

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

NEA-PSHSS-14-001

Weekly Report 36 — April 13, 2015

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## Executive Summary

On April 11, ISIL released a new video on YouTube showing the performative deliberate destruction of the Northwest Palace at Nimrud in northern Iraq. The city of Nimrud (ancient Kalhu, the Biblical Calah) was a famous capital city of the Neo-Assyrian Empire of the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE and was originally located on the Tigris River. The extensive ruin mounds of Nimrud lie southeast of modern Mosul and represent the remains of human occupation spanning the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE to the Hellenistic era. The Northwest Palace was constructed by the Neo-Assyrian king Assurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) and was famed for its monumentality and the abundance of elaborately carved bas-reliefs bearing representational scenes as well as other architectural sculptures such as winged-bull colossi. Neo-Assyrian royal women were buried in tombs beneath the palace. Multiple archaeological expeditions have explored the large ruin mound of Nimrud, especially the Northwest Palace, since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century CE, and these digs represent key moments in the history of Near Eastern archaeology and Near Eastern studies more generally.

The ISIL video contains speeches by militants attempting to justify this war crime by citing Jihadi-Salafi requirement that Muslims destroy “pagan idols,” as well as diatribes against foreigners/unbelievers (esp. Americans) who link the pre-Islamic past to modern Iraqi identity. The video shows ISIL militants smashing through one of the palace walls using a sledgehammer. Militants then smash bas-reliefs with sledgehammers and vandalize the site. Bas-reliefs are removed from walls and moved using a front-end loader to the north end of the palace where they are dumped in a pile and militants continue to deface the sculptures with jackhammers. The video concludes with militants assembling barrel bombs within the palace, followed by a massive detonation filmed from multiple vantage points. The final scene shows that the palace was completely destroyed. Analysis of high-resolution satellite imagery indicates that ISIL began the destruction of the sculptures in early March. The detonation of the barrel bombs occurred on or after April 1.

## Key Points

- ISIL militants destroyed the Northwest Palace at Nimrud and on April 11 released a video showing this performative deliberate destruction and denouncing connections between the pre-Islamic past and modern Iraqi identity. (pp. 34–52)
- The Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums of Syria (DGAM) released its Quarterly Report (January 1–March 31, 2015) on heritage damage in Syria.

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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.

## Heritage Timeline

April 14, 2015

UNESCO posted a press release titled “**UNESCO Director-General condemns destruction at Nimrud.**” In the statement, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova condemned ISIL’s filmed destruction of the site of Nimrud in Iraq. She decried the performative destruction of statuary and the explosion of the site itself, calling these a “mad, destructive act” and a war crime, insofar as they represent the willful obliteration of heritage. On behalf of UNESCO, Bokova called for a joint effort in spreading awareness and appreciation of heritage and called attention to UNESCO’s recently announced #unite4heritage campaign.

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco\\_director\\_general\\_condemns\\_destruction\\_at\\_nimrud/#.VS0F6SldXv5](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_director_general_condemns_destruction_at_nimrud/#.VS0F6SldXv5)

- The ROM (Royal Ontario Museum) held an event titled “**Cultural Genocide in Iraq and Syria.**” The event featured a panel including Patrick Graham (Freelance writer, Toronto), Clemens Reichel (Assistant Professor of Mesopotamian Archaeology, University of Toronto), and Sascha Priewe (ROM).

<https://www.rom.on.ca/en/activities-programs/events-calendar/cultural-genocide-in-iraq-and-syria>

April 13, 2015

The *International Business Times* published an article titled “**Islamic State’s war on history and the multimillion dollar global antiquities trade**” (by Orlando Crowcroft). Drawing on interviews with **Michael Danti** (Academic Director, ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives) and **Lamia al-Gailani Werr** (SOAS, University of London), the article discusses ISIL’s calculated campaign of looting and destruction, their attempts to justify this campaign with reference to Islamic law, the connection to the global antiquities trade, and ISIL’s loose understanding of history.

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-islamic-states-war-history-multimillion-dollar-global-antiquities-trade-1496177>

- *Conflict Antiquities* published a blog post titled “**The inexact science of exact numbers: does anyone know how many archaeological sites have been looted in Syria?**” (by Sam Hardy). The post questions claims made by the DGAM and Europol about the number of sites that have been looted in Syria during the current conflict.

<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/04/13/syria-official-police-looting-statistics-lack-evidence/>

April 12, 2015

*BBC News* published an article titled “**Islamic State video ‘shows destruction of Nimrud.’**” <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32273672>

- *Conflict Antiquities* published a blog post titled “**Islamic State B-movie of attack on Nimrud**” (by Sam Hardy).  
<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/04/12/iraq-nimrud-buildings-destroyed-site-not-bulldozed-islamic-state/>
  - *ARCA* published a blog post titled “**What Remains of Nimrud’s NorthWest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II**” (by Lynda Albertson).  
<http://art-crime.blogspot.ca/2015/04/what-remains-of-nimruds-northwest.html>
  - *APSA* posted a report and a series of images showing damage to the **Armenian Catholic Church** and the **Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias** in the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo**. See *ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0006 Update* and *ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0066*.  
<http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments/1197-aleppo-jdeideh-elias.html>
  - *Salon* published an article titled “**ISIS and the corrupt art trade: We know cultural crimes fund terrorism — now what?**” (by Noah Charney). The article draws attention to the long-standing connection between art crime and the funding of terrorism and tracks the recent developments that have brought this connection into the spotlight. Ultimately, the author urges readers to stop buying antiquities from terrorist-occupied territories and argues that cultural heritage sites should be protected like the high-value commodities that they are.  
[http://www.salon.com/2015/04/12/isis\\_and\\_the\\_corrupt\\_art\\_trade\\_we\\_know\\_cultural\\_crimes\\_fund\\_terrorism\\_now\\_what/](http://www.salon.com/2015/04/12/isis_and_the_corrupt_art_trade_we_know_cultural_crimes_fund_terrorism_now_what/)
  - *Siraj Press* and *ASOR CHI* sources indicate that the DGAM may be in the process of relocating collection objects from the **Aleppo National Museum**. <http://syrianpc.com/2015/04/12/يسرق الأسد نظام/محتويات وينقل حلب متحف/>
- April 11, 2015
- ISIL** released a **video** documenting the vandalism and destruction of relief sculpture from the **Northwest Palace at the site of Nimrud** (Nineveh Governorate, Iraq), followed by the complete destruction of the standing remains of the Northwest Palace using barrel bombs. See *ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0079*.
- *The Guardian* published an article titled “**Isis video shows destruction of ancient Assyrian city in Iraq**” (by AFP).  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/11/isis-video-destruction-ancient-city-militants-iraq-nimrud>

