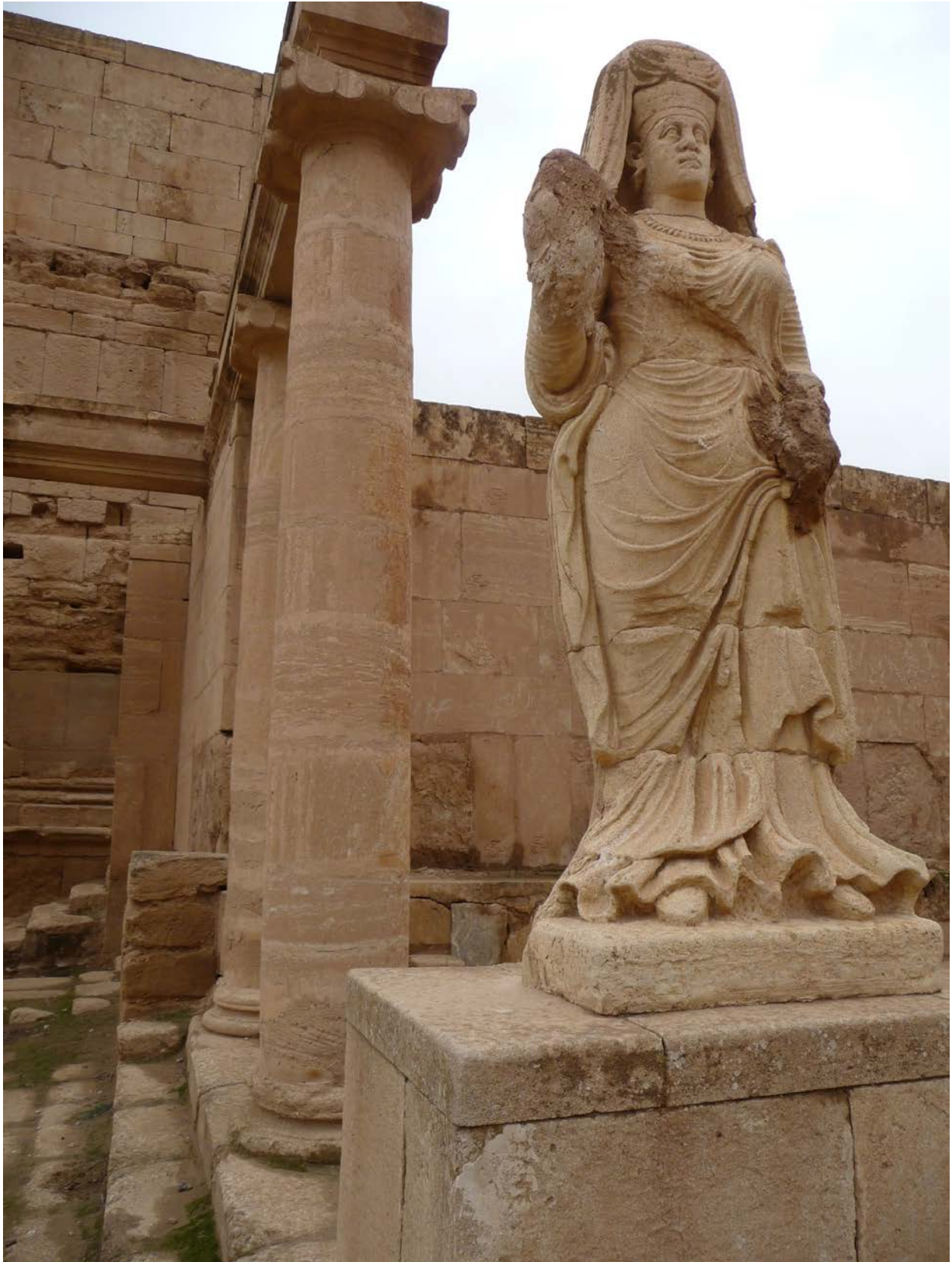
Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)





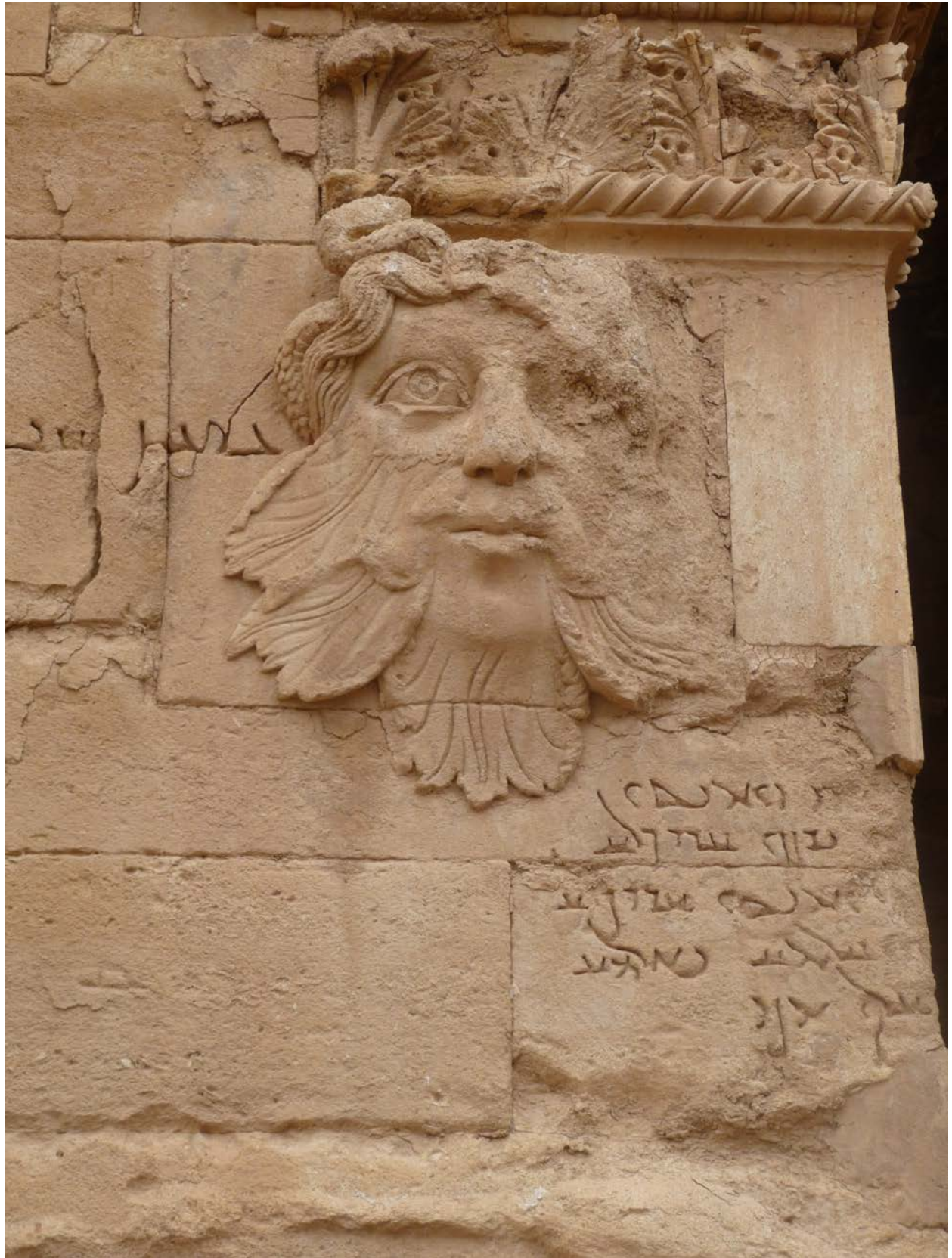
Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)





