

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

NEA-PSHSS-14-001

Weekly Report 46 — June 23, 2015

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Executive Summary

During the reporting period, reports emerged of ISIL militants allegedly planting explosive devices among the standing architecture of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra. ISIL released photos showing the destruction of two Muslim religious sites. Between March 15, 2015 and May 22, 2015 ISIL deliberately destroyed the Shia Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad ibn ‘Ali, a descendant of a cousin of the Prophet Mohammad located atop a hill north of Tadmor, Syria. Between June 15, 2015 and June 26, 2015 ISIL deliberately destroyed the Tomb and shrine of Shagaf/Nizar Abu Behaeddine, a Sufi scholar and religious figure reportedly from Tadmor, Syria. The site is located south of modern Tadmor in the Efqa Oasis area. ISIL has also been engaged in the destruction of modern graves in the cemeteries of Tadmor.

Additional information has been provided documenting the damage to the Ma’arat al-Numan Archaeological Museum in Syria caused by direct, intentional airborne attacks on the historic structure by SARG forces on June 15, 2015.

John Whittingdale, UK Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, announced the UK will ratify the 1954 Hague Convention. The UK would also set up a cultural protection fund for Syria and Iraq and assist in training a corps of rescue archaeologists in Iraq.

In Iraq, on June 22, 2015 the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities published a press release stating that inspectors found that the Anbar Museum had been looted by ISIL militants. Special equipment and department vehicles were stolen from the museum. No artifacts were stolen as the collection had been transferred to Baghdad before the ISIL invasion

Key Points

- Reports emerged of ISIL militants allegedly planting explosive devices among the standing architecture of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra ([ASOR Incident Report SHI15-0101](#)).

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.

- Between March 15, 2015 and May 22, 2015 ISIL deliberately destroyed the Shia Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad ibn 'Ali, a descendant of a cousin of the Prophet Mohammad near Tadmor, Syria. ISIL promoted this destruction online via social media ([ASOR Incident Report SHI15-0102](#)).
- Between June 15, 2015 and June 26, 2015 ISIL deliberately destroyed the Tomb and shrine of Shagaf/Nizar Abu Behaeddine, a Sufi scholar and religious figure from Tadmor, Syria. The site is located south of modern Tadmor in the Efqa Oasis area. ISIL promoted this destruction online via social media ([ASOR Incident Report SHI15-0102](#)).
- During the reporting period and the previous weekly reporting period, ISIL was engaged in the destruction of modern graves in the cemeteries of Tadmor, Syria ([ASOR Incident Report SHI15-0103](#)).
- Additional information has been provided documenting the damage to the Ma'arat al-Numan Archaeological Museum in Syria caused by direct airborne attacks on the historic structure by SARG forces on June 15, 2015 ([ASOR Incident Report SHI15-0098 update](#)).
- John Whittingdale, UK Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, announced the UK will ratify the 1954 Hague Convention. The UK would also set up a cultural protection fund for Syria and Iraq and assist in training a corps of rescue archaeologists in Iraq.

Heritage Timeline

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|---------------|--|
| June 23, 2015 | <p><i>The Guardian</i> published an article titled “Isis destroys Palmyra shrines in Syria” (by Reuters).
 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/23/isis-destroys-palmyra-shrines-in-syria</p> |
| • | <p><i>Hyperallergic</i> published an article titled “Another Treasure Lost in Iraq: The Story of Mar Behnam Monastery” (by Christopher Jones).
 http://hyperallergic.com/216393/another-treasure-lost-in-iraq-the-story-of-mar-behnam-monastery/</p> |
| June 22, 2105 | <p><i>Illicit Cultural Property</i> published a blog post titled “Palmyra as Propaganda Success” (by Derek Fincham).
 http://illicitculturalproperty.com/palmyra-as-propaganda-success/</p> |
| • | <p><i>USA Today</i> published an article titled “Rebels, Syrian government work together to protect antiquities” (by Riham Kusa). The article highlights the efforts of local community groups to protect cultural heritage, including in particular, reference to protection and restoration work done at Bosra..
 http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/06/22/syria-archaeology/28977009/</p> |

- The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq** published a press release stating that equipment and department vehicles had been stolen from the Anbar Museum, but not artifacts were lost because the collection has been moved to Baghdad before the ISIL invasion. [ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0086](#).
<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=208>
- June 21, 2015
- Reuters UK* published an article titled “**Islamic State militants plant mines and bombs in Palmyra – monitoring group**” (by Mariam Karouny; additional reporting Kinda Makieh).
<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/06/21/uk-syria-crisis-palmyra-idUKKBN0P10FU20150621>
- BBC* published an article titled “**Islamic State crisis: 'Mines planted in Syria's Palmyra'.**”
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33216305>
 - The Guardian* published an article titled “**Britain signs convention on protecting treasures in war zones**” (by Toby Helm).
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/21/britain-signs-up-to-protect-cultural-treasures-war-zones>
 - BBC* published an article titled “**UK to adopt Hague Convention to protect artefacts in war zones**”.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-33213911>
 - news.com.au* published an article titled “**‘Commando’ archaeologists to rescue threatened artefacts in Middle East.**”
<http://www.news.com.au/technology/science/commando-archaeologists-to-rescue-threatened-artefacts-in-middle-east/story-fnjwl1aw-1227408033903>
 - The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq** published a press release announcing that ministry officials **participated in the third session of the 1970 UNESCO Convention**, held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The meeting focused on taking necessary measures to prevent trafficking in cultural property and to return looted antiquities to their countries of origin, **with emphasis on plans and measures to be taken by Member States in response to UNSCR 2199 concerning Iraqi antiquities.**
<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=204>

- *The Telegraph* published an article titled “**Isil lay mines in Syria’s ancient Palmyra ruins**” (by Louisa Loveluck and Magdy Samaan).
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11689694/Isil-lay-mines-in-Syrias-ancient-Palmyra-ruins.html>
- June 20, 2015
- *Al Arabiya* published an article titled “**Iraqi ministry slams ISIS’s project to turn Jonah’s tomb into park.**”
<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/06/20/Iraqi-ministry-ISIS-s-project-of-turning-Jonah-s-tomb-into-park-a-crime.html>
 - *LBC Group* published a video titled “**مأساة التراث السوري تتكرر في معرّة النعمان [Syrian Heritage tragedy repeated in Ma’arrat]**” (by ريتا قربان وري).
<http://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/219199/1506200442-lbci-news>
 - *Murr Television* published an article titled “**تضرر متحف الفسيفساء الأكثر شهرة في سوريا [Popular mosaic museum damaged in Syria]**.”
<http://mtv.com.lb/News/492032>
 - *The Daily Star (Lebanon)* published an article titled “**Famed Syria mosaic museum damaged in barrel bombing: NGO**” (by AFP).
<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Jun-20/303048-famed-syria-mosaic-museum-damaged-in-barrel-bombing-ngo.ashx>
 - *The Guardian* published an article titled “**Britain signs convention on protecting treasures in war zones**” (by Toby Helm).
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/21/britain-signs-up-to-protect-cultural-treasures-war-zones>
- June 19, 2015
- *CNN* published a video titled “**Crews work to save Babylon**” (reported by Ben Wedeman).
<http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/06/19/saving-babylon-iraq-wedeman-pkg.cnn>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T51MeE3XWrM>
 - *United Nations Academic Impact* published a blog post titled “**Countering destruction of and trafficking in cultural property: from lessons learned to implementation**” (by Achuth Krishnan).
<https://academicimpact.un.org/content/countering-destruction-and-trafficking-cultural-property-lessons-learned-implementation>

