

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

NEA-PSHSS-14-001

Weekly Report 41 — May 19, 2015 (Submitted May 20, 2015)

Michael D. Danti, Cheikhmous Ali, Tate Paulette, Kathryn Franklin, Allison Cuneo, LeeAnn Barnes Gordon, and David Elitzer

## Executive Summary

During the reporting period, the key areas of concern for cultural heritage in the conflict zone were the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra (Tadmor) and ongoing damage to the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo. At the time of the writing of this executive summary, the town of Tadmor and the archaeological site of Palmyra are reportedly under the control of ISIL following a rapid military advance on the town, and cultural heritage in the region is at extreme risk for theft, damage, and destruction. Events in Tadmor continue to evolve rapidly. Another key concern is the status of cultural heritage and cultural infrastructure in the area of Ramadi, Iraq, recently captured by ISIL. Little information is forthcoming regarding the status of heritage sites in this region. ASOR CHI continues to document the extensive heritage damage in Iraq's Ninawa Governorate (see IHI Incident Reports included in this report).

## Key Points

- ISIL now controls the Syrian town of Tadmor and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra. (pp. 8, 29–37)
- ISIL now controls the provincial capital city of Ramadi in Iraq. The status of heritage in this area is difficult to ascertain at the present time. (p. 10)
- Ten countries in the Middle East and North Africa (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates) have announced the Cairo Declaration, a regional action plan designed to stop the illicit looting and trafficking of antiquities. The declaration was announced following an emergency ministerial summit held in Cairo and co-hosted by the Antiquities Coalition and the Middle East Institute. (p. 5)

## Heritage Timeline

May 19, 2015

*BBC News* published an article titled “‘Cyber archaeology’ salvages lost Iraqi art” (by Jonathan Webb).

<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-32742622>

---

<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 YouTube video showing damage to the citadel in the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo**. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0087**.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdunFOq8gdM&feature=youtu.be>
  - *The Guardian* published an article titled “**Palmyra: is saving priceless antiquity as important as saving people?**” (by Jonathan Jones).  
<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2015/may/19/palmyra-syria-islamic-state-architecture-protected>
  - *The New York Times* published an article titled “**ISIS Finances are Strong**” (by Sarah Almukhtar).  
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/05/19/world/middleeast/isis-finances.html>
- May 18, 2015
- On the Protect Syrian Archaeology Facebook page, **APSA** posted a brief statement indicating that the archaeological museum at the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra** was hit by “a few” mortar shells, though the extent of damage is uncertain.  
<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/a.324921080948343.76891.324869057620212/1358345270939247/?type=1>
- The **DGAM** posted a series of images showing the current state of the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1703>
  - *Bloomberg View* published an article titled “**Islamic State’s War on Art Turns a Profit**” (by Erin L. Thompson).  
<http://www.bloombergvew.com/articles/2015-05-18/islamic-state-s-war-on-art-turns-a-profit>
  - *CNN* published an article and associated video clip titled “**Palmyra: Will ISIS bulldoze ancient Syrian city?**” (by Mairi Mackay).  
<http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/15/middleeast/syria-palmyra-isis/>
  - *Ahram Online* published an article titled “**Cairo Declaration to protect Middle East cultural heritage**” (by Nevine El-Aref).  
<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/9/40/130553/Heritage/Ancient-Egypt/Cairo-Declaration-to-protect-Middle-East-cultural.aspx>
- May 17, 2015
- APSA** posted a YouTube video showing damage to the citadel at the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra** in the wake of recent fighting between the Syrian army and ISIL. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086**.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nEof-4Tcok>

- The **DGAM** posted two brief updates about the threat to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1698>  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1700>
  - *BBC News* published an article titled “**Syria conflict: IS ‘withdraws’ from ancient Palmyra.**”  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32772894>
- May 16, 2015
- NBC News* published an article titled “**ISIS Looting Syrian Sites ‘Into Oblivion’; Fears Mount for Palmyra**” (by Charlene Gubash). Drawing on commentary by **Michael Danti** (Academic Director, ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives), the article highlights the looting “on an industrial scale” that is taking place in areas under ISIL control.  
<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-looting-destroying-ancient-syrian-sites-industrial-scale-n359461>
- **Heritage for Peace** published its newsletter *Damage to Syria’s Heritage – 16 May 2015*.  
<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-16-may-2015/>
  - The **DGAM** posted a brief report about the threat to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**, including some information about measures taken in 2012 by the DGAM to protect the site. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086**.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1696>
- May 15, 2015
- BBC News* published an article titled “**Palmyra: IS threat to ‘Venice of the Sands’**” (by Keven Butcher, Warwick University). Amid fears that the ancient city of Palmyra may soon fall into the hands of ISIL, the article provides a historical overview of the city and its unique cultural achievements.  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32748392>
- *Le Point* published an article titled “**Butterlin: ‘Il faut se préparer à une bataille de Palmyre’**” (interview by Christophe Ono-dit-Biot). The article is a transcript of **an interview with Pascal Butterlin** (University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), who discusses the imminent threat to the site of Palmyra, as fighting continues between government forces and ISIL fighters in the immediate vicinity of the site.  
[http://www.lepoint.fr/culture/butterlin-il-faut-se-preparer-a-une-bataille-de-palmyre-15-05-2015-1928747\\_3.php#r](http://www.lepoint.fr/culture/butterlin-il-faut-se-preparer-a-une-bataille-de-palmyre-15-05-2015-1928747_3.php#r)

- **APSA** posted a YouTube video showing fighting between ISIL and the Syrian army in the citadel area at the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**. *ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPg3UodXZ7M&feature=youtu.be>
- **APSA** posted a YouTube video showing fighting between ISIL and the Syrian army near the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**. *ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086*.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_CCTnX19Yvc&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CCTnX19Yvc&feature=youtu.be)
- *The Guardian* published an article titled “**Isis pulls back from Palmyra but fear of ‘cultural atrocity’ remains**” (by Kareem Shaheen).  
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/15/isis-pulls-back-from-palmyra-but-fear-of-cultural-atrocity-remains>
- *BBC Radio 5* aired an interview (20:43–30:44 in the audio clip) with **Stephennie Mulder** (Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture, University of Texas at Austin). In the interview, Prof. Mulder provides a general description of the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra** and reflects on what could potentially be lost if ISIL gains control of the site. She also discusses ISIL’s broader campaign of deliberate destruction, targeting a broad range of Islamic, Christian, and Yezidi cultural heritage.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05tk7jl#auto>
- *CNN* aired a televised interview with **Kevin Butcher** (Professor of Classics and Ancient History, University of Warwick). The interview, which is illustrated with photos and video, provides a general introduction to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra** and its historical and cultural importance.  
<http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/05/15/wrn-isis-advance-palmyra-kevin-butcher-intv.cnn>

