

ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq¹

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Weekly Report 19 – December 15, 2014

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Heritage Timeline

- December 12, 2014** APSA posted 13 photos and a video dated December 8, 2014 on its website showing the state of the **Madrasa Sultaniyeh** in the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo. The site was largely destroyed in a tunnel bombing December 7, 2014. See updated [SHI Incident Report SHI 14-0097](#).
- December 11–12, 2014** The **German Archaeological Institute**, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, and the German Archaeological Association organized “Cultural Heritage in Danger: Illicit Excavations and Illegal Trade” in Berlin. http://www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/veranstaltungen/rp/141211_conference_cultural_heritage_in_danger.pdf
- December 11, 2014** The **DGAM** posted a short report entitled “Damages at Deir ez-Zor Archaeological Sites.” The report lists damages at over 24 sites. This area is largely outside the control of the DGAM. [SHI Incident Report SHI 14-098](#)
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1535>
- *The National* published “Stealing from history: the looting and destruction of Iraqi and Syrian heritage concern us all.” <http://www.thenational.ae/arts-lifestyle/the-review/stealing-from-history-the-looting-and-destruction-of-iraqi-and-syrian-heritage-concern-us-all#page1>
- December 10, 2014** **The Metropolitan Museum of Art**, Department of Ancient Near East Art held its *Scholars Day: Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age* featuring a session entitled **Cultural Heritage in Crisis** with talks by MMA President Emily Rafferty, Curator in Charge Joan Aruz, Lamia Al Gailani Werr, Salam Al Kuntar, and Zainab Bahrani.

Military and Political Context

The primary theaters of combat in Syria during the reporting period include²:

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.

- 1) Continued hostilities in Kobani between YPG (supported by U.S./Coalition Airstrikes) and Islamic State;
- 2) Ongoing and intensified clashes between SARG and rebel forces in the Damascus suburbs of Western and Eastern Ghouta;
- 3) Fighting between Islamic State and SARG in the village of Beir Qassab in Rif Dimashq (southeast of Damascus);
- 4) Intense fighting in and around Sheikh Miskin in Daraa between SARG and rebel forces;
- 5) Eastern Aleppo, where SARG threatens to sever vital opposition supply lines;
- 6) Ongoing and intense fighting between Islamic State and SARG over the Deir ez-Zor Military Airport with SARG airstrikes supporting the defenders;
- 7) Heavy fighting between SARG against JN, Ahrar al-Sham, and other rebel forces south of Maarat al-Nu'man with a focus on control of the Wadi Deif Military Base (previously attacked by tunnel bombs);
- 8) Islamic Front and Jabhat al-Nusra attacks on al-Zahraa and other towns and villages northwest of Aleppo;
- 9) Clashes between IS and YPG forces near Hasakah;
- 10) Airstrikes on Raqqa.

During the reporting period, there was little information on the heritage situation posted by ASOR CHI's regular sources covering Syria. This is perhaps verification of previously stated predictions that the increasing footprints of IS and JN will result in diminished heritage reporting.

With regard to the current situation in Iraq³, the main areas of military activity include:

- 1) Mosul, where Islamic State began digging a defensive trench to the north and east of the city and conscripting young Moslawi men into its fighting forces;
- 2) Clashes between Islamic State and Iraqi forces north of Baghdad;
- 3) U.S./Coalition and Iraqi airstrikes on Islamic State positions around Kirkuk (Hawijah and Riyadh);
- 4) Islamic State gained ground in Ramadi against ISF and tribal forces;
- 5) Islamic State small-scale attacks in Sinjar.

² There has been a noticeable decrease in the flow of information out of Syria on the military situation and the posting of synopses online.

³ For more detailed information on Iraq see Ali, Ahmed and Nichole Dicharry. 2014. *Iraq Situation Report: December 13-14, 2012*. (Institute for the Study of War).

Although it is perhaps premature to reach any conclusions, the conflict kinetics seem to be diminishing somewhat with the onset of winter weather. In-country sources suggest that Islamic State is preparing for a potential withdrawal from Mosul as Peshmerga and ISF forces continue to exert pressure from the south and east.

Key Heritage Recommendations and Actions

1) Tunnel bombing continues to be a serious concern in Syria.

*ASOR CHI is currently completing a Special Report on this phenomena specifically focusing on damage in the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ancient City of Aleppo.

2) In-country reporting in Syria is somewhat diminished.

*ASOR CHI has taken steps this reporting period to develop new partnerships to increase the acquisition of data on the heritage situation and will continue to adjust its procedures.