- June 18, 2015 **The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq** published a press release announcing that **it has received a number of artifacts that were smuggled to other countries** as part of a national campaign to protect Iraqi antiquities launched by the ministry earlier this month.
<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=203>
- *Raialyum* published an article titled “العراق يسترد 663 قطعة أثرية مهربة لثلاث دول [Iraq recovers 663 artifacts smuggled to three countries].”
<http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=274116>
- June 17, 2015 APSA posted an article titled “**Ma’arrat al-Nu’man: Report on the Bombing of the archaeological Museum.**” ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0098 UPDATE.
<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-maaret-al-numan-the-archaeological-museum-is-damaged-with-a-tnt-barrel-06152015/>
- The Director-General of UNESCO, **Irina Bokova**, released a statement **condemning airstrikes damaging the Maarrat al Numaan Museum** in Syria.
http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/the_director_general_of_unesco_condemns_airstrikes_damaging_the_maarrat_al_numaan_museum_in_syria/
- June 16, 2015 *WNPR* published an article titled “**Syrian Cultural Heritage Site Allegedly Bombed by Assad Regime**” (by Diane Orson).
<http://wnpr.org/post/syrian-cultural-heritage-site-allegedly-bombed-assad-regime>
- The recently published Syrian Studies Association Bulletin (Vol. 20, No. 1, Spring 2015) includes an article titled “**Civil War and Cultural Heritage in Syria, 2011–2015**” (by Mattia Giudetti and Silvia Perini).
<https://ojcs.siue.edu/ojs/index.php/ssa/article/view/3115>
- June 15, 2015 **The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq held a meeting with the regional antiquities inspectors** to improve coordination between the ministry and local governments as a part of a national campaign to protect antiquities in the wake of intentional destructions by ISIL militants and an increase in looting and trafficking.
<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=194>

June 14, 2015

The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq launched a national campaign to protect Iraqi antiquities that aims to preserve and maintain cultural heritage and initiate projects in response to the attacks on heritage by ISIL militants. This campaign will include the formation of inspection teams in all provinces to survey and document archaeological and heritage sites, will urge citizens to report the existence of any archaeological or heritage sites near their homes so that they can be documented, and will create a Ministry website that will allow any party to submit information on archaeological and heritage sites. The ministry will also coordinate with the media to raise archaeological awareness in the community and organize awareness-raising events, and it will coordinate with regional cultural centers and universities and partner with relevant ministries to better protect antiquities from looting, trafficking, and deliberate attacks.

<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=188>

Military and Political Context

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

1. Tel Abyad Area, Raqqa Governorate
 - After Kurdish YPG fighters seized control of Tel Abyad from ISIL last week,² the fight continued as the U.S. and coalition forces conducted five airstrikes against ISIL near Tel Abyad on Thursday, June 18. The strikes destroyed fighting positions, a vehicle, a machine gun, and a mortar system.³
 - On Friday, June 19, the U.S. and coalition forces conducted airstrikes again, hitting targets near Tel Abyad and the city of Raqqa.⁴ That same day, clashes erupted between ISIL forces and YPG forces backed by rebels in the southern countryside of Tel Abyad.⁵
 - Since YPG fighters regained control of Tel Abyad, hundreds of refugees have started returning after Turkey reopened a nearby border.⁶

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33152153> ;

<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129081>

³ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/19/world/middleeast/19reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

⁴ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/20/world/middleeast/20reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

⁵ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/clashes-between-is-and-ypg-in-tal-brak-and-tal-abiad-countrysides/>

⁶ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/f306df4d5cf14fbd2cf967e3f5c9c98/turks-open-border-hundreds-syrian-refugees-return-home>

- On Monday, June 22, the YPG announced that they captured a military base from ISIL. The base, called Liwa 93, is southwest of Ain Issa and just 50 km/ 30 miles from the city of Raqqa, ISIL's de facto capital.⁷
2. Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate
- During the reporting period, rebel groups – including groups such as Nour al Din al Zinki and the Free Syrian Army – declared a campaign to reclaim Aleppo. So far, they have captured some ground in government-held districts in the city and in areas north of the city.⁸
 - The aforementioned effort was accompanied by increased levels of violence. On Tuesday, June 16, a shelling of the city by rebels attempting to gain greater control killed more than 30 people and wounded around 190 people.⁹ On Friday, June 19, rebel forces backed by Islamic factions clashed with regime forces on the outskirts of the al-Rashedin neighborhood.¹⁰ On Saturday, June 20, rebels fired shells in the Midan district and near al-Baladi palace, killing several civilians and wounding many more.¹¹
3. Palmyra, Homs Governorate
- From Thursday, June 18 to Sunday, June 21 government-led airstrikes killed at least 11 people in the residential part of Palmyra. Additionally, there have been reports over the reporting period that ISIL has planted explosives in Palmyra.¹² This follows a period of relative calm – after ISIL seized control of Palmyra from the Syrian government last month, they left the site untouched, possibly in an effort to appeal to local residents; but on Saturday, June 13 the Syrian government staged an airstrike on Tadmor (one of many), which showed that, despite the fact that ISIL controls the area on the ground, the Syrian regime can still reach it by air.¹³
4. Al Hasakah, Hasakah Governorate
- After an attack by ISIL on Kurdish YPG bastions in the Tal Brak countryside area, ISIL fighters and YPG fighters clashed south of Tal Brak. There have been reported losses on both sides.¹⁴
 - On Friday, June 19, the U.S. and coalition forces conducted airstrikes near the city of Hasakah.¹⁵

⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/22/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-idUSKBN0P21HV20150622>

⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/20/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKBN0OZ1VY20150620>

⁹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/16/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKBN0OW0TL20150616>

¹⁰ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/clashes-break-out-in-aleppo-and-airstrikes-target-the-east-of-deir-ezzor/>

¹¹ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/4-killed-while-25-others-were-wounded-by-shells-exploded-in-aleppo-city/>

¹² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33216305>

¹³ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11679477/Syrian-regime-launches-air-strike-on-world-famous-ancient-city-of-Palmyra.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/clashes-between-is-and-ypg-in-tal-brak-and-tal-abiad-countrysides/>