May 14, 2015

*Foreign Policy* published an article titled “**New Bill Targets U.S. Buyers Filling the Islamic State’s Coffers With Millions**” (by David Francis). The article highlights the **Prevent Trafficking in Cultural Property Act**, a bill introduced by Representative Bill Keating (D-Mass.) and supported by Representatives Mike McCaul (R-Texas) and Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.). The bill aims to block ISIL’s efforts to sell antiquities on the black market by coordinating U.S. law enforcement efforts, providing enhanced training for U.S. officials, and improving efforts to prosecute buyers.  
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/14/new-bill-targets-u-s-buyers-filling-the-islamic-states-coffers-with-millions/>

- The Guardian* published an article titled “**Isis reaches gates of ancient Syrian city Palmyra, stoking fears of destruction**” (by AFP). In the wake of a recent “lightning advance across the desert,” ISIL fighters are now positioned in immediate proximity to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**. According to Mamoun Abdulkarim (Director-General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria), they have not yet entered the ancient city, but, if they do, an “international catastrophe” on par with the recent destructions at the Mosul Museum, Hatra, and Nimrud can be expected. [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086](#).  
[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/14/isis-syria-palmyra-iraq?CMP=fb\\_gu](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/14/isis-syria-palmyra-iraq?CMP=fb_gu)
- The Daily Star* published an article titled “**ISIS at gates of Syria’s Palmyra raising fears for ancient city**” (by AFP).  
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/May-14/297936-isis-threaten-syrias-ancient-palmyra-activists.ashx>
- BBC News* published an article titled “**Syria conflict: IS advances on ancient ruins of Palmyra.**”  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32735677>
- The Syrian Observer* published a brief article titled “**Syria’s Hotels Face Conversion into Military Barracks**” (originally published in Arabic by Madar al-Yawm).  
[http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/29170/Syria\\_Hotels\\_Face\\_Conversion\\_Into\\_Military\\_Barracks](http://syrianobserver.com/EN/News/29170/Syria_Hotels_Face_Conversion_Into_Military_Barracks)
- Reuters* published an article titled “**Islamic State battles Syrian army near world heritage site**” (by Laila Bassam and Suleiman al-Khalidi).  
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/14/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBNONZ1FA20150514>
- The Middle East Institute* posted a press release titled “**Countries Sign Declaration to Prevent Antiquities Looting in the Middle East.**” According to the press release, ten countries in the Middle East and North Africa (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates) have announced **the Cairo Declaration, a regional action plan designed to stop the illicit looting and trafficking of antiquities**. The declaration was announced following an emergency ministerial summit held in Cairo and co-hosted by the Antiquities Coalition and the Middle East Institute.  
<http://www.mei.edu/content/article/countries-sign-declaration-prevent-antiquities-looting-middle-east>

- *The New York Times* published an article titled “**ISIS Advance in Syria Endangers Ancient Ruins at Palmyra**” (by Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad).  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/world/middleeast/ancient-ruins-at-palmyra-are-endangered-by-isis-advance-in-syria.html>
- On the Protect Syrian Archaeology Facebook page, **APSA** posted four images showing fighting between ISIL and the Syrian army near the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086**.  
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1357086571065117.1073741900.324869057620212&type=1>
- The #SavePalmyra campaign launched a petition urging the international community to protect the **UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra**.  
<https://www.causes.com/actions/1778720-sign-the-petition-to--savepalmyra>  
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1624920817755235/>
- **UNESCO** posted a press release titled “**We must save Palmyra’ says UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova.**”  
[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/we\\_must\\_save\\_palmyra\\_says\\_unesco\\_director\\_general\\_irina\\_bokova/#.VVtZg5NVhHy](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/we_must_save_palmyra_says_unesco_director_general_irina_bokova/#.VVtZg5NVhHy)
- *The Daily Star* published an article titled “**UNESCO chief appeals for sparing Palmyra from Syria fighting**” (by AFP).  
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/May-14/297978-unesco-chief-appeals-for-sparing-palmyra-from-syria-fighting.ashx#.VVU133yRITg>

May 13, 2015

- *The New York Times* published an article titled “**UN Says Destruction of Mideast Historical Sites ‘War Crime’**” (by the Associated Press). Reporting on a conference launched on May 13 in Cairo, the article highlights comments made by **UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova** – who calls the destruction and looting of archaeological sites a war crime – and by **Deborah Lehr** of the Antiquities Coalition.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/13/world/middleeast/ap-ml-egypt-antiquities-.html>
- In the **US House of Representatives**, Congressmen William Keating, Eliot Engel, and Michael McCaul introduced **H.R. 2285**, a bill designed “**to improve enforcement against trafficking in cultural property and prevent stolen or illicit cultural property from financing terrorist and criminal networks.**”  
<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d114:HR02285:@@@P>

- The **House Committee on Foreign Affairs** held a hearing titled “**Ancient Communities Under Attack: ISIS’s War on Religious Minorities.**” The hearing, which was available as a live webcast, included testimony by **Sister Diana Momeka** (Dominican Sisters of Saint Catherine of Siena, Mosul, Iraq), **Hind Kabawat** (Director of Interfaith Peacebuilding, Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution, George Mason University), **Jacqueline Isaac** (Vice President, Roads of Success), and **Dr. Katharyn Hanson** (Fellow, Penn Cultural Heritage Center, University of Pennsylvania Museum).

<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/hearing-ancient-communities-under-attack-isis-s-war-religious-minorities>

[http://www.democrats.foreignaffairs.house.gov/press\\_display.asp?id=1468](http://www.democrats.foreignaffairs.house.gov/press_display.asp?id=1468)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVpMPXgRsNE&feature=youtu.be>

May 12, 2015

*The World Post* published an article titled “**Culture Under Threat: Fighting Terrorist Financing in the Middle East**” (by Deborah Lehr and Wendy Chamberlin). In the article, Deborah Lehr (Antiquities Coalition) and Wendy Chamberlin (Middle East Institute) draw attention to the ongoing, intentional destruction of cultural heritage by ISIL and also to the ways in which the antiquities market is helping to finance ISIL’s terrorist activities. They suggest a **series of concrete actions that the international community can and should take to keep extremist groups from benefiting from the antiquities market.**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/deborah-lehr/culture-under-threat-figh\\_b\\_7265574.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/deborah-lehr/culture-under-threat-figh_b_7265574.html)

- *Rudaw* published an article titled “**ISIS destroys 200-year-old Ottoman mosque in Mosul.**” ISIL militants allegedly destroyed the **Maryam Khatoon Mosque**, built in 1821, located in the Hawsh Khan neighborhood of western Mosul. *ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0080.*

<http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/12052015>

- *Gates of Nineveh* published a blog post titled “**What We’ve Lost: Mar Behnam Monastery**” (by Christopher Jones). The post traces the history of the Mar Behnam Monastery, including the **tomb of Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah**, which was destroyed by ISIL on March 19, 2015.