Incident Reports

SHI 14-097 updated

Report Date: December 7, 2014; Updated December 14, 2014

Site Name: The Madrasa Sultaniyeh, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ancient City of Aleppo

Date of Incident: December 7, 2014

Location: UNESCO World Heritage Site, Ancient City of Aleppo

Coordinates: 36°11'50.05"N, 37° 9'42.73"E

Site Description: See SHI Incident Reports SHI14-004, SHI14-024.

This madrasa and mosque (1225 CE) lies immediately south of the citadel's main entrance and was badly damaged in previous tunnel bomb detonations. It contains the tomb of Sultan Malik al-Zaher. Gaube and Wirth provide the following dating details, "Von Gazi begonnen und im Jahre 1225 vollendet."⁴ According to Ross Burns,

Across the road and a little to the left as you look from the entrance of the citadel lies the Madrasa Sultaniye completed in 1223–1225 by Governor (Sultan) al-Aziz, a son of Sultan al-Zaher Ghazi, the project having begun under his father. The *mihrab* of the prayer room is particularly commended. To the left lies a modest room which contained the cenotaphs of Sultan al-Zaher Ghazi and his family.⁵

Site Date: 13th Century AD

Source of Destruction: Tunnel bomb completely destroyed the southern half of the madrasa complex.

Pattern: The use of tunnel bombs at the southern side of the Aleppo citadel — four previous episodes were linked to Islamic Front.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR SHI has already designated the Old City of Aleppo as a high priority for monitoring and remediation efforts.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

⁴ Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 342, p. 382.

⁵ Burns 2009: 38–39.

DGAM Website: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1531>

Scholarly:

Burns, Ross. 2009. *The Monuments of Syria. A Guide*. (I. B. Tauris).

Gaube, Heinz and Eugen Wirth. 1984. *Aleppo: historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole*. Two Volumes. (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert).



The Madrasa Sultaniyeh in 2007 prior to the Syrian Civil War (Saleem Hajjar).



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the south following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the south following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the south following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the southeast looking northwest following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the southeast looking northwest following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the southeast looking northwest following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the south following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the southeast looking northwest following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the southeast looking northwest following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



The remains of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh from the southeast looking northwest following the tunnel bombing of December 7, 2014.



Before-and-after-comparison of the Madrasa Sultaniyah.



Digital Globe Image of the Madrasa Sultaniyah dating to November 7, 2014. The tunnel bomb of December 7, 2014 destroyed the southern half of the building (Digital Globe).



Digital Globe Image of the Madrasa Sultaniyeh dating to December 15, 2014. The tunnel bomb of December 7, 2014 destroyed the southern half of the building (Digital Globe).

SHI 14-098**Report Date:** December 14, 2014**Site Name:** Archaeological Sites in Deir ez-Zor Governorate**Date of Incident:** November 2014**Location:** Various**Coordinates:** —**Site Description:** The DGAM provided the following table:

Site Name	Damages	Current Situation
Halabia	Illegal Buildings - Illegal Excavations - Land Bulldozer	Stopped
Rahbaa Castle	Vandalism and Looting to the archaeological mission resident - Illegal Excavations	
(Sheikh Anas, Tell al-Shibli, Ein Ali) sites	Vandalism -Illegal Excavations - Destroying Sheikh Anas tomb	
Tell al-Ashaara	Illegal Buildings - Land Bulldozer in the E area for track construction	
Mari	Vandalism and Looting o the archaeological mission resident- Illegal Excavations using heavy equipment	Stopped
Salhia	Vandalism and Looting to the archaeological mission resident- Vandalism and Looting to the visitor center- Illegal Excavations destroyed the archaeological layers.	Stopped
al-Taiana sites: (Tell Krah, Tell al-Foria)	Illegal Excavations - Land Bulldozer	
Bassira	Vandalism - Illegal Excavations - Illegal Buildings	Stopped
Khabour Gharbi sites (Tell al-Gebn, al-Khan, al-Banat, al-Fadin, al-Sor, al-Hasin, al-Mashekh, al-Abu Heet, Tell al-Sen)	Illegal Excavations	Stopped
Tell al-Rum	Illegal Excavations	Stopped
Tell Tabouss	–	Can't Reach
Sheikh Hamad sites	Vandalism - Illegal Excavations	Can't Reach
al-Bagour	Vandalism - Illegal Excavations	

Site Date: Various

Source of Destruction: See above

Pattern: Extensive looting in Deir ez-or Governorate

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: —

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM Website: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1535>