¹⁵ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/20/world/middleeast/20reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

5. Quneitra, Quneitra Governorate

- During the reporting period, a rebel alliance began an offensive against government forces in Quneitra province, about 70 km/40 miles southwest of Damascus. On Tuesday, June 16, Southern Front spokesman Issam al-Rayes announced the start of the operation to “liberate remaining regime targets.”¹⁶ al-Rayes asserted that the rebel alliance signed a pact, which did not include al-Qaeda’s Syrian wing, the al-Nusra Front.¹⁷
- By the morning of Wednesday, June 17, areas near the town of Quneitra came under heavy bombardment. One photographer on the ground commented that the bombardment seemed to focus on an area between the town of Quneitra and a nearby reservoir.¹⁸

6. Deir ez-Zor Governorate

- On Thursday, June 18, the U.S. and coalition forces conducted airstrikes, four of which hit three oil-collection points in the Deir ez-Zor governorate.¹⁹

Other key points:

- Since ISIL seized oil-rich regions in Syria’s north and east, ISIL fighters are preventing fuel shipments from reaching rebel-held parts of northern Syria. This is causing severe shortages that are halting ambulances and shutting down medical centers and bakeries. Medical committees in the Idlib and Hama governorates have warned that they will have to shut down facilities soon if they do not receive fuel.²⁰

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

1. Falluja, Al Anbar Governorate

- On Thursday, June 18, U.S. and coalition forces conducted airstrikes against ISIL targets near Falluja.²¹
- On Friday, June 19, U.S. and coalition forces led airstrikes near Fallujah again.²²
- On Friday, June 19, ISIL attacked the Iraqi Security Forces near Fallujah University, east of Fallujah, killing several soldiers and wounding a number of others. ISF reinforcements forced ISIL to withdraw back into Fallujah, however.²³

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33166040>

¹⁷ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/06/17/Syrian-rebels-launch-offensive-in-southern-Syria.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33166040>

¹⁹ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/19/world/middleeast/19reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

²⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/world/middleeast/isis-imposed-fuel-embargo-threatens-syrias-medical-centers.html>

²¹ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/19/world/middleeast/19reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

²² Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/20/world/middleeast/20reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

²³ T. Bell, P. Martin, and ISW Iraq Team, “Iraq Situation Report: June 18-19, 2015,” <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/iraq-situation-report-june-18-19-2015.html>

2. Ramadi, Al Anbar Governorate

- On Thursday, June 18, U.S. and coalition forces carried out four airstrikes near Ramadi.²⁴
- On Friday, June 19, U.S. and coalition forces conducted airstrikes near Ramadi.²⁵
- On Friday, June 19, the ISF killed a number of ISIL militants in Ramadi's al-Ta'mim and Albu Faraj neighborhoods. The ISF also shelled Albu Faraj, destroyed several vehicles, and destroyed an IED factory during the effort.²⁶

3. Sinjar, Ninawa Governorate

- On Thursday, June 18, U.S. and coalition forces hit targets during airstrikes around Sinjar.²⁷
- On Friday, June 19, additional U.S. and coalition-led airstrikes hit targets near Sinjar.²⁸
- On Friday, June 19, Iraqi Kurdistan's Peshmerga repelled an ISIL attack against Peshmerga positions in the Sinjar district, killing a number of ISIL fighters.²⁹

4. Mosul Area, Ninawa Governorate

- On Thursday, June 18, U.S. and coalition-led airstrikes hit a tactical unit, a rocket-firing position and structure, an excavator, a fighting position, a rocket, and a tank near Mosul.³⁰
- On Friday, June 19, U.S. and coalition forces-led airstrikes hit a tactical unit, a staging area, a tank, a heavy machine gun, and an ISIL building near Mosul.³¹

5. Baiji, Salah ad Din Governorate

- On Thursday, June 18, U.S. and coalition forces conducted airstrikes against ISIL targets near Baiji.³²
- On Friday, June 19, U.S. and coalition forces conducted additional airstrikes near Baiji.³³

²⁴ T. Bell, P. Martin, and ISW Iraq Team, "Iraq Situation Report: June 18-19, 2015,"

<http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/iraq-situation-report-june-18-19-2015.html>

²⁵ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/20/world/middleeast/20reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

²⁶ T. Bell, P. Martin, and ISW Iraq Team, "Iraq Situation Report: June 18-19, 2015,"

<http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/iraq-situation-report-june-18-19-2015.html>

²⁷ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/19/world/middleeast/19reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

²⁸ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/20/world/middleeast/20reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

²⁹ T. Bell, P. Martin, and ISW Iraq Team, "Iraq Situation Report: June 18-19, 2015,"

<http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/iraq-situation-report-june-18-19-2015.html>

³⁰ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/19/world/middleeast/19reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

³¹ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/20/world/middleeast/20reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

³² Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/19/world/middleeast/19reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

³³ Reuters, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/20/world/middleeast/20reuters-mideast-crisis-airstrikes.html>

- During the reporting period, fighting continued in and around Baiji. The U.S. Department of Defense claims that Iraqi security forces and the Popular Mobilization Forces are maintaining and increasing their footholds around the city, however. They attribute some of this success to the numerous U.S. coalition led airstrikes in the region.³⁴
 - On Wednesday, June 17, ISIL reportedly killed five policemen at an oil refinery in Tal Abu Jarad village as part of a battle for control of Baiji refinery. Fighting over nearby neighborhoods ensued.³⁵
6. Baghdad Area, Baghdad Governorate
- On Wednesday, June 17, a Vehicle-Born Improvised Explosive Device exploded in the Kadhimiya area of northwestern Baghdad. It killed three people and wounded 10 others. Iraq's Ministry of the Interior contends that it was an Adhesive Explosive Device and not a VBIED.³⁶

³⁴ <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=129081>

³⁵ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/17/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN00X0N220150617>

³⁶ T. Bell, P. Martin, and ISW Iraq Team, "Iraq Situation Report: June 18-19, 2015," <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/iraq-situation-report-june-18-19-2015.html>

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0098 UPDATE

Report Date: June 21, 2015

Site Name: Ma'arat al-Nu'man Archaeological Museum (Khan Murad Pasha)

Date of Incident: June 15, 2015

Location: Ma'arat al-Numan, Idlib Governorate, Syria

Site Description:

According to Ross Burns:

[The Maarat al-Numan Museum] contains an interesting collection of objects including mosaics and pottery from many periods...The mosaics have been transferred from nearby sites including a fifth century mosaic from as far as Homs... In the centre of the courtyard is a *tekkiye* or foundation for the instruction of initiates to the Dervish sect. A doorway to the left once led to the hammam and suq attached to the khan (now managed separately). Opposite the museum is another Ottoman khan, the Khan Assad Pasha al-Azem.