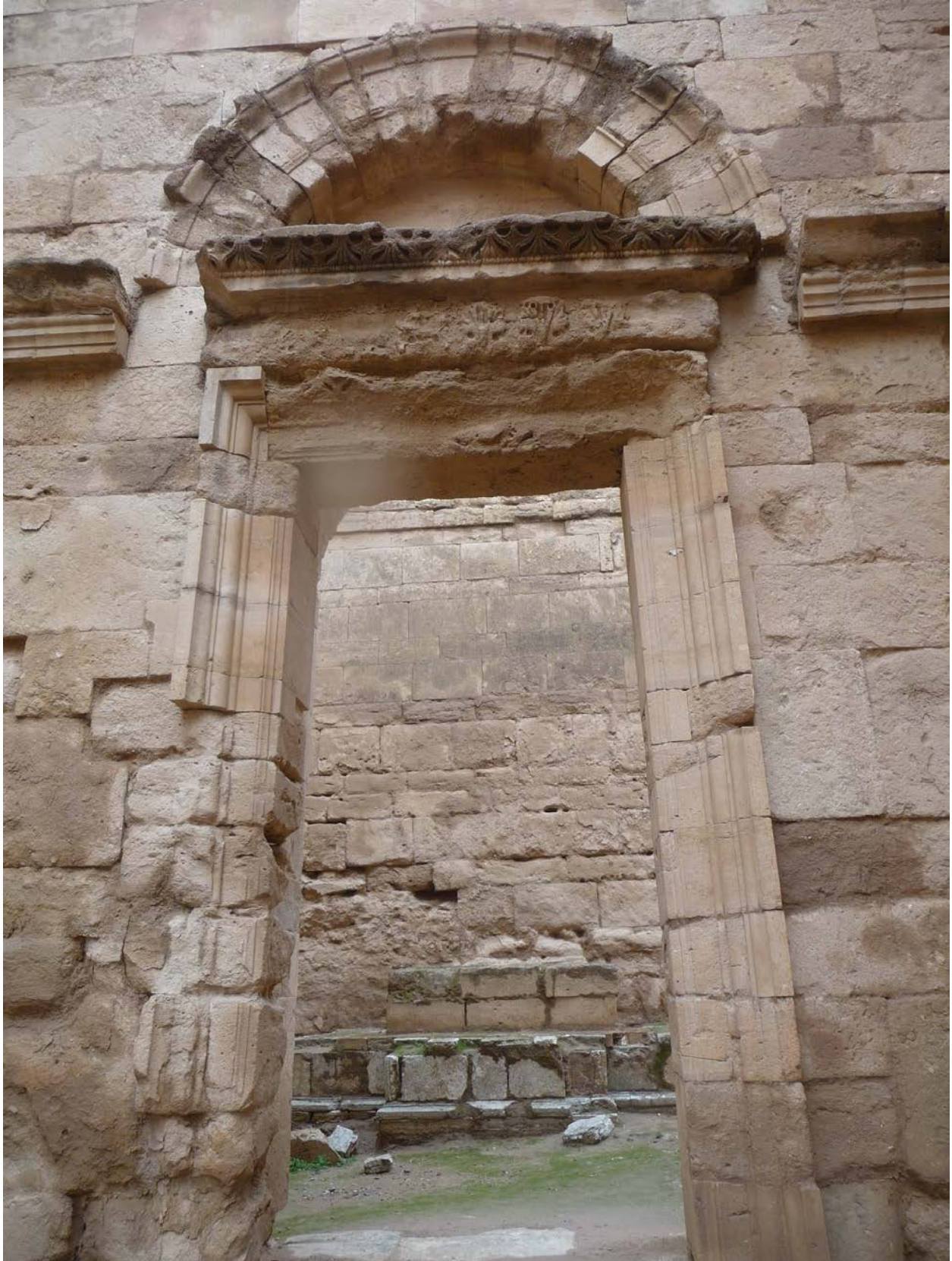
Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)





Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)





Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)





Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)



Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)





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Hatra in 2010 (Photo by M. Proffit, provided by S.E. Botts)



Hatra in 2010 (Photo by S.E. Botts)



Hatra in 2010 (Photo by S.E. Botts)



**IHI 15-0077**

**Report Date:** April 4, 2015

**Site Name:** Tomb of Saddam Hussein

**Date of Incident:** March 16, 2015

**Location:** Al-Awja Religious Compound, Tikrit, Salahuddin Governorate

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Mausoleum of Saddam Hussein (1937-2006), fifth president of Iraq, executed in 2006 after being convicted of crimes against humanity. The marble, octagonal complex was located in Saddam Hussein's birthplace of Al-Awja in the same cemetery that held the tombs of Saddam Hussein's two sons, Uday and Qusay Hussein.

**Site Date:** 2006

**Source of Destruction:** Deliberate destruction or ordnance detonation; cause undetermined.

**Pattern:** The party responsible for the destruction of the tomb has not been determined. Iraqi forces and Shiite paramilitary groups had been battling ISIL militants in the area at the time.