- The **DGAM** published a report and a series of images showing damage and looting at the Ottoman-period **Garz Railway Station** (Daraa Governorate, Syria). See [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0065](#).  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1654>
- April 10–11, 2015      The **University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology** hosted a conference titled “**The Future of the Past: From Amhipolis to Mosul**. New Approaches to Cultural Heritage Preservation in the Eastern Mediterranean.”  
<http://futureofthepast.wix.com/culturalheritage>
- April 10, 2015      The **DGAM** published its **quarterly list of damage assessments**, covering the period from **January 1 to March 31, 2015**. The document provides a listing of damaged sites by governorate and indicates the type of damage at each site.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1652>  
[http://www.dgam.gov.sy/archive/docs/File/assessment%20damages%202015%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.dgam.gov.sy/archive/docs/File/assessment%20damages%202015%20(1).pdf)
- MEDMAK* published a blog post titled “**Should Syria’s smuggled antiquities be repatriated before conflict ends?**” (by Franklin Lamb). In response to recent suggestions that the repatriation of objects to Syria in the midst of the current crisis might put those objects in danger, the author argues that Syrians and the international community firmly support the continued repatriation of looted and smuggled artifacts to the Syrian authorities.  
<https://medmakblog.wordpress.com/2015/04/10/should-syrias-smuggled-antiquities-be-repatriated-before-conflict-ends/>
- The New York Times* published an article titled “**A Struggle to Secure Iraq’s Shared Past, and Perhaps Its Future**” (by Michael Kimmelman). The article draws attention to shared history (e.g., in the form of the National Museum in Baghdad) as a potential unifying factor that can help bring Iraqis together as they struggle to overcome decades of war and corruption.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/10/world/middleeast/a-struggle-to-secure-iraqs-shared-past-and-perhaps-its-future.html>
- Smithsonian* published an article titled “**Why We Have a Civic Responsibility to Protect Cultural Treasures During Wartime**” (by Richard Kurin). The article traces the history of efforts by museums and others to protect cultural heritage during times of conflict and highlights a number of cases in which cultural heritage helped foster post-conflict reconciliation.  
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/why-we-have-civic-responsibility-protect-cultural-treasures-during-wartime-180954887>

- *The Art Newspaper* published an article titled “**Cultural heritage at heart of propaganda battle in Iraq**” (by Martin Bailey).  
<http://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/news/17214/>
  - Several news outlets, including the *International Business Times* (4/10/2015) and *Breitbart* (4/12/2015), ran stories about a recently uploaded video featuring a group of approximately 40 anti-Assad female fighters training with machine guns at the **Saint Simeon Monastery** near the basilica. ASOR CHI reported the incident as part of a longer video in Weekly Report 35, Incident Report SHI 15-0062.  
<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/syria-female-jihadists-set-anti-assad-training-camp-worlds-oldest-byzantine-church-empower-1495746>  
<http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/04/12/video-shows-female-jihadist-training-at-worlds-oldest-byzantine-church/>
- April 8, 2015
- The Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and the World Monuments Fund presented the **Babylon Site Management Plan** to Adil Fahad Shrshab (Minister of Tourism and Antiquities) and Sadik Madlol al-Sultani (Governor of Babylon). Funded by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, the plan features a proactive risk-management strategy and is an integral part of the effort to have the site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.  
<http://www.wmf.org/field/babylon-site-management-plan-presented>
- April 7, 2015
- BBC News* published an article titled “**Archaeologists in Iraq defy militants**” (by Sean Coughlan). The article highlights a team of archaeologists from the **University of Manchester** who have been **working at a site near Ur**. Project directors Jane Moon and Stuart Campbell envision their archaeological work as a form of defiance against ISIL’s campaign of deliberate destruction and emphasize the value that the Iraqi people place on their ancient cultural heritage.  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/education-32204577>
- *The Guardian* published an article titled “**A sledgehammer to civilisation: Islamic State’s war on culture**” (by Martin Chulov). The article describes ISIL’s campaign of deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in northern Iraq. According to Qais Hussein Rashid (Director, State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Iraq), Iraqis have lost “about 10%” of their heritage so far. Emphasizing that cultural heritage is not just a matter of artifacts, monuments, and buildings, however, the article also draws attention to the massive numbers of people who have been forced to leave their homes and to the destruction of collective memory more broadly.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/07/islamic-state-isis-crimes-against-culture-iraq-syria>

- The Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities released a statement condemning the demolition of the **Bashtabiya Palace** (Mosul, Nineveh Governorate, Iraq). Subsequent posts on social media, however, suggest that the palace remains intact. See [ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0078](#).  
<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=53>

April 6, 2015

The Protect Syrian Archaeology (APSA) Facebook page posted a summary report titled “**Syrian Cultural Heritage: APSA-Report – March 2015.**” The report compiles all of the reports posted by APSA and the ASOR Syrian Heritage Initiative during the month of March and includes a list of relevant articles that have appeared in the news media.  
<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/posts/1271157716324670:0>

## Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo
  - During the reporting period, ISIL clashed with al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra and other Islamic rebel groups, and clashes took place between all these groups and regime forces.<sup>2</sup>
2. Yarmouk Refugee Camp, Damascus
  - During the reporting period, ISIL fighters clashed with the Palestinian militia Aknaf Beit al-Maqdis and Islamist rebels for control of the Palestinian Yarmouk Refugee Camp, a neighborhood of southern Damascus.<sup>3</sup> In addition, regime aircraft have reportedly dropped barrel bombs on the neighborhood.<sup>4</sup>
3. Hasakah Area, Hasakah Governorate
  - During the reporting period, the Kurdish YPG militia, supported by several coalition airstrikes, clashed with ISIL in the area between Tel Tamr and Tel Tamis.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/10/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN0N11E620150410>; <http://syriahr.com/en/2015/04/clashes-renew-in-aleppo-city-and-its-countryside/>; J. Cafarella, “Syria Situation Report: April 7-8, 2015,” [http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-gqp-jzSnMo/VSW0868BwUI/AAAAAAAAADAc/UCAuWhKA3io/s1600/SYR%2BSITREP%2BMap%2B08%2BAPR%2B2015\\_large-01.png](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-gqp-jzSnMo/VSW0868BwUI/AAAAAAAAADAc/UCAuWhKA3io/s1600/SYR%2BSITREP%2BMap%2B08%2BAPR%2B2015_large-01.png)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32239161>; J. Cafarella, “Syria Situation Report: April 7-8, 2015,” [http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-gqp-jzSnMo/VSW0868BwUI/AAAAAAAAADAc/UCAuWhKA3io/s1600/SYR%2BSITREP%2BMap%2B08%2BAPR%2B2015\\_large-01.png](http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-gqp-jzSnMo/VSW0868BwUI/AAAAAAAAADAc/UCAuWhKA3io/s1600/SYR%2BSITREP%2BMap%2B08%2BAPR%2B2015_large-01.png)