[The Khan Murad Pasha] has been converted to a museum with striking effect. It contains an interesting collection of objects including mosaics and pottery from many periods, a tribute to the late curator Kamel Chéhadé. The mosaics have been transferred from nearby sites including a fifth century mosaic from as far as Homs. Note especially the mosaic depicting Romulus and Remus found at al-Firkiye (north of Maarat) and dated to 510. A second mosaic of the same date from al-Firkiye animals in a field bordered by vines....³⁷

Site Date: ca. 1565 CE

Source of Destruction: ASOR CHI sources reported on June 16, 2015, that the archaeological museum of Ma'arat al- Nu'man (formerly Khan Murad Pasha) suffered massive destruction due to a TNT barrel dropped by a Syrian Army helicopter on the evening of Monday, June 15, 2015 at 11 pm local time.

Images were posted to social media³⁸ and to the APSA website³⁹ on June 16, 2015, showing substantial destruction to the small building complex, a mosque and tekkiye, at the center of the courtyard of the museum complex (a 16th century Ottoman khan). The damage includes collapsed domes, ceilings, and walls. The photographs also indicate that there is structural damage to a small area of an upper section of an adjacent wall of the khan. CHI sources say that no artifacts were stored in the building complex at the center of the courtyard. Mosaics were, however, previously displayed on the floor adjacent to the courtyard structure and on the south wall of the structure; it is unclear at this time whether these mosaics had been removed prior to the recent damage. In addition, architectural fragments such as column capitals and mosaics are displayed or stored

³⁷ Burns, Ross. 2010. *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide* (I.B. Tauris), p. 195.

³⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/808286192587259/photos/a.808332109249334.1073741828.808286192587259/845974475485097/?type=1&theater>

³⁹ <http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-maaret-al-numan-the-archaeological-museum-is-damaged-with-a-tnt-barrel-06152015/>

throughout the portico of the courtyard (as seen in the images), and it is likely that there has been some damage to some of these artifacts.

On June 17, 2015 *le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger* (PASD) co-released a report with The Safeguarding the Heritage of Syria and Iraq Project (SHOSI) on the damage to the Museum.⁴⁰ The report includes a floorplan of the museum with clearly marked areas of damage, as well as numerous high quality photographs of the damage.

On June 18, 2015 APSA published a report with extensive photographic documentation of the damage to the museum caused by the barrel bomb attack of June 15 2015. The report appears to draw on some of the reporting in the PASD-SHOSI report but includes different photographs. According to the report, the explosion damaged the middle portion of the west wall of the eastern wing, as well as the central part of the east portico of the eastern wing, completely destroying three pillars (the PASD-SHOSI report specifies four pillars as damaged) and cracking others, and collapsing part of the roof. A second barrel bomb hit damaged the mosque and tekkiye in the center of the Great Court of the Khan Murad Pasha. The southern iwan (monumental entrance) of the tekkiye completely collapsed, and much of the dome and east wall were destroyed. The vault of the mosque was almost completely destroyed, and there is damage to the east wall and collapse in the southeastern corner. Additionally, stones from the Khan Murad Pasha north portico facade fell due to the explosion impact effects. The report also commented on the condition of the archaeological collections. Secondary to the barrel bombing, several mosaic panels located in the east portico were damaged. Specifically, two rectangular panels of geometric mosaic were severely damaged. Of the four oval shaped geometric mosaic panels mounted on the wall of the portico, three fell to the ground and were covered by rubble. Other mosaic panels in the east portico were damaged to an as-yet undetermined degree, and a discussion panel fell due to the explosion. Several stone artifacts including basalt column capitals and doors located in the east portico were damaged as well.⁴¹

Pattern: Ongoing polarization of Ma'arat al-Nu'man within the civil conflict and explicit militarization of the archaeological mosaic museum (See [ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0041](#) and [ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0016](#)). The museum is a prominent landmark located within the center of an intensely disputed town strategically located upon highway routes making up the Aleppo-Damascus corridor. The DGAM reported that 30 artifacts, including clay figurines, pottery, and amulets, were stolen from the museum in 2012.⁴² According to an APSA report published on October 1, 2014, the museum at that time suffered daily and massive aerial bombardments ([ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0041](#)). The adjacent museum (Khan al-Qashlah) was allegedly converted into a military retrenchment by the official army until August 2011, whereupon the free army assumed control of the complex, which remained the case as of late 2014. The same APSA report stated that a MIG dropped a bomb near the museum in early October 2012, resulting in shattered doors, windows, display cases, and earthenware objects, compounding the bullet damage and more severe forms of destruction to the mosaic panels.

⁴⁰ PASD (*Le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger*) and SHOSI (The Safeguarding the Heritage of Syria and Iraq Project). 2015. Report on the Bombing of the Ma'arrat al-Nu'man Museum.

⁴¹<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-maaret-al-numan-the-archaeological-museum-is-damaged-with-a-tnt-barrel-06152015/>

⁴² Abdulkarim, Maamoun. 2013. *Archaeological Heritage in Syria During the Crisis 2011-2013: Le Patrimoine Archéologique Syrien Durant La Crise*. Damascus: Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.

In February 2015, the results of an emergency project carried out by a local group to safeguard collection materials at the Al-Ma'arra Museum, Idlib, were announced through a series of public announcements and news articles. Project activities included repairs to the facility and facing of numerous (possibly all) of the mosaic fragments on site; an article states that "some 1600 square feet of mosaics were protected."⁴³

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of the Ma'arat al-Nu'man Archaeological Museum, given its significance as a cultural repository. The PASD-SHOSI report states that a team of caretakers at the Ma'arra Museum is preparing detailed damage assessments and will conduct salvage removal of collapsed debris after thorough documentation. The team is also reportedly going to assess the structural stability of the buildings and identify any further emergency interventions that could be taken.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Facebook (June 16, 2015):

<https://www.facebook.com/808286192587259/photos/a.808332109249334.1073741828.808286192587259/845974475485097/?type=1&theater>

Siraj Press: <http://sirajpress.com/8558/مقال/براميل-الأسد-تدمر-متحف-مدينة-أبي-العلاء-المعري/>

The Day After. 2015. "Emergency Preservation Activities Completed at Syria's Ma'arra Mosaic Museum," February 18. <http://tda-sy.org/بيان-مشترك-اتمام-أنشطة-الطوارئ-المتعل/?lang=en>.

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1722>

APSA (June 17, 2015):

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-maaret-al-numan-the-archaeological-museum-is-damaged-with-a-tnt-barrel-06152015/>

Scholarly:

Abdulkarim, Maamoun. 2013. *Archaeological Heritage in Syria During the Crisis 2011-2013: Le Patrimoine Archéologique Syrien Durant La Crise*. Damascus: Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.

⁴³ The Day After. 2015. "Emergency Preservation Activities Completed at Syria's Ma'arra Mosaic Museum," February 18. <http://tda-sy.org/بيان-مشترك-اتمام-أنشطة-الطوارئ-المتعل/?lang=en>.