According to *The Guardian*,

Isis has controlled Tikrit since June, when it waged its lightning offensive that saw Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, come under their control. The militants were helped in their conquest of northern Iraq by Saddam loyalists, including military veterans, who appealed to Sunnis who felt victimised by Baghdad's Shia-dominated government. Isis claimed in August that Saddam's tomb had been completely destroyed, but local officials said it was just ransacked and burned, but suffered only minor damage.... Poster-sized pictures of Saddam, which once covered the mausoleum, were nowhere to be seen amid the mountains of concrete rubble. Instead, Shia militia flags and photographs of militia leaders marked the predominantly Sunni village, including that of Major General Qassem Soleimani, the powerful Iranian general advising Iraqi Shia militias on the battlefield.... "This is one of the areas where IS militants massed the most because Saddam's grave is here," said Captain Yasser Nu'ma, an official with the Shia militias, formerly known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces. He said the Isis militants set a trap by planting bombs around the tomb."<sup>21</sup>

According to the *BBC*,

Militia leaders said IS put up a strong fight for the village, and left many bombs and booby-traps behind, says BBC Middle East correspondent Jim Muir. But there will be suspicions among many in Iraq's Sunni community that the tomb was deliberately destroyed by the Shia militias, he says.<sup>22</sup>

According to *Al-Monitor*,

After IS entered the city of Tikrit in July 2014, and Shiite militants poured in to liberate the city, Saddam's tomb was caught in the crossfire and became a target for both warring factions — with IS bent on destroying graves for ideological reasons, and Shiite militants never letting an opportunity

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/16/saddam-husseins-tomb-destroyed-as-battle-for-tikrit-rages>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31901568>

pass to take revenge on Saddam. As expected, the tomb was broken into and vandalized, as shown in a number of videos, some of which depicted Shiite forces setting fire to the tomb by targeting it with rocket propelled grenades, while another video purported to show IS blowing up the grave.<sup>23</sup>

The Maliki-owned Afaq Channel aired on Aug. 14, 2014, a report showing Saddam's grave open and devoid of a corpse. The reporter affirmed that they had found the grave empty, as rumors spread in the media that Saddam's daughter Raghad, who resides in Amman, transported the body to Jordan on an earlier date. But, as CNN reported in March 2015, Raghad denied those claims, leaving the fate of the body a mystery."<sup>24</sup>

*The Guardian* adds: "Iraqi media reported last year that Saddam's body was removed by loyalists amid fears that it would be disturbed in the fighting. The body's location is not known."<sup>25</sup> Allegedly, Iran sent special forces to Iraq with the intent of recovering the body,<sup>26</sup> as noted in the *Al-Monitor* article: "This will surely open the door for new episodes in this ongoing saga. Iran harbors strong hostility toward Saddam, as it accuses him of inciting the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, which lasted eight years."<sup>27</sup> The *Al-Monitor* report adds: "It seems clear that the importance of Saddam's body and grave goes beyond being used for media propaganda among Iraqis and Arabs as well. For the issue is one where politics is intermingled with ideology and sectarianism — an issue that gains importance whenever the country's crises intensify. As long as those crises endure, Saddam will remain wanted."<sup>28</sup>

On April 1, 2015, Iraqi security forces and allied Shiite Popular Mobilization militias, with the support of coalition airstrikes, have seized almost all of Tikrit from ISIL. In the days following the victory, some Shiite paramilitaries reportedly took part in widespread vandalism and looting that lasted for days.<sup>29</sup> On April 4, 2015, Shiite militia forces were ordered to leave Tikrit with Iraqi security forces left in charge of the area.<sup>30</sup>

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will closely monitor the situation in Tikrit for further reports concerning the destruction of the mausoleum of Saddam Hussein or desecration of the body, as well as any destruction of cultural property in Tikrit, related, for example, to intentional destructions by ISIL or Shiite militia looting.

#### Sources:

##### Online Reporting:

##### YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ny88\\_J\\_RY-g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ny88_J_RY-g)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3jLVgFOoSg>

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-saddam-hussein-body-grave-media-buzz.html>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-saddam-hussein-body-grave-media-buzz.html>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/16/saddam-husseins-tomb-destroyed-as-battle-for-tikrit-rages>

<sup>26</sup> <http://alkhaleejonline.net/#!/articles/1426164506635529300>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-saddam-hussein-body-grave-media-buzz.html>

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/03/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-tikrit-special-re-idUSKBN0MU1DP20150403>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/04/us-mideast-crisis-tikrit-looting-idUSKBN0MV0JE20150404>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlQMPaiLhT0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAryFk5-w14>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31901568>

The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/16/saddam-husseins-tomb-destroyed-as-battle-for-tikrit-rages>

Al-Monitor: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-saddam-hussein-body-grave-media-buzz.html>

Scholarly:



Saddam Hussein's tomb after his burial in 2006 (Getty Images)





Saddam Hussein's Mausoleum after destruction in March 2015 (BBC)



Saddam Hussein's Mausoleum after destruction in March 2015 (AP)

## Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0059

**Report Date:** March 31 2015

**Site Name:** Qalaat Shaizar/Shayzar Castle (SHI #916), as well as the *noria* (waterwheel) located nearby on the Orontes

**Date of Incident:** Unknown, March 2015

**Location:** Shaizar (also known as Saijar or Larissa), located on the Orontes river, Mhardeh District, Hama Governorate, Syria

### Coordinates:

**Site Description:** Shaizar itself is an ancient site. Qalaat Shaizar was a defensive outpost of the Byzantine empire in the 10th century AD, before being bought by the Munqidhites in AD 1081. Located at a vital river crossing, the castle was a critical strategic point throughout the crusades of the 12th century. Though the original castle was destroyed in an earthquake in 1157, construction on a new citadel began under the Ayyubid prince Nur al-Din Zangi in the late 12th century and continued into the 13th century.<sup>31</sup>

The castle of Shaizar occupies an elongated ridge on the western bank of the Orontes river. Access to the castle is given through an imposing *glacis* and gate tower, followed by a series of galleries passing through the thick fortifications. The area on top of the plateau is covered in collapsed structures, dating from the recent occupation of the castle keep by local villagers in the first half of the 20th century; these structures have re-used older building components. The medieval castle is best preserved on the eastern side, with a curtain wall, towers, and fortified access. The site's palatial core is located at the southern edge of the plateau; epigraphic evidence allowed the buildings in this area to be attributed to various rulers, including the Mamluk sultan Nur al-Din (1157–1163) and the Ayyubid prince of Aleppo (1233). The in-situ inscription on the tower above the gate is attributed to the Mamluk sultan Qalawun and dates to 1290 AD.<sup>32</sup>

In 2006, Qalaat Shaizar was added to the World Monuments Fund Watch List due to “general neglect, geological instability, and adverse exposure to winds and vegetation overgrowth.” Beginning in 2007, a team of WMF conservators worked at the site clearing vegetation, performing roof repairs, clearing and restoring damaged masonry, and installing tie-rods.<sup>33</sup>

**Site Date:** Classical–Ayyubid

**Source of Destruction:** On March 31, 2015, the DGAM posted a very brief report on the state of the castle and a series of images. According to the report, the most recent intense combat in the countryside of Hama resulted in severe damage to the castle, specifically “damage to the stones of

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<sup>31</sup> World Monuments Fund: <http://www.wmf.org/project/shayzar-castle>

<sup>32</sup> C. Tonghini and N. Montevecchi. 2006. The castle of Shayzar: the fortification of the access system. In H. Kennedy (ed.), *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*. History of Warfare Series Vol. 35. Leiden: Brill.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.wmf.org/project/shayzar-castle>

the Northern façade in the main gate tower and the [defense] wall.” According to the DGAM, parts of the Mamluk-era inscriptions above the castle entrance were also damaged.<sup>34</sup>

On April 1, 2015, the DGAM posted a second set of photos showing damage to the wooden wheel and stone supporting structure of the *noria* (waterwheel) west of the castle at Shaizar.<sup>35</sup> From the images, it appears that the wheel has sustained repeated incidents of intensive damage causing collapse of the masonry supports, but the dating of these incidents is unclear.