<sup>4</sup> <http://syriahr.com/en/2015/04/36-explosive-barrels-on-the-yarmouk-camp/>; <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/4/8/in-beleaguered-palestinian-camp-pivotal-battle-for-syrias-heart-unfolds.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/11/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN0N20CA20150411>; [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

#### 4. Kobani Area

- During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Kobani.<sup>6</sup>

Other key points:

- On April 10, talks between Syrian government representatives and some opposition groups, hosted in Moscow by Russia, ended with little progress made.<sup>7</sup>
- On April 5, 300 Kurdish men who were travelling from the town of Afrin in Aleppo Province to the city of Aleppo were taken hostage by Islamist rebels, but they were released on April 6, allegedly in exchange for 3 Islamist rebels held by Kurdish forces.<sup>8</sup>

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

1. Sijariya Area, Al-Anbar Governorate
  - On April 8, Iraqi security forces launched their major offensive to retake Anbar Province from ISIS, driving ISIL out of the Sijariya area in the eastern part of the governorate.<sup>9</sup>
2. Ramadi Area, Al-Anbar Governorate
  - During the reporting period, ISIL fighters and government forces clashed in the center of Ramadi and in its outskirts, especially the suburb of Abu Faraj; in addition to casualties from the fighting, ISIL executed dozens of government soldiers, police officers, and civilians.<sup>10</sup>
3. Fallujah Area, Al-Anbar Governorate
  - During the reporting period, approximately half a dozen coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Fallujah.<sup>11</sup>
4. Tikrit, Salah ad-Din Governorate
  - On April 7, Iraqi security forces and allied militias battled ISIL fighters in the northern neighborhood of Qadisiya, which is ISIL's last major stronghold in the city.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

<sup>7</sup> AP, <http://news.yahoo.com/both-sides-syria-conflict-wrap-4-days-moscow-090249031.html>;  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/10/us-syria-crisis-russia-idUSKBN0N10U420150410>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32195726>; <http://syriahr.com/en/2015/04/islamist-militants-release-300-kidnapped-syrian-kurds/>; <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/04/06/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-idUKKBN0MX0VK20150406>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/08/us-mideast-crisis-anbar-idUSKBN0MZ1DE20150408>;

Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: April 7-8, 2015,"

<http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/04/iraq-situation-report-april-7-8-2015.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/11/world/middleeast/iraq-islamic-state-anbar-province-attack.html?ref=middleeast&r=0>; [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/islamic-state-launches-deadly-assault-in-anbar-province/2015/04/10/acf19906-df97-11e4-b6d7-b9bc8acf16f7\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/islamic-state-launches-deadly-assault-in-anbar-province/2015/04/10/acf19906-df97-11e4-b6d7-b9bc8acf16f7_story.html);

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/11/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN0N11OR20150411>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/10/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN0N11OR20150410>.

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

<sup>12</sup> AFP, <http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-battles-tikrit-week-city-retaken-180811304.html>; Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: April 7-8, 2015," <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/04/iraq-situation-report-april-7-8-2015.html>

5. Baiji Area, Salah ad-Din Governorate
  - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Baiji.<sup>13</sup>
6. Mosul Area, Ninawa Governorate
  - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Mosul.<sup>14</sup>
7. Tel Afar Area, Ninawa Governorate
  - During the reporting period, at least half a dozen coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Tel Afar.<sup>15</sup>

Other key points:

- On April 8, ISIL released more than 200 Yazidis – mostly women, children, and elderly people – who had been kidnapped from the Sinjar area in Ninawa Governorate in August 2014.<sup>16</sup>
- As the battle to retake Tikrit winds down, the Iraqi government has begun to shift its focus to clearing ISIL from Al-Anbar Governorate; the Iraqi government, as well as the American military, is working to find Anbari Sunni tribal militias to replace the bulk of the Shiite Popular Mobilization militias that had a prominent role in the Tikrit offensive because, while Tikrit has a mixed Sunni and Shiite population, Anbar is almost exclusively Sunni.<sup>17</sup> The Anbar offensive risks being delegitimized as a sectarian attack if the Shiite militias, which are largely backed by Iran, were to play a major role in the fighting.

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<sup>13</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-release-over-200-yazidi-hostages-in-iraq-1428504327>;  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/08/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-yazidis-idUSKBN0MZ19220150408>;  
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/08/world/isis-yazidis-released/>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32221467>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/08/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-anbar-sunni-shiite.html?src=xps&r=0>; S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. al-Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: April 7-8, 2015," <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/04/iraq-situation-report-april-7-8-2015.html>



## Incident Reports: Syria

### SHI 15-0006 UPDATE

**Report Date:** January 18, 2015; updated April 11, 2015

**Site Name:** Armenian Catholic Church (Our Lady of Pity; Armenian Cathedral; St. Rita Cathedral)

**Date of Incident:** January 9, 2015; ongoing

**Location:** Al-Tallal Street, next to the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Aleppo, Jdeideh Quarter, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:**

**Site Date:** Inaugurated 1840

**Source of Destruction:** On January 9, 2015, the Harakat 'Ahrar al-Sham militia of the Islamic Front in Aleppo allegedly deliberately targeted the Armenian Cathedral (St. Rita Cathedral in the al-Tallal District), hitting it multiple times with mortar fire and inflicting structural damage on the church. This damage incident caused large holes in the domed roof of the church and minor damage to the interior.<sup>18</sup>

On April 11, 2015, APSA posted an updated set of images documenting intensified damage to the roof and interior of the cathedral.<sup>19</sup> The photos show evidence of further direct impacts to and/or collapse of the roof, with large fragments of masonry filling the interior beneath. It is not yet known if this damage occurred as a result of a deliberate attack: the Maronite Church of Aleppo, located nearby in the Jdeideh quarter, was also reported by APSA as damaged, suggesting a more generalized incident.