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (Sirajpress; published June 16, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 16, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



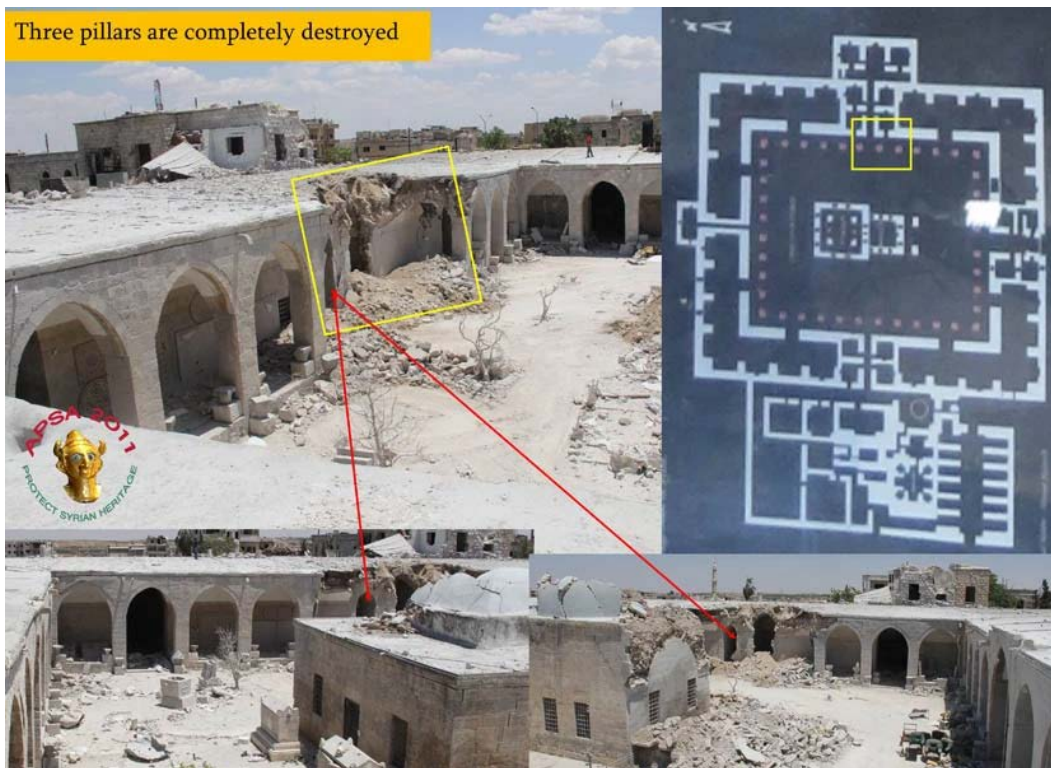
Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



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Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)

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Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



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Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APISA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APISA; June 17, 2015)



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Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



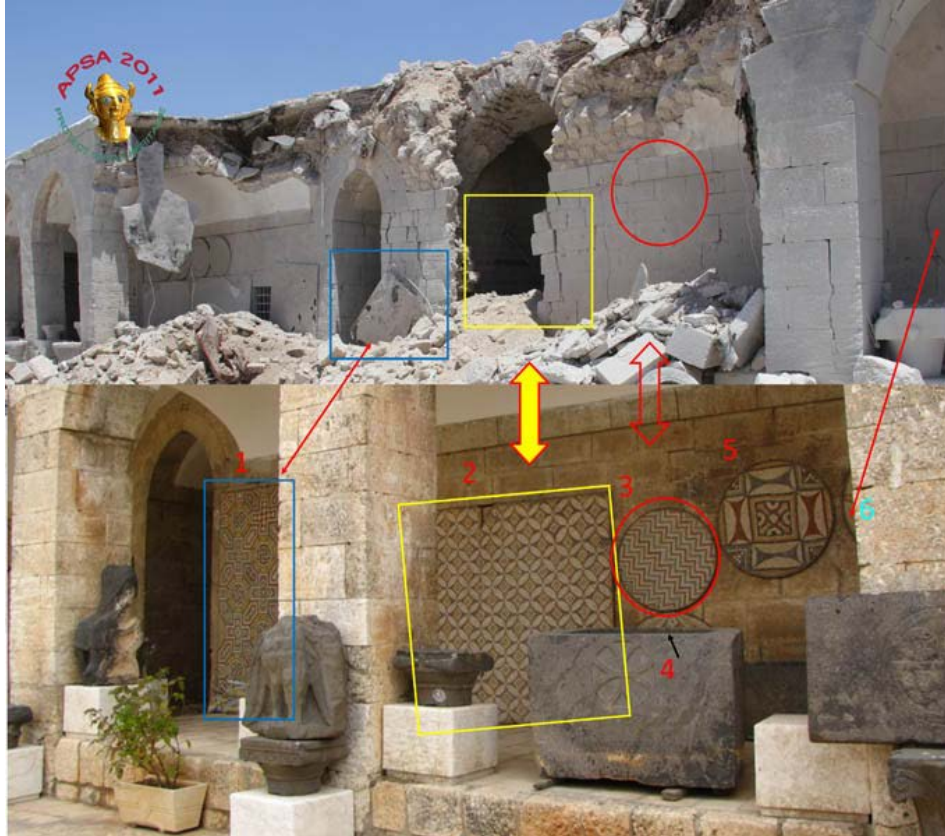
Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



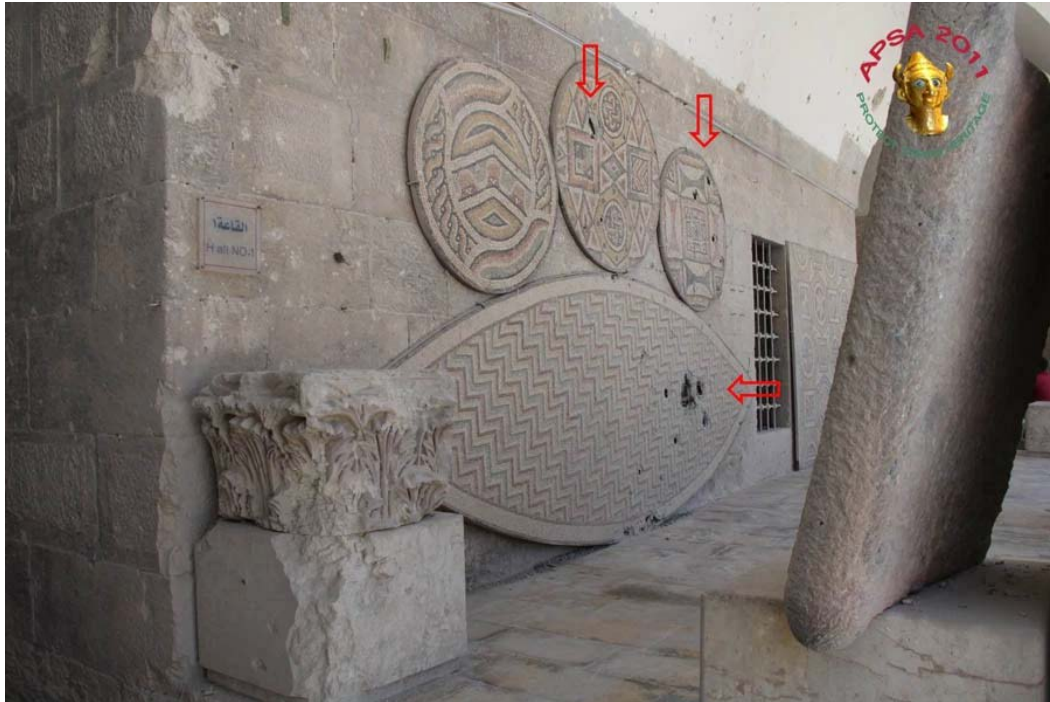
Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