**Pattern:** Destruction of heritage sites due to intensive fighting in the cities and countryside of Hama Governorate. Throughout 2014 and acutely in March 2015, the Hama region has witnessed town-by-town clashes between regime and rebel/Islamist battalions. During this period, rebel-held and opposition towns in Hama have been hit heavily by regime aerial bombardments.<sup>36</sup>

### **Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:**

#### **Sources:**

##### Online Reporting:

##### DGAM:

March 31, 2015: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1641>

April 1, 2015: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1643>

##### Scholarly:

World Monuments Fund: <http://www.wmf.org/project/shayzar-castle>

Tonghini, C. and N. Montevicchi 2006. The castle of Shayzar: the fortification of the access system. In H. Kennedy (ed.), *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*. History of Warfare Series Vol. 35. Leiden: Brill.

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1641>

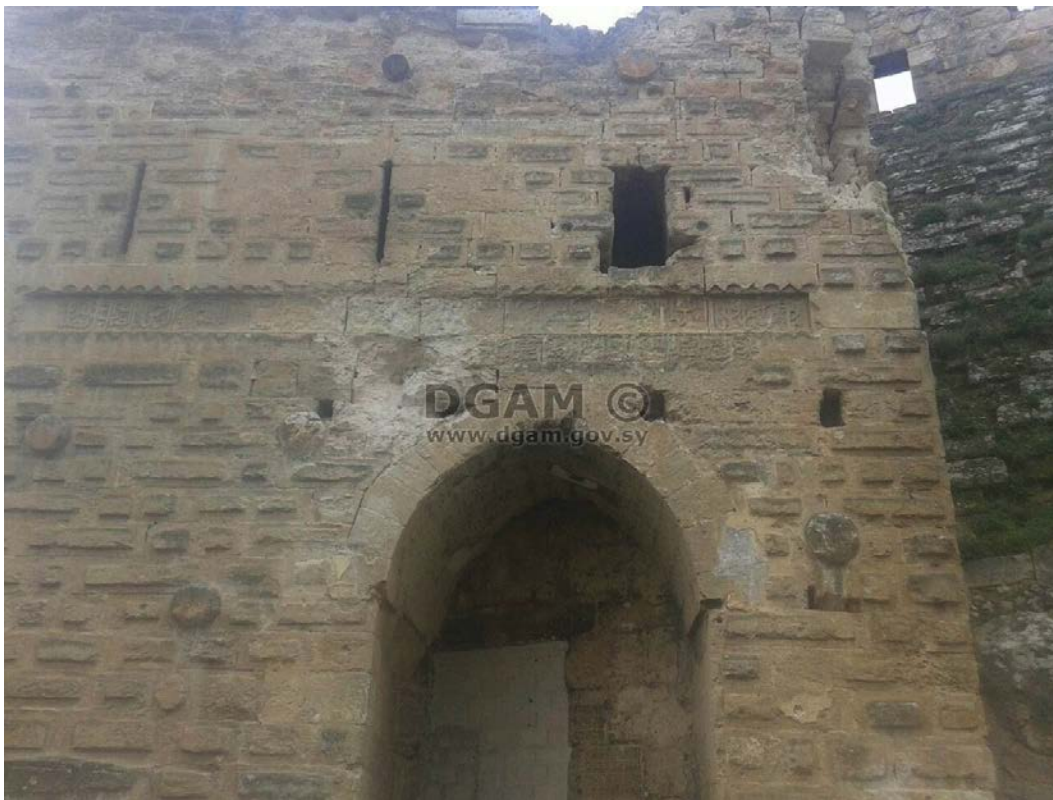
<sup>35</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1643>

<sup>36</sup> Syrian Observatory for Human Rights





Qalaat Shaizar (DGAM; posted March 31, 2015)



Qalaat Shaizar. Note damage to 13th century Mamluk inscription above portal. (DGAM; posted March 31, 2015)



Qalaat Shaizar (DGAM; posted March 31, 2015)

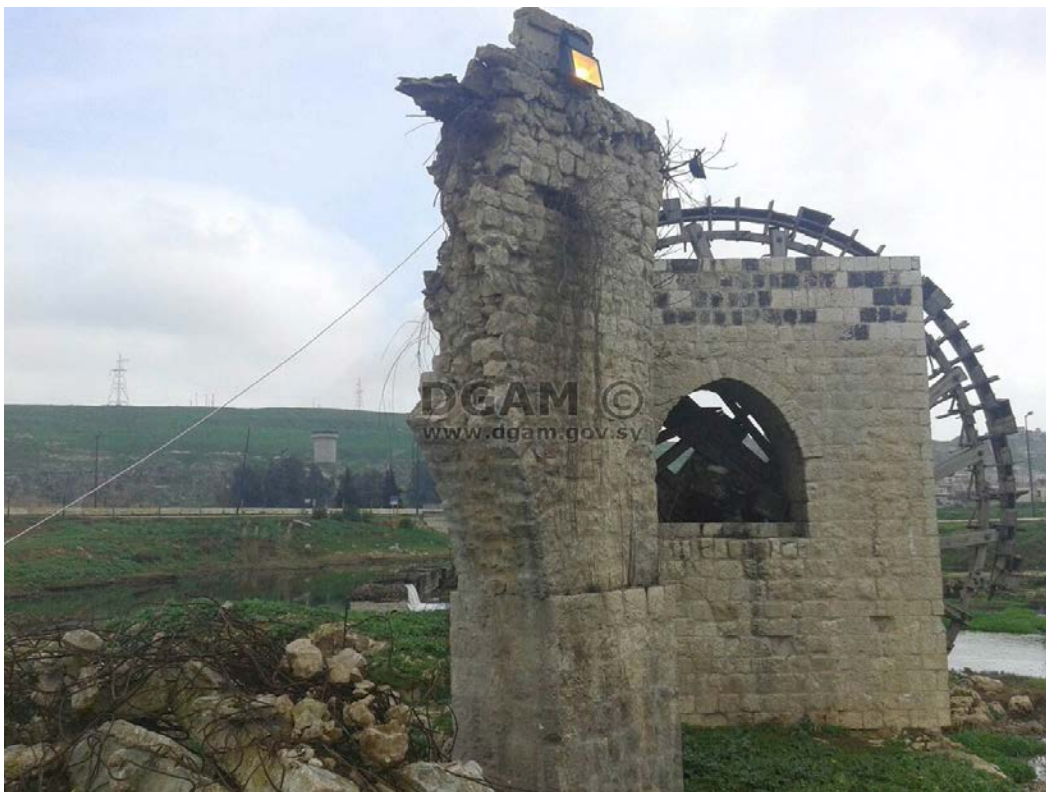


Qalaat Shaizar (DGAM, posted March 31, 2015)