**Pattern:** Vulnerable condition of prominent Christian built heritage in Aleppo's historical neighborhoods during the ongoing clashes between regime forces and rebel groups with Islamist components. Given the profound state of destruction to the urban fabric of Aleppo, any singling out of one genre of heritage over another is arbitrary, but recent damage to the Armenian churches in Aleppo is of acute significance to the global Armenian community which is currently marking the centennial of the genocide of the Ottoman Armenians.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** Data-gathering on the condition of built heritage in the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo continues to be a critical priority.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/01/10/cathedral-bombed/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments/1197-aleppo-jdeideh-elias.html>

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

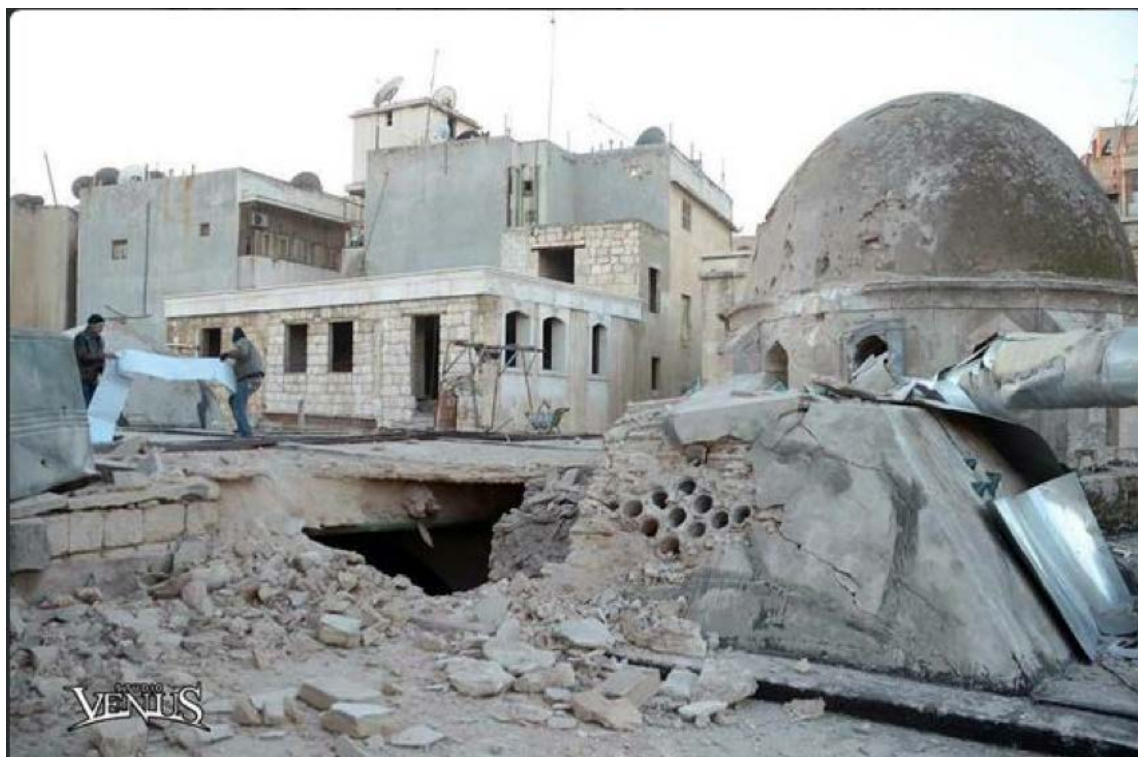
Armenian Weekly: <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/01/10/cathedral-bombed/>

APSA: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments/1197-aleppo-jdeideh-elias.html>

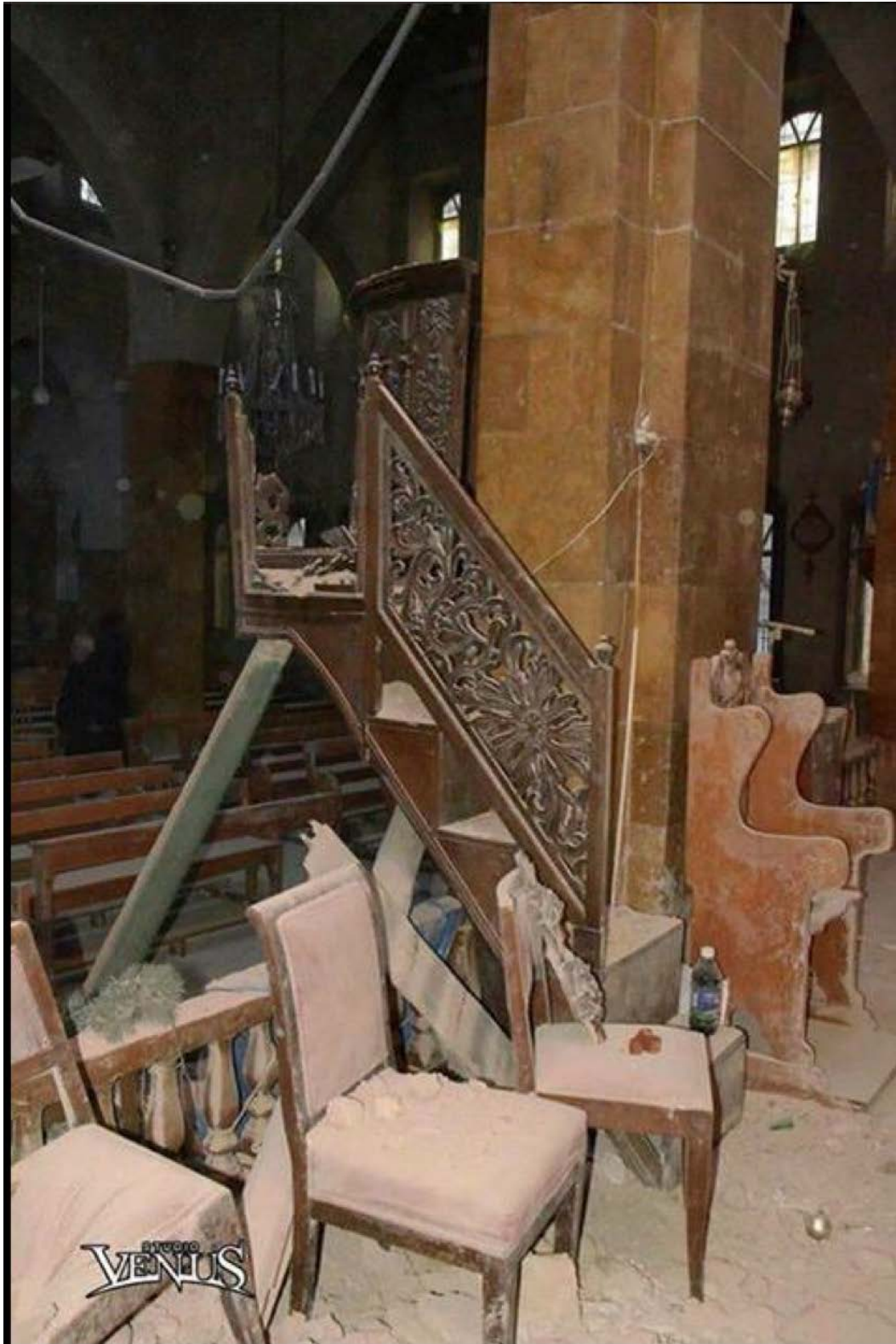
Scholarly:



