

ASOR Syrian Heritage Initiative (SHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria¹

NEA-PSHSS-14-001

Weekly Report 14 – November 10, 2014

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Heritage Timeline

- November 7, 2014** **APSA** posted six photos and a video to its website documenting damage to the **Aleppo Citadel**. **SHI Incident Report SHI14-076**
<http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments.html>
- November 5, 2014** **APSA** posted five photos to their Facebook page showing damage to **Qal'at Sukkara** on top of Jebel 'Abd al'Aziz. **SHI Incident Report SHI14-075**
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1077737529000024.1073741889.324869057620212&type=1>
- November 4, 2014** **APSA** posted a video of **Serjilla** in Idlib. SHI Incident
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPdU6mw5BTg&feature=youtu.be>
- **DGAM** posted eight photos and a short report regarding damage to the **Seray Building in al-Nabk** to its website. **SHI Incident Report SHI14-074**
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1485>

Military and Political Context

During the reporting period², the primary theaters of military engagement and insurgent activity in Syria were:

- 1) The Palmyra region, where there were continuing clashes between Islamic State (IS) and regime (SARG) forces in Palmyra, Sukhna, and the Sha'er gas fields;
- 2) The Qalamoun Mountains northwest of Damascus where Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) and Ahrar al-Sham attacked SARG forces and reportedly inflicted heavy casualties;
- 3) Nawa, north of Dera'a, where JN captured the town and the 112th Brigade Base from SARG;

¹ 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.

² For coverage of weekly events see Jennifer Cafarella and Theodore Bell, *Syria Update November 5 – November 11, 2014* (Institute for the Study of War).

- 4) Al-Bara, where JN took an additional four villages, expanding on previous gains over more moderate rebel fighters in the Jabal al-Zawiyah;
- 5) U.S./Coalition airstrikes against the Khorasan Group in northwest Idlib Governorate;
- 6) Assassinations and a bombing against U.S.-backed rebels in Kafr Nabil and Idlib.

Perhaps the most significant recent development in the past week for the heritage situation has been the territorial gains of Jabhat al-Nusra at the expense of F.S.A-affiliated groups and SARG forces and successful attacks on the leadership of U.S.-backed forces. The Institute for the Study of War has recently published a detailed report on the situation in the northwest of the country and its implications³. JN expansion equates with reduced capacity to conduct cultural heritage monitoring, mitigation, and preservation projects for in-country heritage experts and will likely correlate with increased looting of heritage places.

Key Heritage Recommendations and Actions

1) The rapid expansion of Jabhat al-Nusra will degrade already reduced cultural heritage capacity in Syria and will likely correlate with an increase in looting.

*SHI will continue to carefully monitor territory under JN control. Many of the major cultural heritage sites in northwest Syria are already classified as high priority for monitoring efforts. Monitoring of the Dera'a region and Qalamoun Mountains should be increased.

³ Cafarella, Jennifer. *Jabhat al-Nusra Deepens its Foothold in Northwestern Syria*. (Institute for the Study of War).

Incident Reports

SHI14-074

Report Date: November 4, 2014

Site Name: Al-Nabk Seray

Date of Incident: DGAM reported 11/4/2014

Location: Al-Nabk Area, Damascus Governorate

Coordinates: The town of Nabk is Lat. 34.024, Lon. 36.729

Site Description: A historic building use for government purposes in the modern town of Nabk.

Site Date: Based on the DGAM photos, the Serai appears to date to the late Ottoman or French Mandate period. The exact date and location need to be determined.

Source of Destruction: According to the DGAM, the Seray Building in Al-Nabk exhibits broken windows, noticeable cracks on the walls and ceiling, and has been looted.

Pattern: Combat damage

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: —

Sources:

Online Reporting:

· DGAM Website

○ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1485>

Scholarly:



Damage to the Seray Building in Al-Nabk (DGAM).



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SHI14-075**Report Date:** November 5, 2014**Site Name:** Qal'at Sukkara**Date of Incident:** November 4, 2014**Location:** Jebel 'Abd el-'Aziz, al-Hassakah Governorate**Coordinates:** 36°25'47.64"N 40°25'33.24"E**Site Description:** Stone masonry castle atop a rocky outcropping.**Site Date:** Medieval**Source of Destruction:** According to APSA, airstrikes were conducted against Islamic State militants that were believed to be occupying the site. There are unconfirmed reports of damage to the north side of the castle.**Pattern:** The use of heritage sites for military purposes. Airstrikes on heritage sites.**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** Airstrikes have occasionally struck archaeological sites used by Islamic State for military purposes, such as the recent airstrike(s) on Tell Sha'ir west of Kobani.**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

· _APSA Facebook Page

○

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1077737529000024.1073741889.324869057620212&type=1>

Scholarly:



Image of Qal'at Sukkara (APSA).