Qalaat Shaizar (DGAM, posted March 31, 2015)



The *noria* (waterwheel) at Shaizar (DGAM; posted April 1, 2015)





The *noria* (waterwheel) at Shaizar (DGAM; posted April 1, 2015)



The *noria* (waterwheel) at Shaizar (DGAM; posted April 1, 2015)





The *noria* (waterwheel) at Shaizar (DGAM; posted April 1, 2015)



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The *noria* (waterwheel) at Shaizar (DGAM; posted April 1, 2015)



The *noria* (waterwheel) at Shaizar (DGAM; posted April 1, 2015)





The *noria* (waterwheel) at Shaizar (DGAM; posted April 1, 2015)

**SHI 15-0060**

**Report Date:** April 6, 2015

**Site Name:** Idlib Regional Museum (SHI # 170)

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

**Location:** East-central Idlib city, Idlib Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** The main tourist attraction for the city, the Idlib regional museum reportedly contained more than 17,000 of the Ebla tablets as well as other artifacts.

**Site Date:** Various

**Source of Destruction:** According to ASOR CHI sources, on March 28, 2015, members of the Jaish al-Fath rebel coalition overran the museum. Initial reports claimed that the museum structure was damaged during the fighting by the explosion of a nearby regime barrel bomb and that the museum was under threat of continued bombings. The DGAM publicly called on the local community to “neutralize the museum and the historical monuments” of Idlib from the combat and to support the DGAM staff in their protection efforts.<sup>37</sup>

On March 31, 2015, APSA released a video that revealed exhibition cases throughout the museum galleries to be empty and showed that a few large fragments of sculpture, mosaics, and oversize ceramic jars were present inside the facility and on the museum grounds.<sup>38</sup> On April 2, 2015, APSA published an updated report with images (dated April 1) of the interior of the museum.<sup>39</sup> The photographs are nearly identical to the scenes shown in the aforementioned video: exhibit cases appear empty; a few small movable artifacts (ceramics) and some large objects are visible; some cases and windows are smashed; floors are covered with a moderate amount of debris; and an interior ceiling appears to be partially collapsed. According to the APSA report, the galleries of the museum had been emptied and the artifacts had been stored in a repository beneath the museum. The report states that SARG bombing had caused heavy structural damage to the east wall of the museum and had revealed the underground repository (causing heightened concern over potential theft), but subsequent reports from CHI contacts have indicated that the east wall has not collapsed and the collections deposit has not been exposed. The impact of nearby explosions on the museum facility appears to be limited to minor damage to the exterior facade and significant damage to some areas of an interior ceiling. A small number of artifacts located in the museum garden and interior also appear to have been damaged.

On April 2, 2015, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova reiterated her call for all parties in the conflict to work for the protection of built and archaeological heritage, specifically related to the recent events in Bosra and Idlib.<sup>40</sup> The DGAM issued a similar call.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1634>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4A5lUL5TjJo&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>39</sup> <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/museums/1182-idlib-archaeological-museum-danger.html>

<sup>40</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1257>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=1644>

On April 3, 2015, Director-General of the DGAM Mamoun Abdulkarim commented to Reuters news agency that “15,000 antiquities locked away in safes around the northwestern Syrian city of Idlib are at risk of being sold on the black market.” In an interesting counterpoint, Al Jazeera presented comments from Razan Saffour (organizer of the anti-regime Syrian Observatory for Human Rights) which characterized Dr. Abdulkarim’s comments as a selective use of Syrian heritage to garner international sympathy.<sup>42</sup>

**Pattern:** Jaish al-Fath or the "Fattah Army" coalition — which includes al-Nusra Front, Jund al-Aqsa, Jaish al-Sunna, Liwa al-Haqq, Ajnad al-Sham, and Faynad al-Sham — seized Idlib city on Saturday, March 28, 2015, after more than five days of fierce fighting against regime forces. Idlib follows Bosra as the second major city taken by rebel forces from the Assad regime in the last two weeks.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is closely monitoring the impact of the shifting fronts of the Syrian conflict on built heritage, museum collections, and archaeological sites in affected areas. All monitoring agencies concerned are proceeding with extreme caution in the case of the Idlib museum and its collections, which are acutely vulnerable.

#### **Sources:**

##### Online Reporting:

Al Jazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/03/syrian-rebels-capture-idlib-city-joint-offensive-150328142110241.html>

Al Jazeera coverage of museum:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/syria-government-warns-threat-artefacts-idlib-150403195218846.html>

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/03/us-mideast-crisis-syria-antiquities-idUSKBN0MU0YC20150403>

Qasion News: <http://qasion-news.com/ar/content/node/23743#sthash.ggu5zgay.xMZeFk3X.dpbs>

##### APSA:

March 31, 2015:

<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/a.324921080948343.76891.324869057620212/1267609663346142/?type=1>

March 31, 2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4A5lUL5Tjlo&feature=youtu.be>

April 1, 2015: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/ar/provinces-ar/idlib/2013-05-25-00-55-58/1184-idlib-archaeological-museum-danger-3.html>

April 1, 2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv1x5lt7pdI>

April 2, 2015: <https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/posts/1268496993257409:0>

April 3, 2015 (translated post and call for aid):

<http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/museums/1182-idlib-archaeological-museum-danger.html>

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/04/syria-government-warns-threat-artefacts-idlib-150403195218846.html>



UNESCO: [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/the\\_director\\_general\\_of\\_unesco\\_calls\\_for\\_all\\_syrians\\_to\\_commit\\_to\\_the\\_safeguarding\\_of\\_cultural\\_heritage\\_in\\_bosra\\_and\\_idlib](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/the_director_general_of_unesco_calls_for_all_syrians_to_commit_to_the_safeguarding_of_cultural_heritage_in_bosra_and_idlib)

DGAM:

March 28, 2015: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1634>

April 2, 2015: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=1644>

Scholarly:



Idlib Museum (Panoramio)



Idlib Museum, damage to the exterior (screenshot from YouTube footage posted by APSA on April 1, 2015)



Idlib Museum, damage to the exterior (screenshot from YouTube footage posted by APSA on April 1, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)





Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)





Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)



Idlib museum (APSA; posted April 2, 2015)

## SHI 15-0061

**Report Date:** March 27, 2015

**Site Name:** Tell Cholama Fawqani (SHI #1888)

**Date of Incident:** Ongoing, 2014–present

**Location:** Hasakah Governorate, Upper Khabur Basin, Syria

### **Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Tell Cholama Fawqani is an unexcavated tell site (22.2 hectares) located in the Upper Khabur Basin between Tell Beydar and the contemporary sites of Tell Brak and Tell Mozan.<sup>43</sup>

**Site Date:** mid-late 3rd millennium BC

**Source of Destruction:** On March 27, 2015, APSA published photos showing looters pits, exposed stone architecture, and disturbed soil on the tell at Cholama Fawqani. These images follow upon similar photos of looting pits, some of which were already overgrown, published by APSA on January 11, 2015.