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo, damage to the dome caused by mortar fire. (Venus Studio)



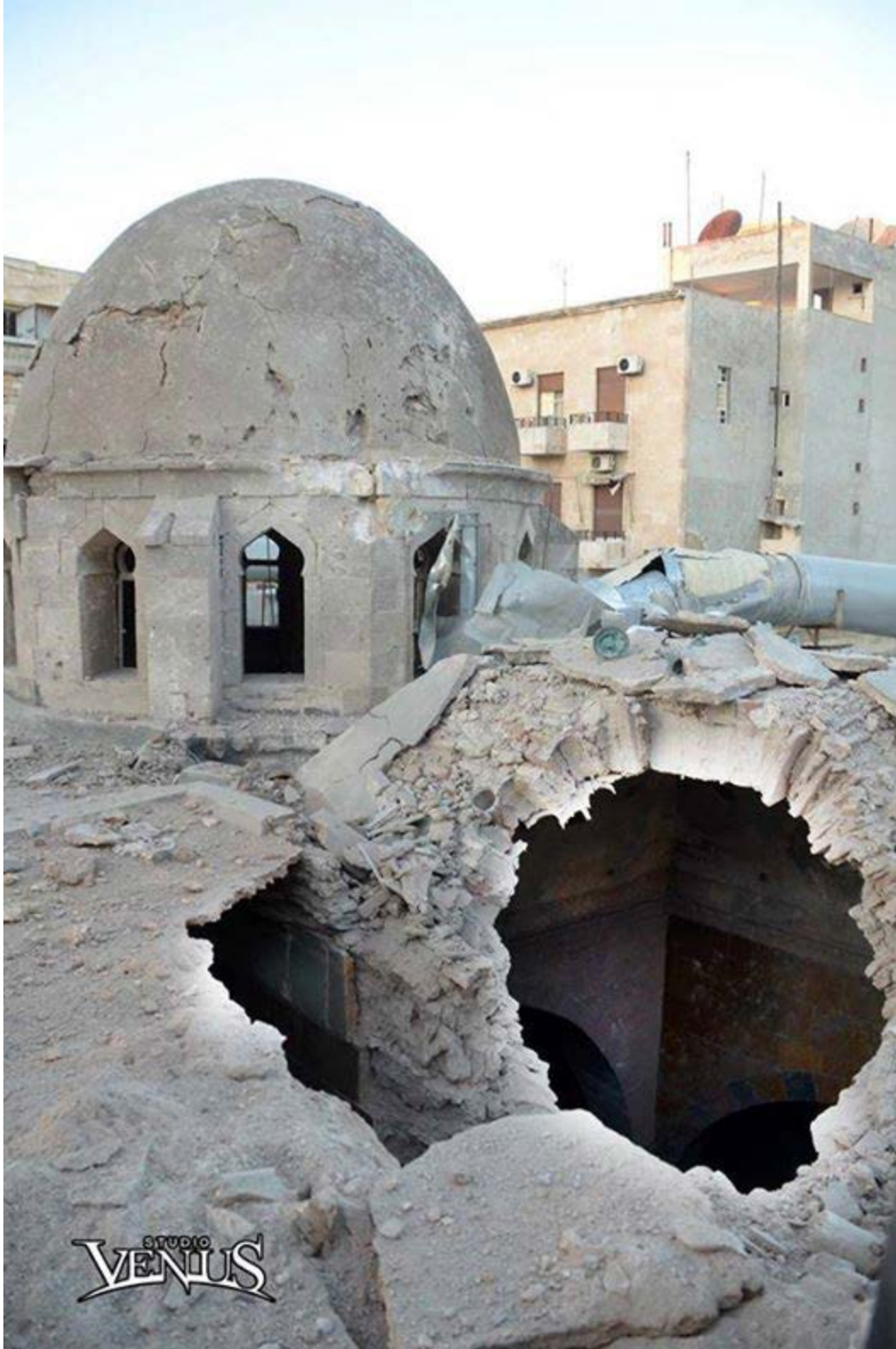
The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo, damage to the dome caused by mortar fire. (Venus Studio)



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo, damage to the interior caused by mortar fire. (Venus Studio)



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo, remains of a “mortar round” fired at the cathedral. (Venus Media)



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo, damage to the dome caused by mortar fire. (Venus Studio)



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo, damage to the interior caused by mortar fire. (Venus Studio)



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo (APSA; posted April 8, 2015)



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo (APSA; posted April 8, 2015)





The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo (APSA; posted April 8, 2015)



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo (APSA; posted April 8, 2015)



The Armenian Catholic Cathedral Our Lady of Pity, Aleppo (APSA; posted April 8, 2015)

**SHI 15-0065**

**Report Date:** April 11, 2015

**Site Name:** Garz Railway Station

**Date of Incident:** March 2015; ongoing

**Location:** al-Taiba town, near Syrian-Jordanian border, Daraa Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Railway buildings along the historical rail lines of Daraa countryside, contemporary with the bridge and buildings in al-Taiba (see ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0064).