<https://gatesofnineveh.wordpress.com/2015/05/12/what-weve-lost-mar-behnam-monastery/>

- The **DGAM** posted a second series of images showing damage to historic buildings within the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo**. [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0085](#).  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1692>

May 11, 2015

The **Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago** announced the creation of the **Chicago Center for Archaeological Heritage Preservation (CCAHP)**, an effort “to systematically map, catalog, and monitor at-risk archaeological sites in the Middle East and other regions.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0aJbf7\\_Bk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0aJbf7_Bk)

## Military and Political Context

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

1. Palmyra Area, Homs Governorate
  - After ISIL fighters started their offensive against Palmyra on May 12, they overran Syrian government forces on the outskirts of the modern town of Tadmur, advancing into the town from the north to less than a mile from the ruins of the ancient city, which lie to the southwest of the modern town. By May 17, Syrian government officials claimed that government ground troops, supported by government airstrikes, had regained control of all of Palmyra, having pushed ISIL out of the northern part of the modern town. ISIL fighters have not, however, left the immediate area, and clashes are ongoing around Palmyra, leaving both the modern town and the ancient city at high risk. Heavy casualties have been reported on both sides. Palmyra is a strategic site because it sits on the highway that connects the city of Deir ez-Zor to the cities of Homs and Damascus and because there are oilfields and an important military base nearby.<sup>2</sup>
2. Al-Sukhnah Area, Homs Governorate
  - During the reporting period, ISIL fighters clashed with Syrian government forces in and around the town of Al-Sukhnah as ISIL fighters made their way to Palmyra.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/world/middleeast/ancient-ruins-at-palmyra-are-endangered-by-isis-advance-in-syria.html?src=xps>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32756301>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/16/mideast-crisis-syria-idUSL5N0Y705U20150516>; AP, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/16/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria-palmyra.html>; [http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/05/17/violents-combats-autour-de-palmyre-attaquee-par-l-etat-islamique\\_4634848\\_3218.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/05/17/violents-combats-autour-de-palmyre-attaquee-par-l-etat-islamique_4634848_3218.html); AFP, <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/dozens-dead-fighting-ancient-syrian-city-palmyra-072617231.html#zQs5KCA>; <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/05/17/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-idUKKBN0020CZ20150517>; <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-isis-ousted-palmyra-unesco-world-heritage/>; AP, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/17/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32772894>; AFP, <http://news.yahoo.com/rockets-kill-five-syrias-palmyra-104729402.html>

<sup>3</sup> AFP, <http://news.yahoo.com/over-48-dead-fights-army-syrias-homs-002743136.html>; <http://www.france24.com/en/20150514-islamic-state-syria-palmyra-unesco>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/13/us-mideast-crisis-syria-toll-idUSKBN0NY0Z420150513>; <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/05/is-advances-in-the-eastern-countryside-of-homs-and-kills-30->



3. Homs, Homs Governorate
  - On May 12, two motorcycle bombs killed approximately four people and wounded more in Alawite-majority neighborhoods in Homs.<sup>4</sup>
4. Deir ez-Zor Governorate
  - On May 16, U.S. Special Operations forces carried out an operation – the U.S.’s first ground operation since the beginning of its military campaign last year – in which they killed Abu Sayyaf (an ISIL leader involved in overseeing oil and finances), captured his wife, and freed a young Yazidi woman who was being held; no commandos or civilians were reported killed or injured.<sup>5</sup>
5. Qalamoun Mountains, Rif Dimashq Governorate
  - On May 13, Syrian government troops and Lebanese Hezbollah fighters captured strategic Talat Moussa, the highest mountain in the Qalamoun mountain region, from al-Qaida-affiliated Nusra Front fighters.<sup>6</sup>
6. Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate
  - On May 12, Syrian government helicopters reportedly dropped a barrel bomb on a crowded bus depot in Aleppo, killing at least two-dozen and injuring dozens more.<sup>7</sup>
7. Hasakah Area, Hasakah Governorate
  - During the reporting period, more than a dozen coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Hasakah.<sup>8</sup>

Other key points:

- On May 14, ISIL released an audio message purportedly from Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIL; analysts have not yet verified that the voice is indeed that of al-Baghdadi.<sup>9</sup>

---

[soldiers-in-regime-forces/](http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2015/05/new-isis-offensives-in-syrian-civil-war.html); C. Kozak, “New ISIS Offensives in the Syrian Civil War,”

<http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2015/05/new-isis-offensives-in-syrian-civil-war.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/double-bombing-kills-4-syrias-homs-governor-122824543.html#OcwaD0I>; <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/05/30-killed-and-wounded-by-2-suicide-explosions-in-homs-city/>; G. Casagrande and C. Kozak, “Syria Situation Report: May 5-12, 2015,”

<http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/2015/05/syria-situation-report-may-5-12-2015.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/17/world/middleeast/abu-sayyaf-isis-commander-killed-by-us-forces-pentagon-says.html>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32764995>;

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-kills-islamic-state-leader-in-syria-raid/2015/05/16/31280b26-fbca-11e4-a13c-193b1241d51a\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-kills-islamic-state-leader-in-syria-raid/2015/05/16/31280b26-fbca-11e4-a13c-193b1241d51a_story.html);

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/17/mideast-usa-syria-islamic-state-idUSKBN00201W20150517>;

[http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/05/16/un-dirigeant-de-l-etat-islamique-tue-par-des-forces-speciales-americaines-en-syrie\\_4634742\\_3218.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/05/16/un-dirigeant-de-l-etat-islamique-tue-par-des-forces-speciales-americaines-en-syrie_4634742_3218.html)

<sup>6</sup> AP, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/13/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>;

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/05/13/mideast-crisis-syria-idINKBN0NY1S820150513>;

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/05/85-killed-during-clashes-in-qalamoun/>.