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Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



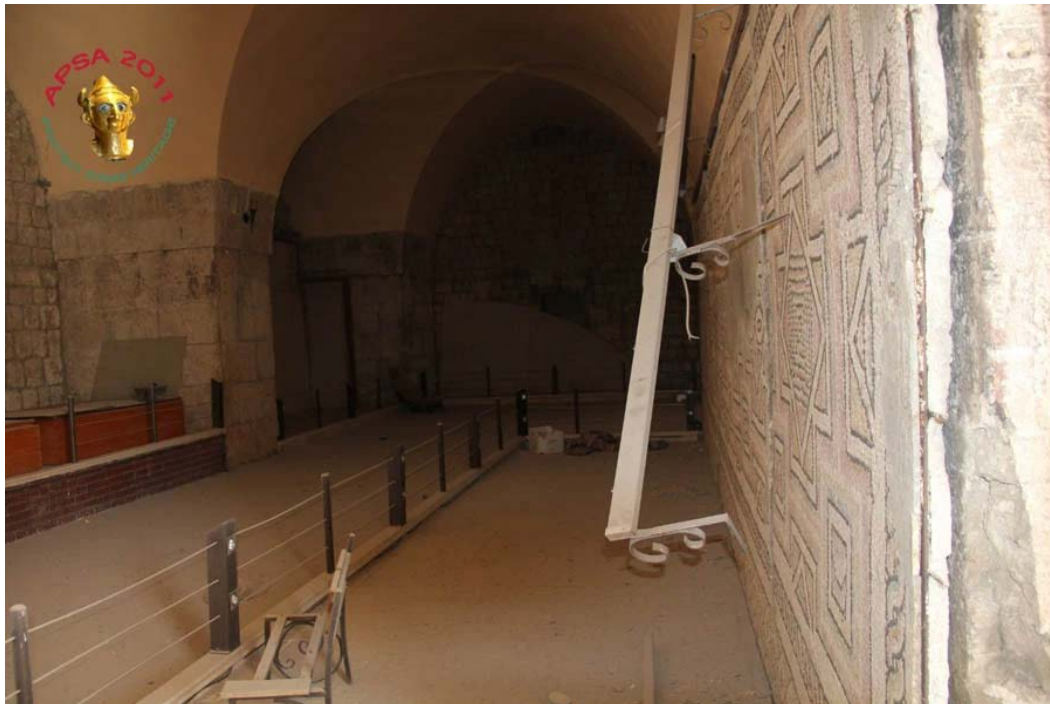
Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; June 17, 2015)

SHI 15-0099

Report Date: June 18, 2015

Site Name: al Meshatiya Mosque

Date of Incident: Unknown

Location: Bab al-Hadid, UNESCO World Heritage Ancient City of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Ottoman courtyard mosque with a minaret built in the Mamluk octagonal style featuring stalactite-style (*muqarnas*) architectural decorations.

Site Date: ca. 1718

Source of Destruction: On June 16, 2015 Protect Syrian Archaeology (APSA) published video and photos documenting the current condition of the al-Meshatiya mosque. From the photos it appears that the crown of the minaret has been completely destroyed; no single incident is yet designated as the source of the destruction. However, some of the video footage posted by APSA which shows the destroyed minaret is dated December 13, 2012.

Pattern: Ongoing destruction of the built heritage landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Ancient City of Aleppo due to urban warfare and ongoing regime aerial bombardment of 'resistant' neighborhoods.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI maintains as critical priority the acquisition of all available remote and local data on the condition of archaeological heritage within the UNESCO World Heritage Ancient City of Aleppo.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

APSA:

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/aleppo-bab-al-hadid-destruction-of-the-minaret-of-al-meshatiya-mosque/>



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



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al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



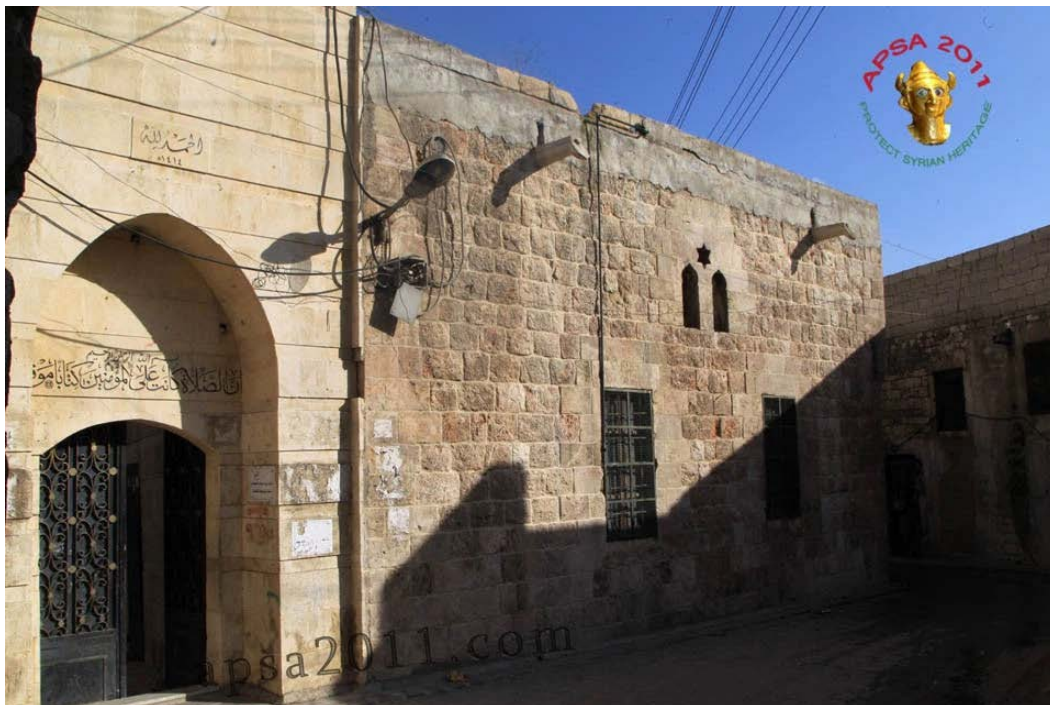
al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)



al-Meshatiya Mosque, Aleppo (APSA; June 16, 2015)