Image of Qal'at Sukkara (APSA).



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Image of Qal'at Sukkara (APSA).



Image of Qal'at Sukkara (APSA).

SHI14-076

Report Date: November 7, 2014

Site Name: Aleppo Citadel

Date of Incident: November 7, 2014

Location: Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate

Coordinates: Lat. 36.199, Lon. 37.163

Site Description: The Aleppo Citadel is a large medieval fortress and palace complex at the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo. The citadel sits atop a large tell dating back to at least the 3rd millennium BC. The citadel is a key tourist attraction in Syria and has suffered moderate damage since the start of the Syrian conflict.

Site Date: Medieval to late Ottoman with modern additions and restoration.

Source of Destruction: Small arms fire, rockets, mortar rounds, artillery fire.

Pattern: Urban warfare. The destruction of heritage places in the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ancient City of Aleppo.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: SHI has designated The Old City of Aleppo as a high priority monitoring area, as have other monitoring groups. There is a major humanitarian crisis unfolding in and around the modern city, and there is a desperate need to conduct mitigation and preservation projects on heritage sites in Aleppo.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

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

Scholarly:

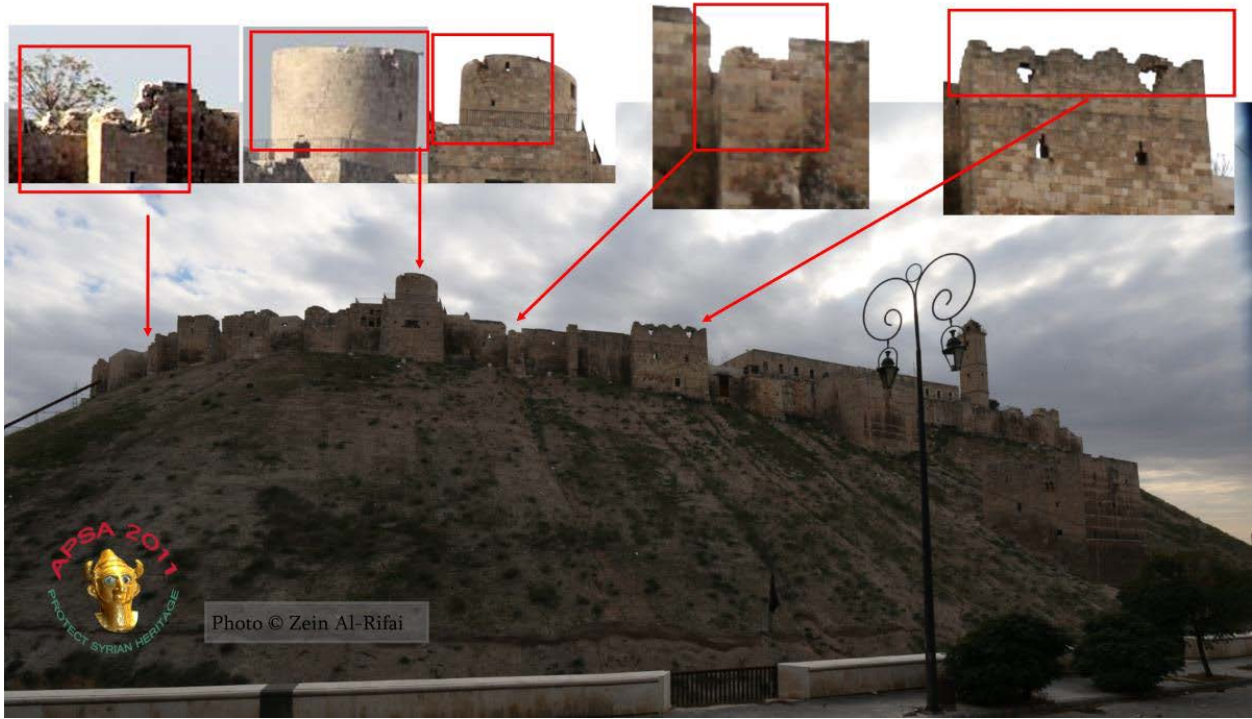


Image showing damage to the Aleppo Citadel (APSA).



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