<sup>7</sup> AP, [http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/12/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/12/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html?_r=0);

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/05/about-30-killed-by-an-explosive-barrel-in-aleppo/>

<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.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32744070>;

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/world/middleeast/isis-releases-recording-said-to-be-by-its-reclusive-leader.html?src=xps>; <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/14/asia/al-baghdadi-audio/>

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

1. Ramadi, Al Anbar Governorate
  - On May 17, the provincial capital Ramadi fell to ISIL. On May 18, approximately 3,000 Shiite militiamen arrived at a military base near Ramadi to prepare for the battle to retake the city, which the Pentagon pledged the international coalition would support.<sup>10</sup>
2. Baiji Area, Salah ad Din Governorate
  - During the reporting period, ISIL fighters continued to besiege Iraqi security forces inside the Baiji oil refinery.<sup>11</sup>
  - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Baiji.<sup>12</sup>
3. Tal Afar Area, Ninawa Governorate
  - On May 13, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense announced that a coalition airstrike near Tal Afar had killed ISIL's second-in-command Abu Alaa al-Afari, also known as Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli. Although U.S. Central Command acknowledged that coalition airstrikes had hit targets near Tal Afar on May 12 and May 13, it said that it could not verify the Iraqi claim.<sup>13</sup>
4. Baghdad
  - On May 12, a string of bomb attacks targeting Shiite pilgrims killed dozens and wounded dozens more throughout Baghdad.<sup>14</sup>
5. Mosul Area, Ninawa Governorate
  - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Mosul.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/18/world/middleeast/isis-ramadi-iraq.html?src=xps>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32773780>; [http://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2015/05/17/l-etat-islamique-en-passe-de-s-emparer-de-la-ville-strategique-de-ramadi-en-irak\\_4634947\\_3210.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2015/05/17/l-etat-islamique-en-passe-de-s-emparer-de-la-ville-strategique-de-ramadi-en-irak_4634947_3210.html); <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/18/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN0020M020150518>; <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128845>; S. Adnan, T. Bell, and P. Martin, "Iraq Situation Report: May 16-18, 2015," <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/05/iraq-situation-report-may-16-18-2015.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/13/us-mideast-is-refinery-idUSKBN0NY0TQ20150513>; [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-islamic-state-threatens-to-capture-massive-iraqi-oil-refinery/2015/05/14/07690f36-f744-11e4-a47c-e56f4db884ed\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the-islamic-state-threatens-to-capture-massive-iraqi-oil-refinery/2015/05/14/07690f36-f744-11e4-a47c-e56f4db884ed_story.html); S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: May 12-13, 2015," [http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/05/iraq-situation-report-may-9-11-2015\\_13.html](http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/05/iraq-situation-report-may-9-11-2015_13.html)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/Airstrikes6.html](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/14/world/middleeast/isis-iraq.html>; <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-second-in-command-killed-in-airstrike-1431528722>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32726646>; <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/13/middleeast/isis-al-afri/>; <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/abu-alaa-al-afari-isis-commander-killed-in-u-s-airstrike-iraq-ministry-claims-1.3073008>

<sup>14</sup> AP, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/12/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>; S. Adnan, P. Martin, and O. Dulimi, "Iraq Situation Report: May 12-13, 2015," [http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/05/iraq-situation-report-may-9-11-2015\\_13.html](http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/05/iraq-situation-report-may-9-11-2015_13.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)

## **Key Heritage Recommendations and Actions**

- ASOR CH is preparing a special report on the site of Palmyra.
- ASOR CHI is taking action to increase in-country narrative reporting in Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq.
- ASOR CHI submitted a prioritized tasking list to obtain high-resolution satellite imagery of key heritage sites/regions in Syria.

## Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0085

**Report Date:** May 13, 2015

**Site Name:** Numerous historic buildings in the center of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo, including the **Khan Slaimanyeh**, the **Khan al-Sabun** (SHI# 109), the **Khan al-Shouneh** (SHI#111), the **Souq al-Suweiq**, the **Textile Souq**, the **Souq al-Zirb** (SHI# 247), the **Souq al-Siyyagh (Jewelry Souq)**(SHI# 245), the **Grand Serail** (SHI# 252), sites around the **Citadel** (SHI# 73), the **Carlton Hotel** (SHI# 4003), the **al-Zahrawi School (Qenaq al-Kikhya)**, the **Umayyad (Great) Mosque** (SHI# 192), the **Chamber of Industry**, and the **Coral Julia Dumna Hotel**.

**Date of Incident:** unknown/ongoing

**Location:** South and southwest of the Citadel, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Various historic buildings, including mosques, souqs, khans, and hotels, within the Old City of Aleppo.

**Site Date:** Various (Umayyad through late Ottoman)

**Source of Destruction:** On May 12, 2015, the DGAM published a set of photos acquired in collaboration with al-Khany Media Agency (this is the second such set; see ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0084), showing the condition of built heritage in the Old City of Aleppo as of the “last week of April, 2015.” The damage to buildings and other built heritage shown in the photos cannot be attributed to any single incident.

**Pattern:** Severe, ongoing damage to built heritage in the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo, especially in the area between the Bab Antakiya and the Citadel, due to repeated tunnel bombings, ongoing aerial bombardment, and continuing urban warfare.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is actively engaged in monitoring the condition of cultural heritage in Aleppo; the task of documenting the impacts of recent destruction events is a particularly high priority.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1692>



Suq Slaimanyeh, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Suq Slaimanyeh, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Suq Slaimanyeh, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Suq Slaimanyeh, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



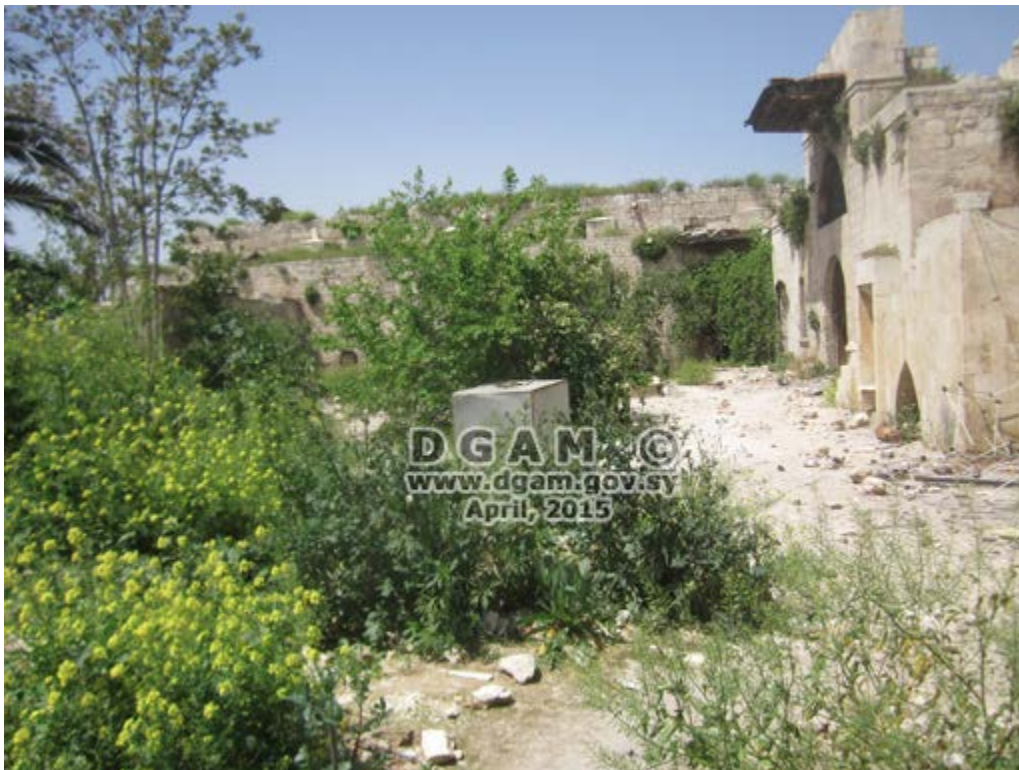
Khan al-Sabun, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Khan al-Sabun, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Khan al-Shuneh, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Khan al-Shuneh, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)