SHI 15-0100**Report Date:** June 18, 2015**Site Name:** Tybnah Byzantine buildings**Date of Incident:** Unknown**Location:** Tybnah (also Tubna, Tibna, Tebnah), Daraa Governorate, Syria**Site Description:** Byzantine and later architectural remains within the contemporary town of Tybnah. Many of these architectural remains have been incorporated into modern structures, others stand open in interstitial spaces and agricultural fields.**Site Date:** Byzantine to modern.**Source of Destruction:** On June 16, 2015 Protect Syrian Archaeology (APSA) reported looting and damage to a “two story Byzantine building” in the ancient center of Tybnah Village. The report was accompanied by a set of images dated June 6, 2015 showing internal and external views of a partly excavated subterranean structure as well as inscribed stones. The location of the building and the exact degree of damage is unclear from the images.**Pattern:** The archaeological landscape of Daraa, as with the countryside of Syria generally, is increasingly vulnerable to neglect and slow destruction through casual looting and use of unmonitored architectural remains.**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is continuing to monitor the condition of the archaeological heritage landscape in Daraa countryside through remote imaging and local reporting.**Sources:**Online Reporting:

APSA (June 16, 2015):

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/daraa-village-of-tybnah-illicit-diggings-in-a-two-story-byzantine-period-building-06-06-2015/>



Byzantine building at Tybnah (APSA; June 16, 2015)



Byzantine building at Tybnah (APSA; June 16, 2015)



Byzantine building at Tybnah (APSA; June 16, 2015)



Byzantine building at Tybnah (APSA; June 16, 2015)



Byzantine building at Tybnah (APSA; June 16, 2015)



Byzantine building at Tybnah (APSA; June 16, 2015)



Byzantine building at Tybnah (APSA; June 16, 2015)

SHI 15-0101

Report Date: June 22, 2015

Site Name: UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra

Date of Incident: unknown

Location: Areas around the archaeological site of Palmyra including the theater, Homs Governorate, Syria

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.⁴⁴

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

Source of Destruction: On June 21, 2015 the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that militants affiliated with ISIL "have planted IEDs and mines in the Ancient City of Palmyra in the eastern countryside of Homs." The report stated that it is yet unclear whether the mines were laid in order to destroy the ruins, or as a deterrent to regime encroachment into the ancient site.⁴⁵ In an additional statement to Reuters UK, Rami Abdulrahman (the head of SOHR) elaborated that explosives had been laid within the Roman theater. In the same Reuters bulletin, Maamoun Abdulkarim (the head of the Syrian DGAM) is quoted as saying that the report that Palmyra has been mined "seems true."⁴⁶

On June 22 the DGAM published a report reiterating the account that explosives had been laid inside parts of the UNESCO World Heritage Ancient Site of Palmyra, but asserted that the specific targets could not be determined⁴⁷. The report also stated that the "same sources" noted that the "al-Lat" Lion Statue, which had been relocated from the entrance of the temple of al-Lat to the hall of the Museum of Palmyra, had been reported as destroyed on June 20, 2015. However, these reports have not been independently verified at the time of publication.

⁴⁴ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23>

⁴⁵ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/islamic-state-mines-the-ancient-city-of-palmyra/>

⁴⁶ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/06/21/uk-syria-crisis-palmyra-idUKKBN0P10FU20150621>

⁴⁷ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1725>

As of June 23, 2015 local ASOR CHI sources in Palmyra confirmed that local people had seen members of ISIL place “large mines/bombs in the ruins of many buildings in Palmyra” and that they had told residents of their intent to blow up the ruins.

Pattern: Increasing militarization and vulnerability of the Palmyra ruins since the May 13, 2015 attack on Palmyra by ISIL and subsequent sustained occupation of the town and site (See [ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0086](#), [ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0096](#)). Informants speaking to Al Jazeera claimed that the mining of Palmyra is an act of retaliation on the part of ISIL in response to increased and intensive airstrikes on the town in the last weeks by the Syrian regime.⁴⁸

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of all periods of cultural heritage at Palmyra, given the high visibility and ongoing significance of the city and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1725>

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights:

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/islamic-state-mines-the-ancient-city-of-palmyra/>

Reuters UK:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/06/21/uk-syria-crisis-palmyra-idUKKBN0P10FU20150621>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RamiAlkhatib/status/612315377364770816/photo/1>

Al Jazeera:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/isil-plants-mines-ancient-syrian-city-palmyra-150622025527317.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/06/isil-plants-mines-ancient-syrian-city-palmyra-150622025527317.html>

SHI 15-0102

Report Date: June 23, 2015

Site Name: Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad ibn 'Ali, a descendant of the Prophet Mohammad's cousin and a Shia holy site, and a shrine identified as the Tomb of Shagaf or Nizar Abu Behaeddine, a Sufi scholar

Date of Incident: June 22, 2015 ISIL announced the destructions using social media. The Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad ibn 'Ali was destroyed between March 1, 2015 and May 22, 2015 based on observations of DigitalGlobe satellite imagery, thus this site was probably destroyed already in the early stages of the ISIL attack on Tadmor begun May 13, 2015. The Sufi Tomb of Shagaf/ Nizar Abu Behaeddine was destroyed between June 15, 2015 and June 26, 2015 based on DigitalGlobe satellite imagery.

Location: North of the contemporary town of Palmyra, and within the town; Homs Governorate, Syria

Site Description: A stone and mudbrick shrine on Mt. Mohammad Ali, north of Palmyra and reinforced concrete structure located near the historic town of Palmyra at the northern end of the palm groves of the Efqa Oasis.

Site Date: Various/unknown

Source of Destruction: On June 22, 2015 Twitter accounts associated with ISIL published images showing the destruction of a Shia and Sufi shrine (called *shirk* in original posts now dismantled) in Palmyra. Images published on a site linked from Twitter (daow.in/ar/shirk) include fighters carrying explosives up a mountain track and the subsequent explosion of a building on a rocky hillside, which has been identified as the tomb of Sheikh Mohammad b. 'Ali — a Shia religious site. Published with these images are photos of a shrine in an apparently more urban context; this shrine is also shown first intact and then in the process of exploding.

On June 24, 2015 the DGAM published a report identifying the second shrine as affiliated with "Shagaf, known as Nizar Abu Behaeddine, a Sufi scholar and religious figure from Palmyra, dated to 500 years ago." According to the report this Sufi shrine is located in the Palmyra oasis, 500m east of the Triumphal Arch. ASOR CHI subsequently identified its location in DigitalGlobe satellite imagery.