**Pattern:** Looting of Bronze Age sites in northern Syria targeting high-profile artifacts (statuary and tablets).

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is continuing to monitor the condition of archaeological sites in rural Syria using remote-sensing data and on-the-ground reports.

### **Sources:**

#### Online Reporting:

APSA

March 2015: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/al-hasakah/sites/1179-hassake-tall-tcholema-27-03-2015.html>

January 1 2015: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/al-hasakah/sites/423-01-11-2015.html>

#### Scholarly:

Sallaberger, W. and J. Ur 2004. Tell Beydar/Nabada in its regional setting. in *Third Millennium Cuneiform Texts from Tell Beydar (Seasons 1996-2002)*, Subartu 12. Edited by L. Milano, W. Sallaberger, P. Talon, and K. Van Lerberghe, pp. 51-71. Turnhout: Brepols.

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<sup>43</sup> Sallaberger and Ur 2004: 62





Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted March 27, 2015)

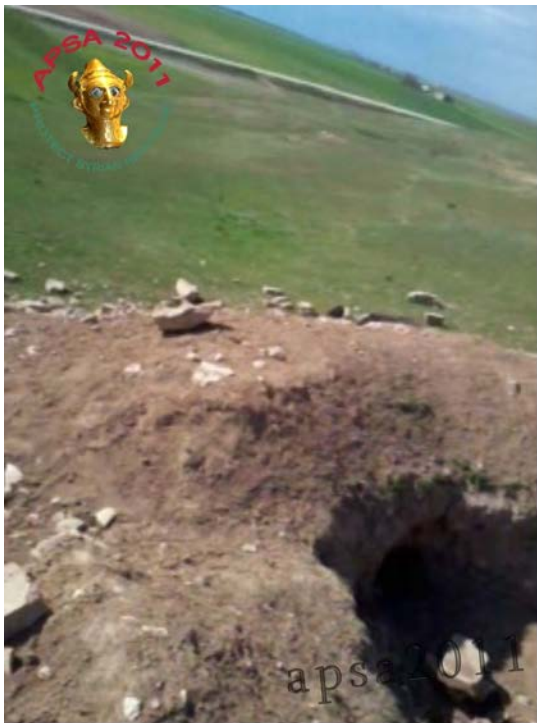


Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted March 27, 2015)





Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted March 27, 2015)



Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted March 27, 2015)



Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted January 11, 2015)





Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted January 11, 2015)





Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted January 11, 2015)





Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted January 11, 2015)





Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted January 11, 2015)





Tell Cholama Fawqani (APSA; posted January 11, 2015)

**SHI 15-0062**

**Report Date:** April 7, 2015

**Site Name:** St. Simeon Monastery (known as Deir Semaan; the main basilica church complex is known as Qalaat Semaan) (SHI #657)

**Date of Incident:** Unspecified, early 2015

**Location:** Jebel Semaan (Mount Simeon) lies on the limestone massif northwest of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:**

According to Ross Burns,

Unlike the later cathedrals of medieval Europe, the great church [at St. Simeon's monastery] was conceived and executed more or less as a single project over a short space of time. The cruciform church comprising four separate basilica buildings was probably constructed shortly after the death of the ascete, St. Simeon....[who] took up residence on a platform atop a column around the remains of which the great building is centered. Construction of the complex began a few years after St. Simeon's death (probably spanning AD 476 to 491)....[T]he column and the site of [St. Simeon's] ascetic deeds was commemorated under imperial patronage, thus encouraging the continuation of the cult of St. Simeon through pilgrimage.<sup>44</sup>

The monastery complex is organized in several groups of buildings: 1) the four basilicas (Qalaat Semaan) meeting in a central octagonal courtyard, 2) the monastery complex adjoining the basilicas to the southeast, 3) the baptistry, 200m to the south, and 4) annexes to the baptistry.<sup>45</sup>

**Site Date:** Byzantine (5th century AD)

**Source of Destruction:** On April 5, 2015, APSA published a report (dated March 24, 2015) on the condition of the site of St. Simeon, presenting images and video footage of illicit excavations and a "military camp." APSA also published Youtube footage dated March 24, 2015, which shows further views of the looting within the monastery complex, as well as extended shots of a group of women ranged in front of the St. Simeon basilica and firing automatic rifles into the air and in target practice. At one point a member of the group addresses the camera, but the sound has been removed from the footage.

**Pattern:**

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** Sites of major local and sectarian significance like Deir Semaan are of critical and ongoing concern to ASOR CHI data-gathering and analysis initiatives.

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<sup>44</sup> Burns, R. 2009. *Monuments of Syria: A guide*. I.B. Tauris. pp. 272-273

<sup>45</sup> Burns, R. 2009. *Monuments of Syria: A guide*. I.B. Tauris. pp. 272-273



**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

APSA: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/acts-of-plundering/illegal-excavations/1193-aleppo-monastery-of-saint-simeon-illicit-diggings-and-military-camp-and-military-camp-2.html>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZEHyfDXY5k>

Scholarly:

Burns, R. 2009. *Monuments of Syria: A guide*. I.B. Tauris.



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)