Khan al-Suweiqa, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Khan al-Suweiq, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Textile Souq, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Textile Souq, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Souq al-Zirb, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Souq al-Zirb, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Cafe in the Citadel area, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Carlton Hotel, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Abdul Hamid al-Zahrawi School (Quenaq al-Kikhya), Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



The Aleppo Citadel, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



The Grand Serail, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)





A.M. Riyad Street, looking south toward the Umayyad Mosque, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



The northern gate of the Umayyad Mosque, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Souq al-Siyyagh (Jewelry Souq), Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Souq al-Siyyagh (Jewelry Souq), Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Chamber of Industry, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)



Coral Julia Dumna Hotel, Aleppo (DGAM; posted May 12, 2015)

**SHI 15-0086**

**Report Date:** May 16, 2015

**Site Name:** UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra (SHI# 852)

**Date of Incident:** May 13, 2015, and ongoing

**Location:** Homs Governorate, Syria

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:**

From UNESCO:

First mentioned in the archives of Mari in the 2nd millennium BC, Palmyra was an established caravan oasis when it came under Roman control in the mid-first century AD as part of the Roman province of Syria. It grew steadily in importance as a city on the trade route linking Persia, India and China with the Roman Empire, marking the crossroads of several civilisations in the ancient world. A grand, colonnaded street of 1100 metres' length forms the monumental axis of the city, which together with secondary colonnaded cross streets links the major public monuments including the Temple of Ba'al, Diocletian's Camp, the Agora, Theatre, other temples and urban quarters. Architectural ornament including unique examples of funerary sculpture unites the forms of Greco-roman art with indigenous elements and Persian influences in a strongly original style. Outside the city's walls are remains of a Roman aqueduct and immense necropolises.<sup>16</sup>

**Site Date:** Primarily Hellenistic (Palmyrene), Roman, and Islamic

**Source of Destruction:** On May 13, 2015, news sources reported that ISIL had “launched a two-pronged attack” on the town of Palmyra and was at that time “just 5 km northeast of its Roman-era ruins.”<sup>17</sup>

On May 15, 2015, APSA published images (dated May 14) and video footage (dated May 15) showing combat centered on the citadel of Palmyra.<sup>18</sup>

On May 16, 2015, the DGAM reported that “[a]ccording to Department of Antiquities in Palmyra, the archaeological site has not so far been subjected to any damage, and it is still under control of the Syrian government, with [ongoing] clashes between the national security forces and the terrorist organization of ‘ISIS’ at several axes near the archaeological site.” This report also stated that the DGAM had taken a number of measures to protect the site of Palmyra since the start of the conflict in 2012, including “reinforcing the gates of tombs containing funeral scenes, then [re-burying] all the gates, transferring the museum objects to more secure places, and communicating with the various figures of the local community in order to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the cultural heritage.”<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23>

<sup>17</sup> <http://syriadirect.org/news/is-launches-full-on-assault-on-palmyra/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/homs/palmyra/1218-palmyra-14-05-2015-a.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1696>

On May 17, 2015, the DGAM reported that security forces had succeeded in forcing ISIL to withdraw eastward away from the city and archaeological site.<sup>20</sup> On the same date, the BBC reported on the high casualties of the Palmyra offensive and relayed a report given by the Homs governor to state-run news agency SANA that “Palmyra is safe and the road linking Homs with Palmyra is absolutely safe.”<sup>21</sup> On May 17, 2015, SANA also published an image of the Bel Temple at Palmyra (dated May 17), with the implication that it had not been further damaged.

On May 17, 2015, APSA posted footage to YouTube showing “damage caused to the Citadel at Palmyra.”<sup>22</sup> The video footage is taken at a great distance and is somewhat unclear but seems to show major damage to the citadel architecture.

On May 18, 2015, ASOR CHI sources in Syria reported that the Palmyra museum had been hit by multiple mortar shells, but the extent of the damage is unknown.

On May 18, 2015, the DGAM published several photos taken by the Department of Antiquities of Palmyra showing the general condition of monuments at the site, including the Bel Temple and tower tombs.<sup>23</sup> These images await in-depth analysis; as their intent is apparently to show that the standing monuments of Palmyra have not been severely damaged through incidental combat impact or intentional destruction, it remains to be established whether or not more localized damage was caused by the recent conflict.

On May 19, 2015, ASOR CHI sources in Syria reported that “two mortar shells” had fallen in the area of the Temple of Bel, but no images confirming this report have yet been provided.

**Pattern:** Tactical/strategic use of built heritage by combatants during the Syrian conflict. Damage to sites of extraordinary historical significance due to their location in strategic or otherwise logistically important regions (in the present as in ancient periods). The site of Palmyra and, specifically, defensive positions like the Bel Temple were fortified by SARG in efforts to defend this oasis and transport hub (see for example ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0103). Palmyra was especially vulnerable in late 2014 after ISIS captured SARG positions in Deir ez-Zor Governorate and was, therefore, provided with access to sites in Homs Governorate (see ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-019). Images showing the condition of the Bel Temple at Palmyra were published by the DGAM on March 20, 2015 (See ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0055).