Pattern: Staged destruction of sites in towns and territories occupied by ISIL, and increased threat to the heritage of Palmyra since the ISIL invasion of the city/site that started on May 13, 2015. Various accounts have circulated as to what the 'policy' of ISIL might be regarding the ancient heritage at Palmyra (see [ASOR CHI Special Report on the Importance of Palmyra](#)), these events indicate an intensification of hostile attention to the local heritage landscape which may extend to ancient as well as Islamic heritage deemed as *shirk* and *bida*. On June 22, 2015 it was reported that ISIL members had laid explosives within the archaeological ruins of Palmyra (see [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0101](#)), and ISIL has according to reports informed the residents of Palmyra of their general intent to destroy cultural heritage.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of all periods of cultural heritage at Palmyra, given the high visibility and ongoing significance of the city and World Heritage Site.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/conflictantiq/status/613078683256008708>
<https://twitter.com/FollowTheHaqq21>

CNN: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/24/middleeast/syria-isis-palmyra-shrines/index.html>

DGAM June 24: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1727>

ISIL Images of Shrine destruction: <https://daow.in/ar/shirk/>



Shia Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad b.'Ali near Tadmor (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



Militants preparing to detonate the Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad b. 'Ali near Tadmor (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



Shia Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad b. 'Ali near Tadmor, prior to destruction (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad b. 'Ali near Tadmor (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad b. 'Ali near Tadmor (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



Sufi shrine and Tomb of Shagaf/ Nizar Abu Behaeddine near Tadmor (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



Sufi shrine and Tomb of Shagaf/ Nizar Abu Behaeddine near Tadmor (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



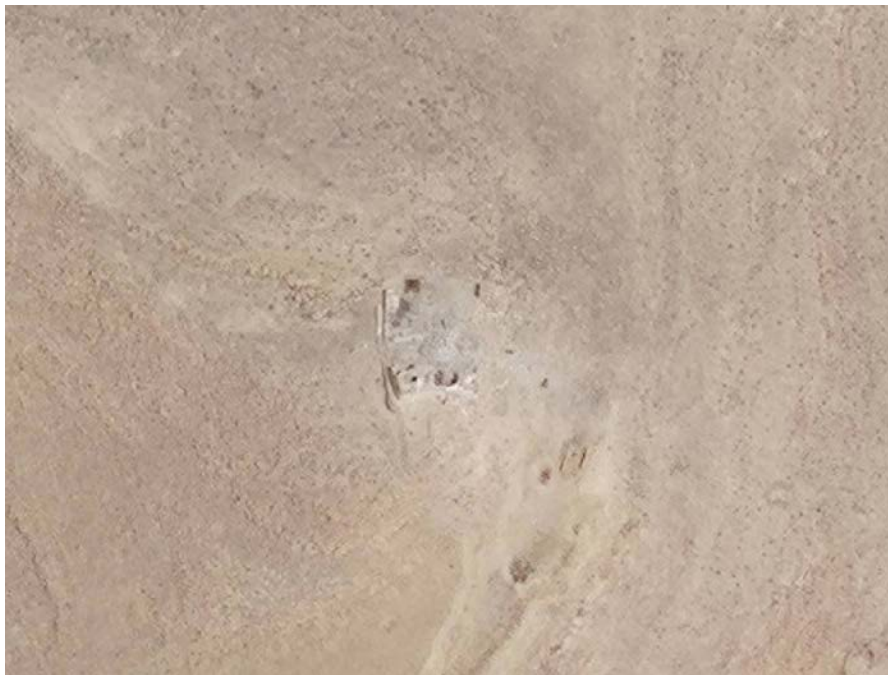
Sufi shrine and tomb of Shagaf/ Nizar Abu Behaeddine near Tadmor (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



Sufi shrine and tomb of Shagaf/ Nizar Abu Behaeddine near Tadmor (Twitter; June 22, 2015)



Satellite image of the shrine of Sheikh Mohammad b. 'Ali north of Tadmor on March 1, 2015 before its destruction by ISIL (DigitalGlobe).



Satellite image of the shrine of Sheikh Mohammad b. 'Ali north of Tadmor on May 22, 2015 after the first phase of destruction (DigitalGlobe).



Satellite image of the shrine of Shagaf/ Abu Behaeddine on June 15, 2015 near Tadmor before its destruction by ISIL (DigitalGlobe).



Satellite image of the shrine of Shagaf/ Abu Behaeddine on June 26, 2015 near Tadmor after its destruction by ISIL (DigitalGlobe).

SHI 15-0103

Report Date: June 23, 2015

Site Name: Contemporary graves within the town of Palmyra

Date of Incident: unknown; prior to June 15, 2015

Location: within the town of Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Gravestones and markers within the historic town cemetery.

Site Date: Contemporary

Source of Destruction: On June 15, 2015 Twitter accounts associated with ISIL published images showing the destruction of grave sites (called *shirk* in original posts now dismantled) in Palmyra. These images were subsequently republished in online news media⁴⁹. The images currently circulating include photos of men breaking gravestones and destroying grave traces in the historical city of Palmyra.

Pattern: ISIL policy of performative destruction of heritage in occupied areas, with a critical threat to the built and cultural heritage of Palmyra (both the historic town and the UNESCO World Heritage Site) since the ISIL invasion of May 13, 2015. This heritage landscape has already been indicated as being of key strategic importance within policies of warfare and of international visibility, both for ISIL and for the Syrian regime (see [ASOR CHI Special Report on the Importance of Palmyra](#)).

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of all periods of cultural heritage around Palmyra, given the high visibility and ongoing significance of the city and UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

International Business Times:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.in/palmyra-isis-fighters-destroy-tombs-tadmur-photos-635923>

ISIL Images on vocativ.com:

<http://www.vocativ.com/news/201890/new-photos-show-isis-destroying-graves-in-ancient-city-of-palmyra/>

⁴⁹ <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/palmyra-isis-fighters-destroy-tombs-tadmur-photos-635923>



Graves in historic Palmyra (vocativ.com; June 15, 2015)



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Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 15-0086

Report Date: June 22, 2015

Site Name: Anbar Museum

Date of Incident: Unknown

Location: Anbar, Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Regional museum of Al Anbar Governorate

Site Date: Modern

Source of Destruction: ISIL theft.

Pattern: On June 22, 2015 the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities published a press release stating that inspectors found that the Anbar Museum had been looted by ISIL militants. Special equipment and department vehicles were stolen from the museum. No artifacts were stolen as the collection had been transferred to Baghdad before the ISIL invasion. No further details about the extent of the damage and no photo/video documentation was provided. These reports have not yet been independently verified at the time of publication.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports through remote imaging and local reporting and will continue to monitor the condition of Iraq's regional museums.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Iraq Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities:

<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=208>