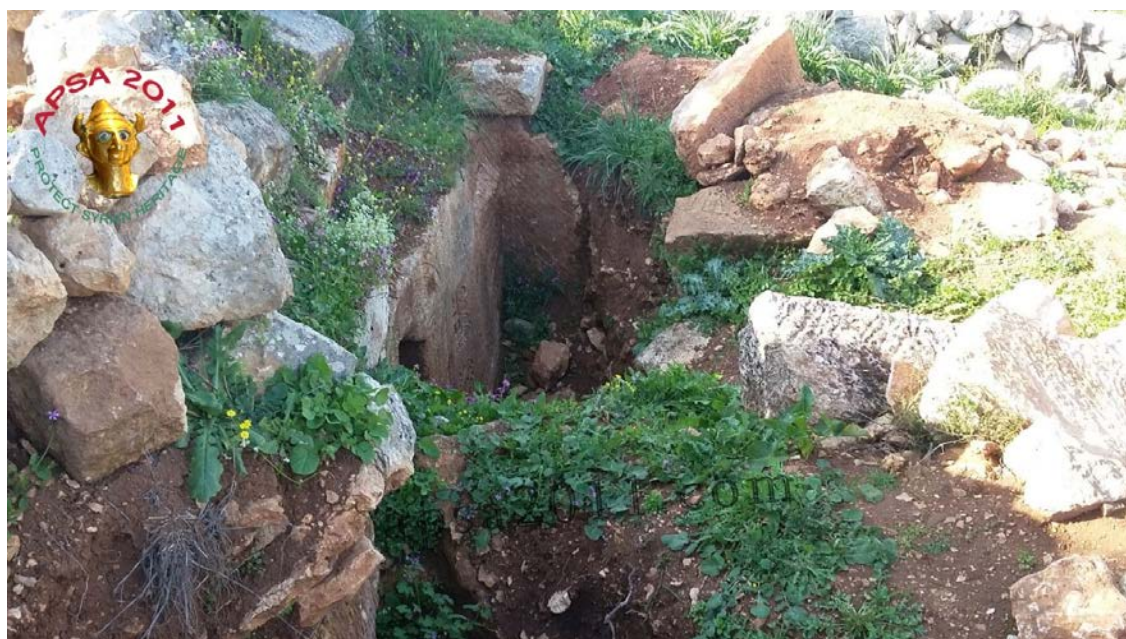


St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)

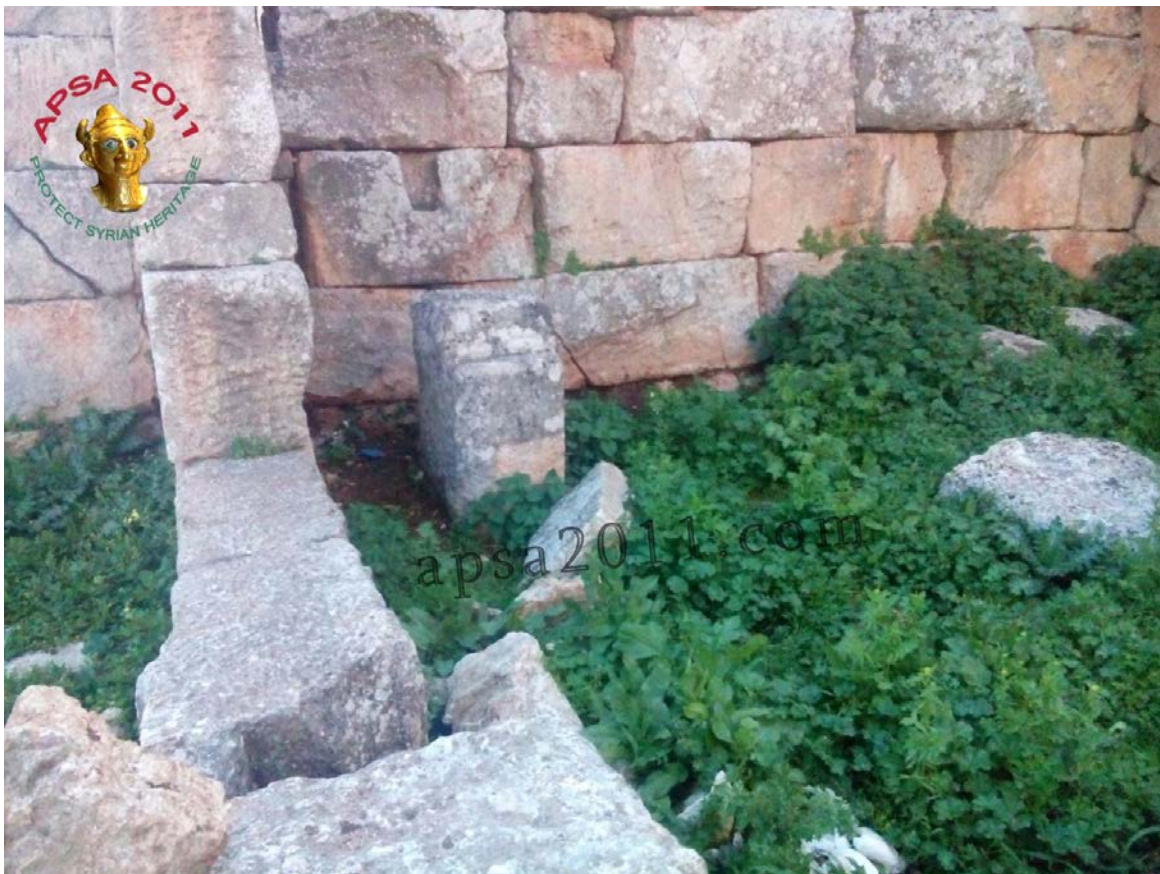


St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





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St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





St. Simeon monastery complex (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



Screen-capture from footage posted by APSA to Youtube on March 24, 2015

**SHI 15-0063**

**Report Date:** April 6, 2015

**Site Name:** Bab Qinnasrin (SHI #60), Aleppo

**Date of Incident:** Unspecified, ongoing late 2014–early 2015

**Location:** Southwest of the citadel, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:**

From *Archnet*:

Bab Qinnasrin was originally built by Sayf al-Dawla [the Hamdanid founder of the emirate of Aleppo] but was completely rebuilt in 1256 by Al-Nasir Yusuf II who renewed the southwestern part of the city wall between the Qinnasrin and Antakiya gates. The architecture of Bab Qinnasrin was formed by two massive towers of unequal heights. The western tower, eighteen meters high, was used for defense while the eastern one, twenty-six meters high, formed the entrance. The Ayyubid portal in the form of a tall arch leads to a tripartite hall with a cross vaulted middle chamber. The chamber opens into another cross-vaulted chamber that is connected to the western side of the gate by a corridor that extends to the wall behind the western tower. Passing through two more chambers, one enters the city. The plan's sequence of rooms form an enclosed square with an open court in the middle that has a water well, cisterns, and flour and oil mills. The gate also holds the Shrine of Khalil al-Tayyar. The western side has been completely demolished.<sup>46</sup>

**Site Date:** 10th–13th centuries AD

**Source of Destruction:** On April 6, 2015, APSA posted images providing an update on the condition of the Bab Qinnasrin, a major Aleppo landmark and a monument of one of the cities Shi'a ruling dynasties (the Hamdanids). From the images posted, it appears that the gate has been minimally impacted by the intensive urban warfare, barrel bombings, and tunnel bombings in the area surrounding it. Some evidence of bullet or other impact damage is visible on the tower exterior, and there is evidence of general but not extreme neglect.

**Pattern:** Vulnerability of built heritage in the ancient city of Aleppo to damage and neglect as a result of intensive, prolonged, and ongoing urban warfare and bombardment.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** The Ancient City of Aleppo remains a high priority for monitoring and research by ASOR CHI.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

APSA: <http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/ar/provinces-ar/aleppo/monuments/1187-aleppo-the-bab-qenssrin-3.html>

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<sup>46</sup> Tabbaa, Y. 1997. *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo*. The Pennsylvania State University Press. p. 21.