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

### **Sources:**

#### Online Reporting:

Syria Direct (May 13, 2015): <http://syriadirect.org/news/is-launches-full-on-assault-on-palmyra/>

APSA (May 15, 2015): <http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/homs/palmyra/1218-palmyra-14-05-2015-a.html>

---

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1700>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32772894>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nEof-4Tcok>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1703>

APSA (May 17, 2015): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nEof-4Tcok>

DGAM (May 16, 2015): <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1696>

DGAM (May 17, 2015): <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1700>

DGAM (May 18, 2015): <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1703>

UNESCO World Heritage Listing for Palmyra: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23>

BBC (May 17, 2015): <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32772894>

SANA (May 17, 2015): <http://www.sana.sy/en/?p=41056>  
<http://www.sana.sy/en/?s=palmyra>



Bombardment in the area of the citadel, Palmyra (APSA; posted May 15, 2015)





Bombardment in the area of the citadel, Palmyra (APSA; posted May 15, 2015)



Bombardment in the area of the citadel, Palmyra (APSA; posted May 15, 2015)



Bombardment in the area of the citadel, Palmyra (APSA; posted May 15, 2015)



Bel Temple, Palmyra (SANA; published May 17, 2015, with the heading "Palmyra on 17/05/2015")



Columned avenue, Palmyra (DGAM; posted May 18, 2015)



Bel Temple, Palmyra (DGAM; posted May 18, 2015)



Columned avenue, Palmyra (DGAM; posted May 18, 2015)



Tower Tombs, Palmyra (DGAM; posted May 18, 2015)



Palmyra (DGAM; posted May 18, 2015)

**SHI 15-0087**

**Report Date:** May 19, 2015

**Site Name:** Citadel of Aleppo (SHI# 73)

**Date of Incident:** reported May 18, 2015, but ongoing

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

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:**

From UNESCO:

The monumental Citadel of Aleppo, rising above the suqs, mosques and madrasas of the old walled city, is testament to Arab military might from the 12th to the 14th centuries. With evidence of past occupation by civilizations dating back to the 10th century B.C., the citadel contains the remains of mosques, palace and bath buildings. The walled city that grew up around the citadel bears evidence of the early Graeco-Roman street layout and contains remnants of 6th century Christian buildings, medieval walls and gates, mosques and madrasas relating to the Ayyubid and Mameluke development of the city, and later mosques and palaces of the Ottoman period.

A ring of crenellated walls and towers rises 50m above the city from a steep glacis, encircling a mass of ruins of every period. The nail-heads on the doors themselves are beautifully worked, the lintels have comic or enigmatic carvings on them, and there are fine Kufic inscriptions calling upon the power and the mercy of Allah. The interior of the citadel shows all too clearly how it has been ravaged by enemies (the Mongols invaded it twice) and shattered by earthquakes (that of 1822 was particularly devastating).<sup>24</sup>

**Site Date:** Hittite through Ottoman

**Source of Destruction:** On May 19, 2015, APSA published video footage to YouTube showing damage to the Aleppo citadel.<sup>25</sup> The video shows the interior of the southwest section of the citadel wall, with major impact damage to the (reconstructed) towers and curtain walls, as well as widespread bullet damage.

**Pattern:** Ongoing severe damage to the built landscape of the Old City of Aleppo due to continuing urban warfare and especially to the citadel because of its strategic location and fortified character.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is actively engaged in monitoring the condition of cultural heritage in Aleppo.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

APSA (May 19, 2015): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdunFOq8gdM&feature=youtu.be>

---

<sup>24</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/21>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdunFOq8gdM&feature=youtu.be>

## **Incident Reports: Iraq**

**IHI 15-0056**

**Report Date:** May 16, 2015

**Site Name:** Al-Fatih Mosque

**Date of Incident:** January 13, 2015

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

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** One of many mosques located in the Qasim Al-Khayat neighborhood of Mosul.

**Site Date:** unknown

**Source of Destruction:** Alleged ISIL deliberate destruction.

**Pattern:** The al-Ummawiya Mosque in the same neighborhood was also allegedly destroyed. No further details about the extent of the damage or photo/video documentation were provided. The authenticity of the report is unconfirmed.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports via in-country sources. ASOR CHI is continuing to monitor the condition of religious cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Al Sharq: <http://www.al-sharq.com/news/details/300157#.VLVXiyuG8bM>

**IHI 15-0057**

**Report Date:** May 16, 2015

**Site Name:** Al-Umawiyya Mosque

**Date of Incident:** January 13, 2015

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

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** One of many mosques located in the Qasim Al-Khayat neighborhood of Mosul.

**Site Date:** unknown

**Source of Destruction:** Alleged ISIL deliberate destruction.

**Pattern:** The al-Fatih Mosque in the same neighborhood was also allegedly destroyed. No further details about the extent of the damage or photo/video documentation were provided. The authenticity of the report is unconfirmed.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports via in country sources. ASOR CHI is continuing to monitor the condition of religious cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Al Sharq: <http://www.al-sharq.com/news/details/300157#.VLVXiyuG8bM>



## IHI 15-0060

**Report Date:** May 15, 2015

**Site Name:** Church of the Immaculate (Church of Virgin Mary; Church of Al-Tahera)

**Date of Incident:** June 21, 2014; February 2, 2015; May 12, 2015

**Location:** Shifaa neighborhood, western Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Important historic Syrian Orthodox Church that is an important place of worship for Christians in Mosul.

**Site Date:** originally built in 1896 CE, renovated in 1972

**Source of Destruction:** ISIL vandalism and appropriation of cultural property for military purposes.

**Pattern:** On June 21, 2014, photos depicting the statue of the Virgin Mary located on top of the clock tower of the Church of the Immaculate were being toppled by ISIL militants.<sup>26</sup> On July 26, 2014, news sources stated that ISIL militants destroyed the church with explosives,<sup>27</sup> but this report appears to have been unfounded.<sup>28</sup> On February 2, 2015, a bomb was detonated at the church,<sup>29</sup> with additional reports suggesting that ISIL militants had removed valuable manuscripts and paintings before detonating the bomb.<sup>30</sup> On May 13, 2015, posts on Facebook indicated that the church was being used as an armory by ISIL militants, who “brought closed medium[sic] size steal[sic] boxes into the church and took out large black bags from it.”<sup>31</sup> ISIL militants also militarized other major places of worship in Mosul, likely chosen based on size, location, and the enhanced security of the structures (see IHI 15-0050 on Mar Gorgis/St. George/St. Markourkas Monastery as a comparison).

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** The militarization of cultural property goes against the principles of the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. ASOR CHI is continuing to monitor the condition of religious cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq.