**Site Date:** Ottoman (19th century CE)

**Source of Destruction:** On April 11, 2015, the DGAM reported that recent (and ongoing) clashes between regime and rebel forces in the Daraa region had damaged the Ottoman railway station north of the town of al-Taiba. According to the report, which included a series of photos, the roof, doors, and walls of the Ottoman building had been damaged, and the chimneys smashed. One building associated with the railway station was burned, and (as shown in the images) there has been illicit digging inside and in the area around the station building.

**Pattern:** Looting and destruction of sites in extra-urban Syria.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is monitoring the effect of shifting combat fronts on looting practices and monitoring capacities within Syria.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM:

April 11, 2015: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1654>

April 6, 2015: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1649>

Scholarly:



The Ottoman railway buildings north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 11, 2015)



The Ottoman railway buildings north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 11, 2015)



The Ottoman railway buildings north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 11, 2015)



The Ottoman railway buildings north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 11, 2015)



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The Ottoman railway buildings north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 11, 2015)



The Ottoman railway buildings north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 11, 2015)



The Ottoman railway buildings north of al-Taiba (DGAM; posted April 11, 2015)

**SHI 15-0066**

**Report Date:** April 11, 2015

**Site Name:** Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias

**Date of Incident:** Ongoing since late 2014

**Location:** Jdeideh Quarter, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** The Eastern Catholic (Maronite) church of St. Elias was built in 1873 on the site of an older church from the 16th century and renovated in 1914. The church has two tall bell towers on the front facade and a marble entrance with yellow columns on the eastern side.

**Site Date:** 19th century CE

**Source of Destruction:** In September 2012, the facade of the church was hit by mortar fire. Video footage posted to YouTube on December 17, 2013, allegedly shows the “torching” of the cathedral by Salafist forces,<sup>20</sup> but is not clear enough to provide confirmation.

The church has been exposed to damage over the last several months as combat has intensified in the historic quarters of Aleppo. On April 11, 2015, APSA published a report on the sequence of damage incidents affecting the Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias (along with the nearby Armenian Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Pity).<sup>21</sup> The images posted by APSA (dated April 8, 2015) show further damage to the roof and interior of the church, but it is not yet possible to determine when this damage occurred.

**Pattern:** Vulnerable condition of prominent sectarian/Christian built heritage in Aleppo’s historical neighborhoods during the ongoing clashes between regime forces and rebel groups with Islamist components.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** Data-gathering on the condition of built heritage in the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo continues to be a critical priority.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

APSA: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments/1197-aleppo-jdeideh-elias.html>

ArchNet: <http://archnet.org/sites/3049>

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChZ6zTOKTP4>

<sup>21</sup> <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments/1197-aleppo-jdeideh-elias.html>

US News and World Report: <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/08/12/aleppos-forgotten-christians>

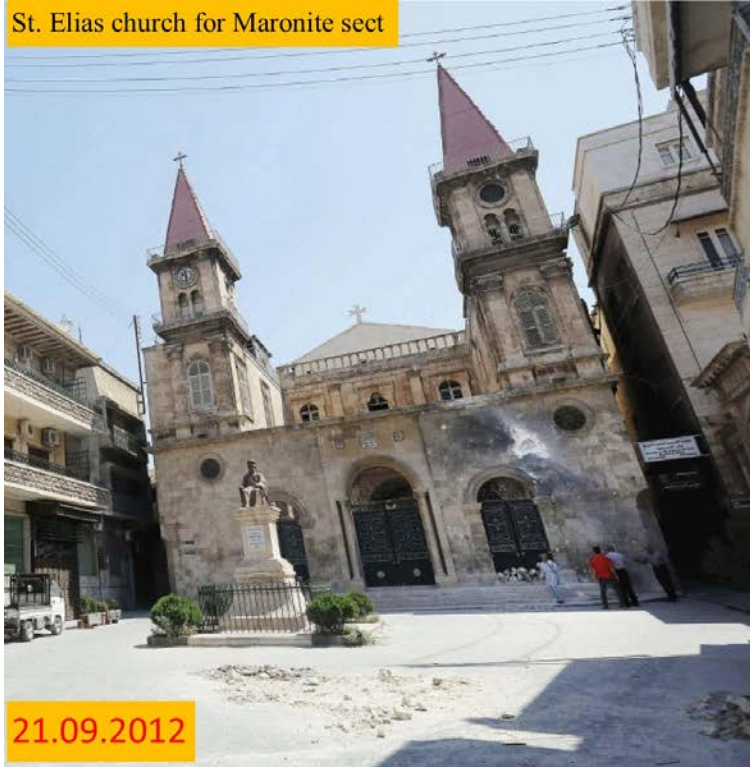
Youtube footage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChZ6zTOkTP4>

Scholarly:



Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias, Aleppo, Syria (APSA; posted April 11, 2015)

St. Elias church for Maronite sect



Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias, Aleppo, Syria (APAS; posted April 11, 2015)

St. Elias church for Maronite sect



Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias, Aleppo, Syria (APSA; posted April 11, 2015)



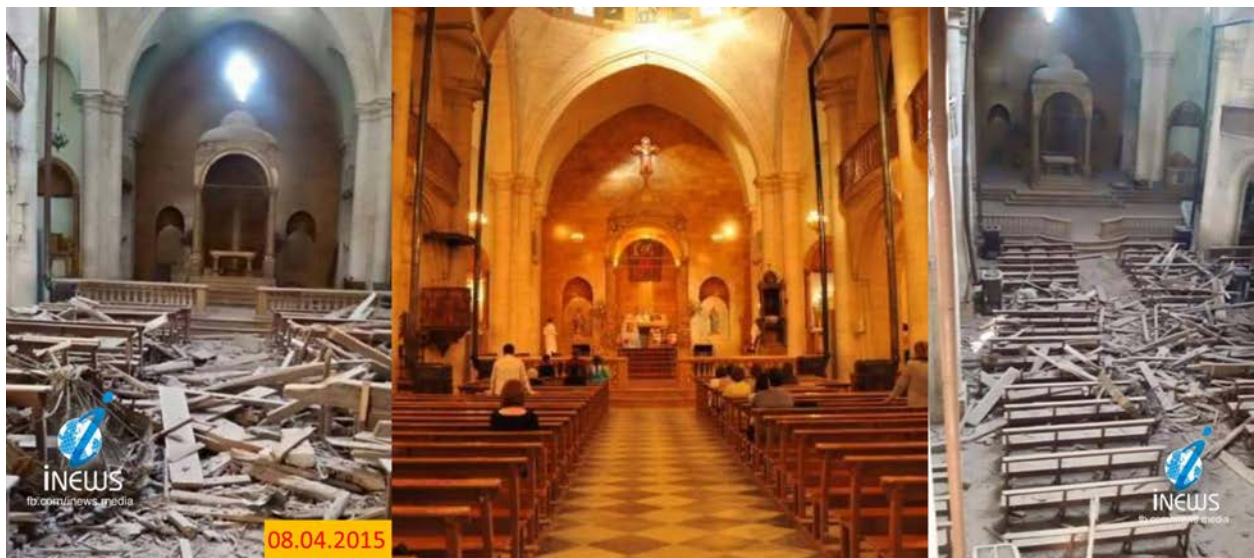
Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias, Aleppo, Syria (APSA; posted April 11, 2015)



Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias, Aleppo, Syria (APSA; posted April 11, 2015)



Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias, Aleppo, Syria (APSA; posted April 11, 2015)



Maronite Cathedral of St. Elias, Aleppo, Syria (APSA; posted April 11, 2015)

## Incident Reports: Iraq

**IHI 15-0078**

**Report Date:** April 11, 2015

**Site Name:** Bashtabiya Palace (also known as Bash Tapia Castle)

**Date of Incident:** No confirmed incident

**Location:** Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Historic fortress and fortification wall built on the bank of the Tigris River in the city of Mosul.

**Site Date:** 12th century CE

**Source of Destruction:** No confirmed destruction

**Pattern:** On April 7, 2015, the Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities released a statement condemning the demolition of the Bashtabiya Palace.<sup>22</sup> On April 8, 2015, multiple news outlets posted reports indicating that the site had been demolished by ISIL militants.<sup>23</sup> On April 9, 2015, however, posts on social media seemed to indicate that the site remains intact.<sup>24</sup>

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the situation in case the palace is targeted by ISIL in the future.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities:

<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=53>

Rudaw: <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/08042015>

Al Forat: <http://en.alforatnews.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=17930>

Scholarly:

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=53>

<sup>23</sup> <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/08042015>;

<http://en.alforatnews.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=17930>

<sup>24</sup>

<https://www.facebook.com/775247292571004/photos/a.778075902288143.1073741828.775247292571004/796031223825944/>





Bashtabiya Palace, Mosul, Iraq, no recent damage visible. (Image shared on social media, allegedly taken on April 9, 2015)

**IHI 15-0079**

**Report Date:** April 12, 2015

**Site Name:** Nimrud (Northwest Palace and Wall Reliefs)

**Date of Incident:** April 12, 2015

**Location:** Noomanea, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** The Assyrian settlement at Nimrud (also known as Kalhu, Calah, Kalakh) was established by Shalmaneser I (1274/1254 BCE) during the Middle Assyrian Empire. It was later named the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire by Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE), superseding Assur. Rulers Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, and Tiglath-Pileser III all built royal palaces at Nimrud, and Shalmaneser III built the Great Ziggurat. The site is known for its extensive palace reliefs and colossal figurative sculptures. The city remained the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire until 706 BCE when Sargon II (722-705 BCE) moved the capital to Khorsabad (also known as Dur-Sharrukin). It continued as a major urban center until the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire sometime between 616 and 605 BCE.

According to the CDLI Wiki:

The site of Nimrud is located on the Tigris River southeast of Mosul in the north of modern day Iraq. Today the city lies some kilometers east of the Tigris, but in antiquity the river flowed along the northwest side of the acropolis. The site was occupied intermittently from the 6th millennium BC to at least the Hellenistic period, but the most significant period of occupation occurred during the Late Assyrian period, when Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) built Nimrud as the capital of his empire. The city remained the chief royal residence and administrative capital of the Assyrian empire until the reign of Sargon II (721-705 BC), though Esarhaddon (680-669 BC) later rebuilt much of the citadel.<sup>25</sup>

According to Karen Radner:

Until the reign of Assurnasirpal II, the religious and ideological centre of Assyria, the city of Assur, served also as the king's main residence. Assurnasirpal, however, relocated the entire royal court, moving hundreds of people under the supervision of his palace superintendent Nergal-apil-kumuya to Kalhu after this ancient city had been completely transformed. The old settlement mound, having grown to a substantial height in the course of its five thousand year long occupation, was turned into a citadel that housed only the royal palace and several temples of the most important deities of Assyria, such as Ninurta and Ištar - but not a shrine for Aššur, whose only sanctuary remained in the city of Assur. The citadel was protected by its own fortification walls but occupied only a small part in the south-western corner of the larger city: with a size of about 360 hectares, Assurnasirpal's Kalhu covered twice the area of Assur and was surrounded by a 7.5 km long fortification wall.<sup>26</sup>

Austen Henry Layard first excavated the site in 1845–1847 and 1849–1851. Later investigations were led by Hormuzd Rassam (1853–54, 1877–1879), W. K. Loftus (1854–55), George Smith (1873), the British School of Archaeology in Iraq (Max Mallowan, 1949; David Oates, 1958–1962; Julian Orchard, 1963), Janusz Meuzynski (1974–76), Paolo Fiorina and the Centro Ricerche

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<sup>25</sup> Nimrud (Kalhu). CDLI Wiki. [http://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=nimrud\\_kalhu](http://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=nimrud_kalhu)

<sup>26</sup> Karen Radner. 2012. Kalhu, Tiglath-pileser's royal residence city. *Assyrian empire builders*. University College London. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sargon/essentials/cities/kalhu/>

Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino (1987–89), John Curtis (1989), and the Directorate of Antiquities of the Republic of Iraq (1956, 1959–60, 1969–78, and 1982–92).

**Site Date:** 13th–7th centuries BCE

**Source of Destruction:** ISIL deliberate destruction. On January 25, 2015, photos were posted on Facebook showing what appears to be damage to the Northwest Palace at Nimrud dating to October 11, 2014.<sup>27</sup> On February 27, 2015, the AFP reported that Nimrud was at risk for destruction in light of recent events at the Mosul Museum (IHI 15-0034) and the site of Nineveh (IHI 15-0033).<sup>28</sup> On March 5, 2015, the Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities released a statement confirming that Nimrud was indeed attacked.<sup>29</sup> Citing this statement, numerous online sources have since claimed that the site was “bulldozed” by ISIL using “heavy vehicles.” No further details about the extent of the damage or photo/video documentation were provided (see IHI 15-0067).