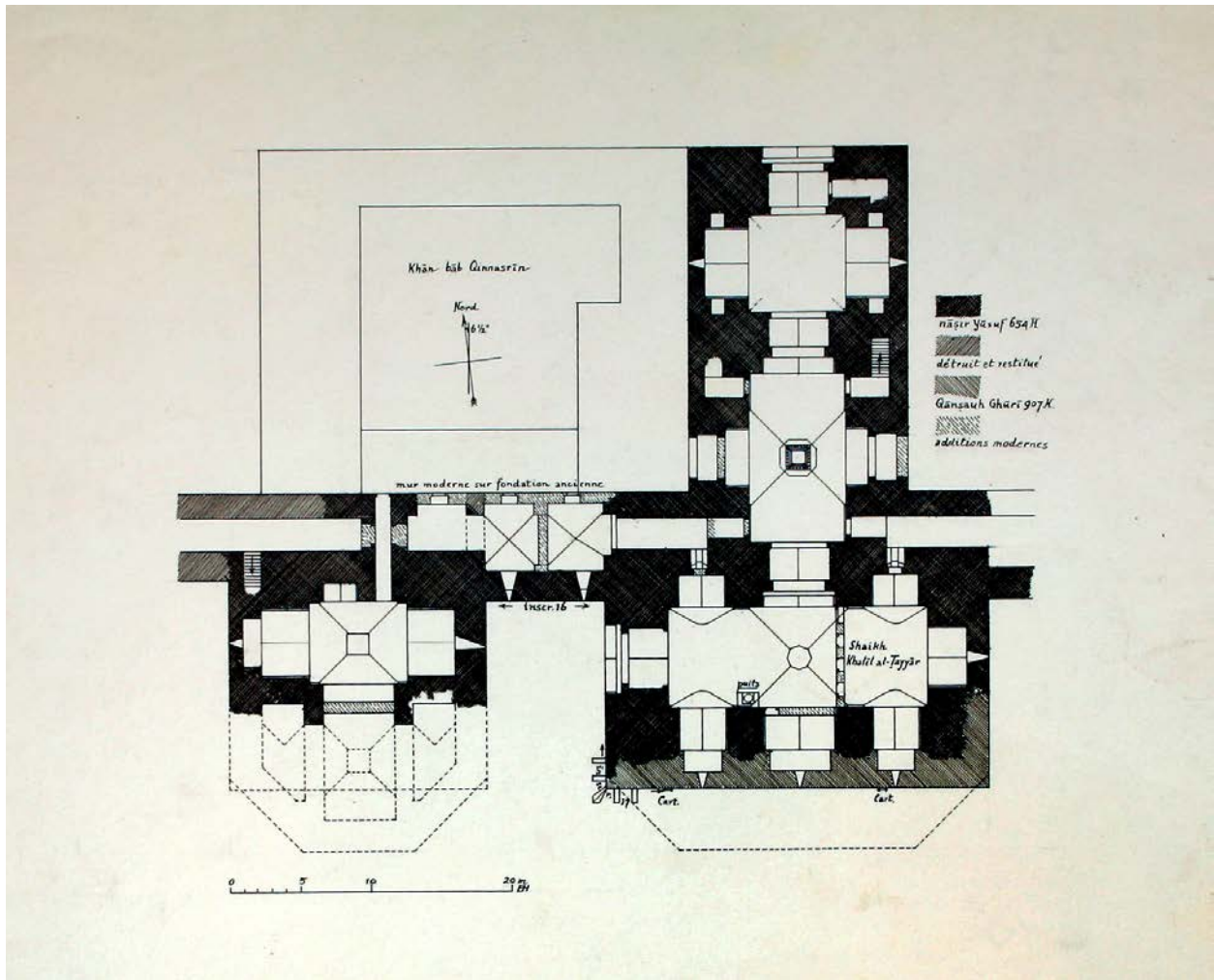
Scholarly:

ArchNet: [http://archnet.org/sites/2871/media\\_contents/35648](http://archnet.org/sites/2871/media_contents/35648)

Tabbaa, Y. 1997. *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo*. The Pennsylvania State University Press. 21.



Bab Qinnasrin, undated general historical view (Creswell archive, Ashmolean Museum <http://creswell.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/>)



Bab Qinnasrin, architectural plan, drawn by E. Herzfeld, 1908-1914. (The Ernst Herzfeld papers. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.)





Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)





Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)



Bab Qinnasrin (APSA; posted April 6, 2015)

**SHI 15-0064**

**Report Date:** April 6, 2015

**Site Name:** Sites in al-Taiba Town

**Date of Incident:** Unspecified

**Location:** al-Taiba Town is located 17 km SE of Daraa, on the right side of al-Zaidi valley, Daraa Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Ottoman infrastructural remains within the town of al-Taiba and the basaltic outcrops in the al-Zaidi valley to the south of the town.

**Site Date:** Paleolithic–Byzantine, Ottoman

**Source of Destruction:** On April 6, 2015, the DGAM published a report on various illegal excavations and damage to archaeological heritage in and near al-Taiba Town, including:

*The Ottoman Railway station:* located in the north part of the town, all of its three component buildings show signs of vandalism. This includes damage to the brick roofs and their wooden cross-beams, theft of wooden doors, digging beneath buildings, and looters pits in the area around the site.

*The Ottoman bridge:* located 200 m from the railway station. Looting has occurred underneath and around the bridge.

*Looting north of al-Taiba town:* 2 km from al-Taiba, dynamite has been used to open 3 excavations in the basalt rock.

*Southwest of al-Taiba town:* in the area near the dam at the edge of al-Zaidi valley, 3 km from the Syria-Jordan border. In this area, many looters pits have appeared in the basalt rock. These excavations in the basaltic deposits of the al-Zaidi valley are presumably searching for cave sites, which have recently been found in the area.<sup>47</sup>

**Pattern:** Intensive fighting in the Daraa region (al-Taiba is located roughly 20 km from Bosra and in close proximity to the Jordanian border) has damaged standing structures and prevented local monitoring of archaeological sites to prevent looting.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of sites and areas made vulnerable by the shifting fronts of intensive combat in the Syrian conflict.

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.english.globalarabnetwork.com/201001234485/Travel/archaeological-rocky-cave-unearthed-in-south-syria.html>



**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1649>

Scholarly:



Looting north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Looting north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)





Looting north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Looting north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Looting north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Looting north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)





Looting north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Ottoman railway bridge in al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Ottoman railway bridge in al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Ottoman railway bridge in al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)





Ottoman railway bridge in al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Ottoman railway bridge in al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Ottoman railway bridge in al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Looting south of al-Taiba town (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)





Looting south of al-Taiba town (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Looting south of al-Taiba town (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Looting south of al-Taiba town (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)



Looting south of al-Taiba town (DGAM; posted April 6, 2015)