---

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php?topic=743314.msg7270528#msg7270528>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.iraqinews.com/features/urgent-isil-destroys-virgin-mary-church-mosul/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2014/07/29/syria-iraq-mosul-chaldean-church-immaculate-virgin-mary-destruction-propaganda/>

<sup>29</sup> <http://rudaw.net/arabic/middleeast/iraq/020220157>; <http://www.ereemnews.com/politics/arab-politics/200383>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/123851/الموصل-وسط-القلعة-كنيسة-يفجرون-داعش-عناصر/ar>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/552514844870022/photos/a.671843999603772.1073741830.552514844870022/731790263609145/>

## Sources:

### Online Reporting:

Ankawa:

<http://www.ankawa.com/forum/index.php?topic=743314.msg7270528#msg7270528>

Niqash:

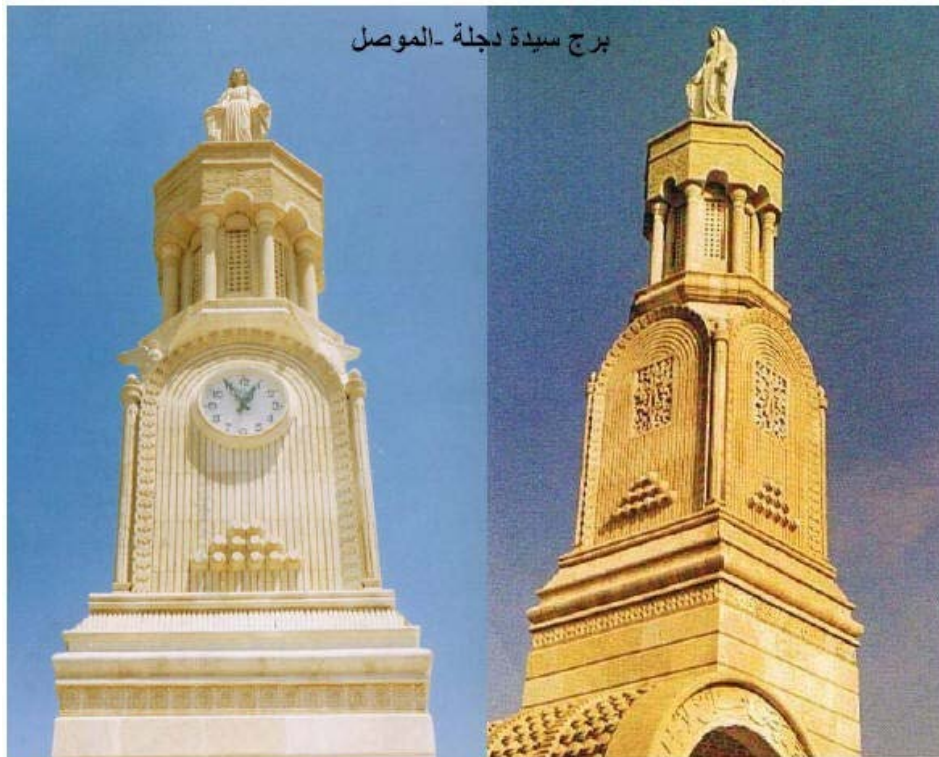
<http://www.niqash.org/en/articles/security/3479/ISIS-puts-mosul%E2%80%99s-ancient-artefacts-and-manuscripts-away-for-safekeeping.htm>

Rudaw: <http://rudaw.net/arabic/middleeast/iraq/020220157>

Erem: <http://www.erehnews.com/politics/arab-politics/200383>

Al Sumaria:

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/123851/الرموصوسطالقلعةكنيسةيفجرونداشعناصر/ar>



Church of the Immaculate, tower with Virgin Mary statue, undated (Ankawa)



Church of the Immaculate, destroyed Virgin Mary statue, June 2014 (Ankawa)



Church of the Immaculate, tower without Virgin Mary statue, June 2014 (Ankawa)



Church of the Immaculate, tower without Virgin Mary statue, June 2014 (Ankawa)

## **IHI 15-0075 UPDATE**

**Report Date:** March 19, 2015; updated May 15, 2015

**Site Name:** Monasteries of Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah

**Date of Incident:** March 19, 2015

**Location:** Qaraqosh, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

### **Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Syriac Catholic monastery dedicated to the martyrs Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah, children of the Assyrian King Sennacherib II of Asuristan. Mar Behnam was converted to Christianity and was baptized by Mar Mattai (St. Matthew), later bringing his sister, Sarah, to be cured of leprosy. Following her healing, Mart Sarah and forty companions of Mar Behnam were also baptized. Sennacherib had Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah and the forty companions killed for converting, but he later was baptized and built the monastery where Sarah was healed out of regret for their deaths.

The church on the site was originally founded by the Assyrian Church of the East, but in the 7th century CE it became part of the Syriac Orthodox Church. In the 19th century CE, the complex then transitioned to a Syriac Catholic Church.

**Site Date:** The complex originates in the 4th century CE, with renovations in the 12th and 13th centuries CE as well as a modern restoration in 1986.

**Source of Destruction:** ISIL deliberate destruction.

**Pattern:** ISIL deliberate destructions of religious places significant to religious and ethnic minorities. The town of Qaraqosh, southeast of Mosul, is predominantly Christian, and the monastery was an important pilgrimage site for Syrian Catholics. ISIL took control of Qaraqosh in July 2014, forcing Christians to either convert to Islam or pay a tax. Monks from the monastery were then expelled by ISIL militants, who refused to allow the monks to take the monastery's religious relics with them.<sup>32</sup> On March 19, 2015, ISIL militants demolished the tombs associated with Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah with explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is continuing to monitor the condition of ethnic and religious minority heritage in Syria and Iraq.

### **Sources:**

#### Online Reporting:

International Business Times: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-blows-famed-4th-century-mar-behnam-catholic-monastery-iraq-1492703>

---

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28408926>

Gates of Nineveh: <https://gatesofnineveh.wordpress.com/2015/05/12/what-weve-lost-mar-behnam-monastery/>

Scholarly:

Wolper, Ethel Sara (2014) "Khidr and the politics of translation in Mosul: Mar Behnam, St. George and the Khidr Ilyas" in *Sacred Precincts: The Religious Architecture of Non-muslim Communities Across the Islamic World (Arts and Archaeology of the Islamic World)* by Mohammed Gharipour. Leiden: Brill, pg. 379-392.