On March 7, 2015, reports emerged that ISIL militants were moving construction vehicles and equipment to Nimrud. Militants had, however, been in control of the area around the site since ISIL invaded northern Iraq in June 2014.

On April 11, 2015, ISIL released a video documenting the destruction of the Northwest Palace. The video shows ISIL militants defacing the palace wall reliefs with sledgehammers and then cutting the sculptures apart and demolishing them with mechanical equipment. The video then cuts to ISIL militants building barrel bombs, which are placed alongside the reliefs in the Northwest Palace and detonated. The video includes multiple views of the explosion, as well as the resulting rubble pile. The dialogue in the video includes anti-American rhetoric not featured in previous videos. Accents suggest that the men who appear in the video are from the Gulf region.

Satellite imagery dating to April 1, 2015, shows the palace still intact, but any damage from handheld equipment may not be visible in the imagery. The region around the site is sparsely populated, and it has not yet been possible to confirm the exact date of the demolition. It has, however, been reported that the video was released only days after the demolition.

**Pattern:** Intentional, performative destruction of archaeological sites and objects by ISIL.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the situation and will work to understand the timeline of events at Nimrud.

#### **Sources:**

##### Online Reporting:

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32273672>

ARCA: <http://art-crime.blogspot.ca/2015/04/what-remains-of-nimruds-northwest.html>

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=pcb.954775044534878;>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/858813217464395/permalink/954746321204417/>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Feb-27/288983-fears-mount-for-iraq-heritage-after-isis-museum-rampage.ashx>

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=154810509877154&id=1492622900992041](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=154810509877154&id=1492622900992041)

The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/11/isis-video-destruction-ancient-city-militants-iraq-nimrud>

Scholarly (selected):

Mallowan, Max E.L. (1966) *Nimrud and its Remains*. London: Collins.

Oates, Joan and David Oates (2004) *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed*. London : The British School of Archaeology in Iraq.



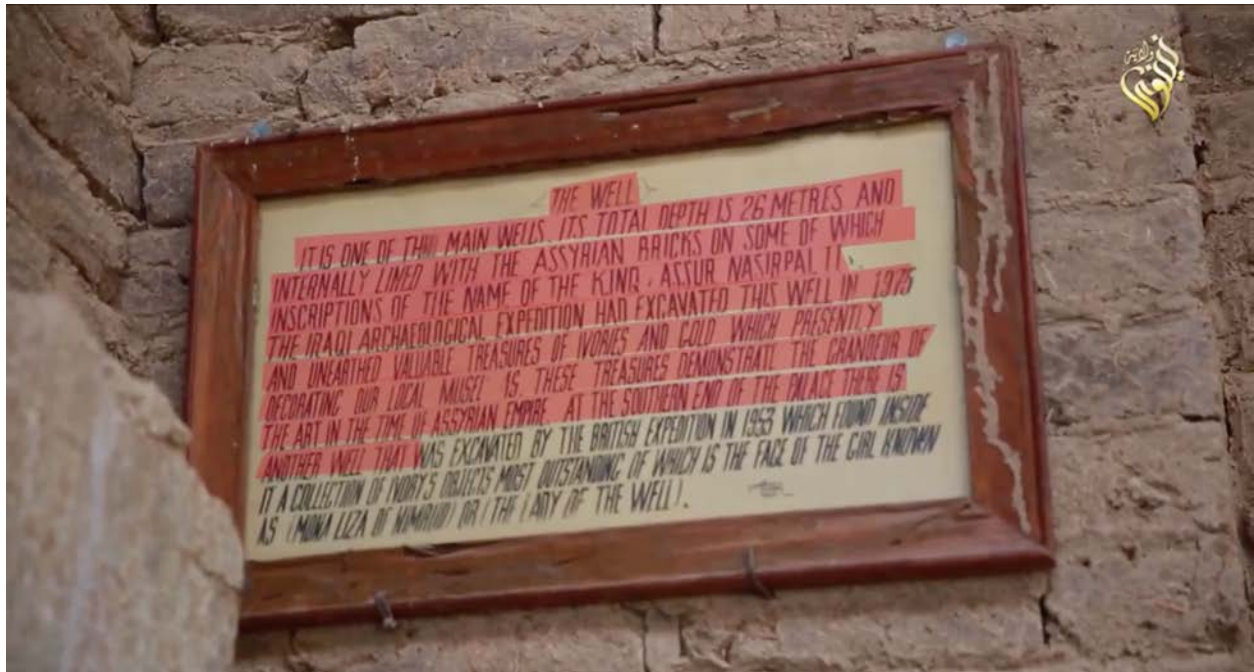
Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militant during a monologue (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, map of the archaeological site (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militant attacking the site with a sledgehammer (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, didactic paneling in English, film edited to highlight the text in red (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, didactic panel being vandalized (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militant vandalizing a palace wall relief with a sledgehammer (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militant vandalizing a palace wall relief with a sledgehammer (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militant cutting apart a palace wall relief with a rotary saw (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militant vandalizing a palace wall relief with a sledgehammer (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)





Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants dismantling the palace wall reliefs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants dismantling the palace wall reliefs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants dismantling the palace wall reliefs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants dismantling the palace wall reliefs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants vandalizing a palace wall relief with a sledgehammer (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants removing the rubble of the wall relief panels with a bulldozer (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants removing the rubble of the wall relief panels with a bulldozer (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants further defacing the removed palace wall reliefs with jackhammers (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militant during a monologue (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants filling barrels with explosives (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, ISIL militants setting the fuses of the barrel bombs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, barrel bombs placed next to the palace wall reliefs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, prior to detonation of barrel bombs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, detonation of the palace (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, prior to detonation of barrel bombs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, detonation of the palace (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)





Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, prior to detonation of barrel bombs (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, detonation of the palace (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



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Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, detonation of the palace (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, detonation of the palace (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)



Northwest Palace, Nimrud, Iraq, following detonation (YouTube; screenshot of video posted by ISIL-associated account, showing the demolition of the Northwest Palace)