Tombs of Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah, still intact (Digital Globe; taken March 11, 2015)



Tombs of Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah, after destruction (Digital Globe; taken April 17, 2015)



Mar Behnam (undated photograph on social media)

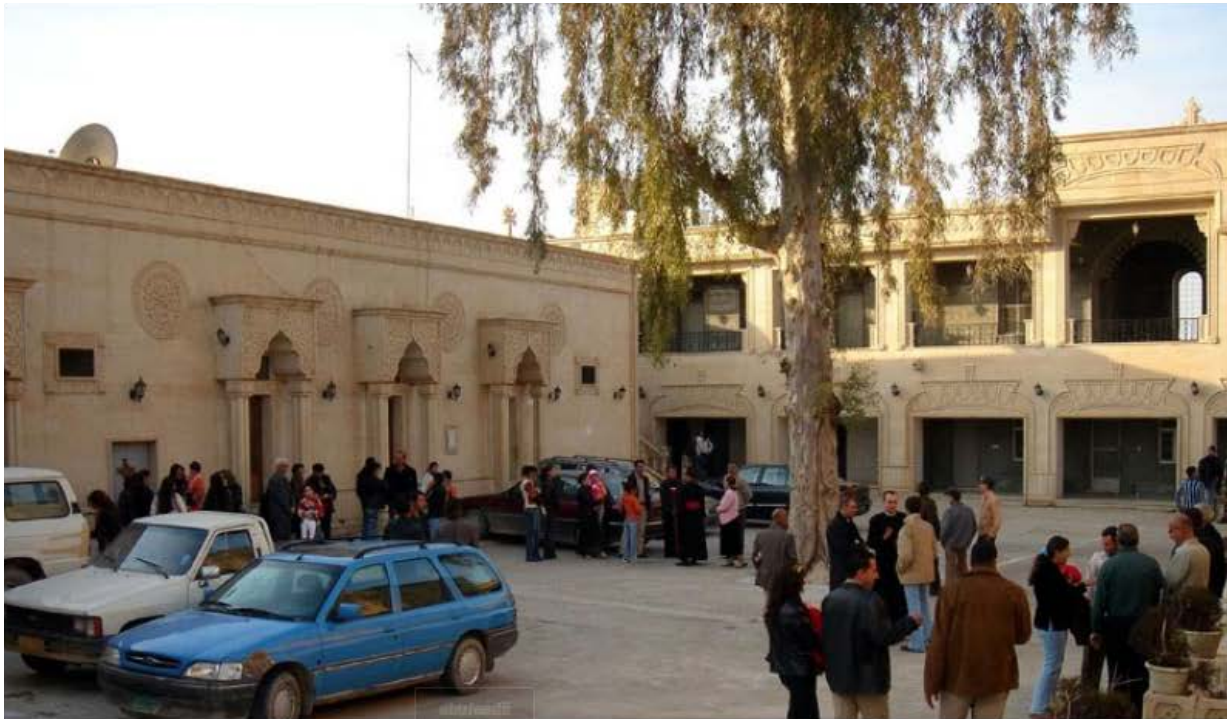


Mar Behnam (undated photograph on social media)

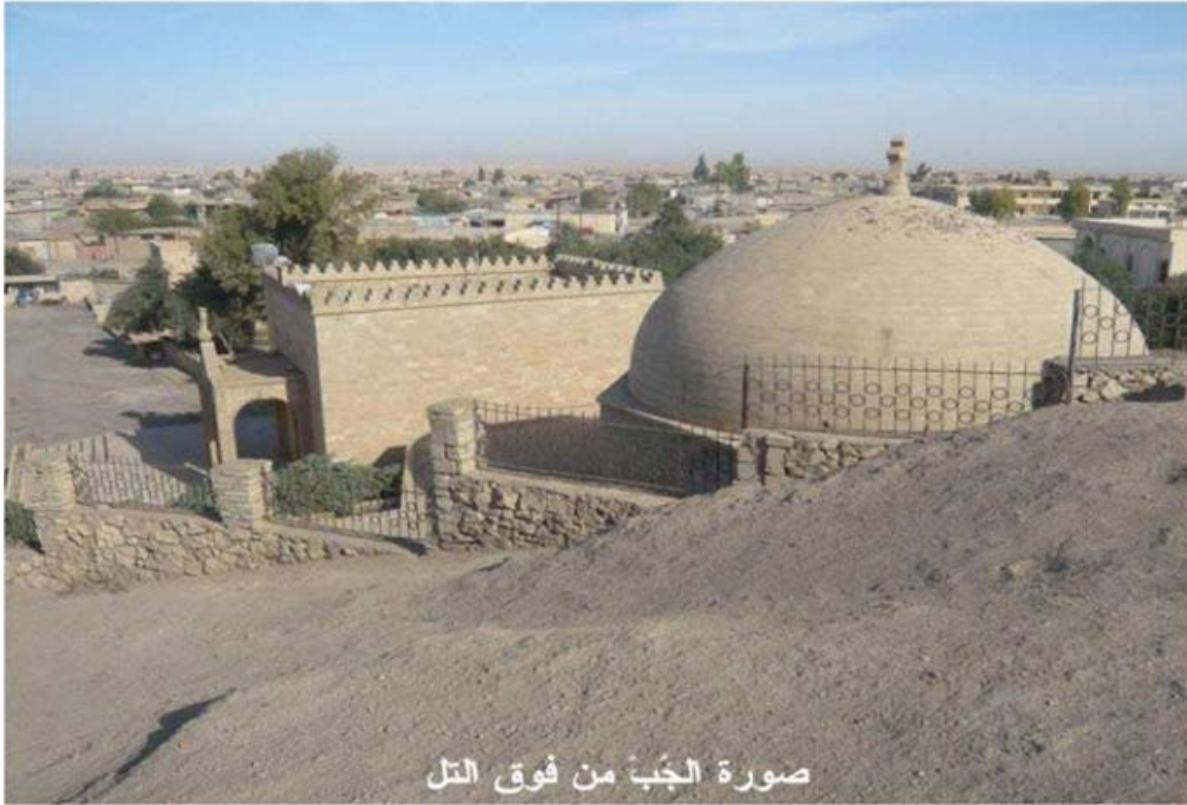




Mar Behnam (undated photograph on social media)



Mar Behnam (undated photograph on social media)



Mar Behnam (undated photograph on social media)



Mar Behnam (undated photograph on social media)



Demolition of the tombs of Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah by ISIL (on social media)



Demolition of the tombs of Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah by ISIL (on social media)



Demolition of the tombs of Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah by ISIL (on social media)



Demolition of the tombs of Mar Behnam and Mart Sarah by ISIL (on social media)

**IHI 15-0080**

**Report Date:** May 15, 2015

**Site Name:** Maryam Khatun Mosque

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

**Location:** Hawsh Khan neighborhood, western Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

**Coordinates:**

**Site Description:** Ottoman-era mosque built by Muhammad Amin Beg al-Jalili and named after his sister, Maryam Khatun.

**Site Date:** ca. 1821 CE

**Source of Destruction:** ISIL deliberate destruction.

**Pattern:** On May 12, 2015, Rudaw published an article indicating that the mosque was demolished by ISIL militants using explosives. No further details about the extent of the damage or photo/video documentation were provided.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is continuing to monitor the condition of religious cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Rudaw: <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/12052015>

YouTube video from Waqf Ninawa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2sSoYASEqI>