

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

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Weekly Report 50 — July 21, 2015

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Executive Summary

During the reporting period, in Syria new details surfaced on the current condition of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra, the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (specifically the St. Simeon Monastery), and the Old Town of Marbaa in Daraa Governorate near Bosra. New details emerged on deliberate heritage destructions by ISIL in the area of Al-Mayadin in Deir ez-Zor Governorate. In Iraq, social media reports and other sources revealed details of ISIL deliberate destructions of a Yezidi shrine in the Gabara/Sinjar area as well as the destruction of the Olympic Stadium in Ramadi. Overall, relative to the high rates of heritage damage documented in previous months, heritage damage may be decreasing somewhat during the summer.

Key Points

- The Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology posted new photographs from ISIL sources showing the current condition of the “Citadel” (the Fakhr al-Din al-Maani Castle) at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086 UPDATE](#)).
- ISIL militants allegedly forced prisoners to destroy tombstones in the town of al- Mayadin, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Syria and ISIL is allegedly looting the nearby archaeological site of Rahba Citadel ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0111](#)).
- The Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums posted information on damage to heritage places in the area of the Old Town of Marbaa in Daraa Governorate near Bosra ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0112](#)).
- ISIL militants allegedly destroyed a Yezidi shrine in the town of Gabara near Sinjar, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq ([ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0089](#)).
- ISIL allegedly demolished the Olympic Stadium in Ramadi, Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq ([ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0090](#)).

Heritage Timeline

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.

July 21, 2015 CNN published an article titled “**Syria's struggle to save the past**” (by Ben Wedeman).

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/20/world/syrian-antiquities-smuggling/>

- *Syria Deeply* published an article titled “**Between Bombs and Beheadings: Palmyra After the ISIS Takeover**” (by Belal Alshami).

<http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2015/07/7741/bombs-beheadings-palmyra-isis-takeover/>

- **APSA** posted photographs of the **Limestone Massif the site of Benabil** in Idlib.

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-limestone-massif-report-on-the-site-of-benabil/>

July 20, 2015 The **DGAM** published a short description, and a group of photographs titled “**The Eastern Countryside in Daraa: Damages at the old town of Marbaa,**” which includes more details of the damage documented in DGAM’s previous post (See post on July 15, 2015). *ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0112*.

<http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1745>

- *Daily Sabah* published an article titled “**Artifact smuggling, recovery both on the rise**” (by Ahmet Topal).

<http://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2015/07/20/artifact-smuggling-recovery-both-on-the-rise>

July 18, 2015 CNN published a video titled “**Saving Syria's ancient past from ISIS.**”

<http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/07/19/syria-saving-the-past-wedeman-pkg.cnn>

- **ISIL** allegedly demolishes the **Olympic Stadium in Ramadi**, Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq. *ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0090*.

<http://www.marca.com/en/2015/07/19/en/football/international-football/1437340813.html>

July 17, 2015 *Deutsche Welle* published an article titled “**Looting represents second-largest cash source for 'IS'**” (by Sarah Steffen), which includes an interview with Mark Altaweel on ISIL’s antiquities trade. <http://www.dw.com/en/looting-represents-second-largest-cash-source-for-is/a-18591736>

July 16, 2015

Live Science published an article titled “**Destroyed Iraqi Holy Sites Find New Life Online**” (by Owen Jarus).

<http://www.livescience.com/51577-destroyed-iraq-sites-documented-photographs.html>

July 15, 2015 *The Washington Post* published an article titled “**Artifacts looted during the Iraq invasion turned up in the house of an Islamic State leader**” (by Loveday Morris).

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2015/07/15/how-ancient-artifacts-looted-during-the-iraq-invasion-turned-up-in-the-house-of-an-islamic-state-leader/>

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The **US Department of State** and the **Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities** announced the return of more than 400 cultural heritage items to Iraq. They were recovered during a raid on the Syrian compound of Abu Sayyaf on May 15, 2015. *Reuters*, *the Associated Press*, *VICE News*, *al-Sharq*, *SWR Fernsehen*, and *Das Erste* all published articles on the event. The blog Conflict Antiquities published an analysis of the return.

<http://eca.state.gov/cultural-heritage-center/iraq-cultural-heritage-initiative/isil-leaders-loot>

<http://www.mta.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=287>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/15/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-antiquities-idUSKCN0PP0ZE20150715>

http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_IRAQ?SITE=ILBLO&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT

<https://news.vice.com/article/antiquities-liberated-from-the-islamic-state-by-us-commandos-are-back-in-baghdad>

<http://www.al-sharq.com/news/details/354820>

<http://www.swr.de/landesschau-aktuell/vor-schwarzmarkt-gerettet-usa-finden-antikenschatz-in-haus-von-is-fuehrer/-/id=396/did=15833394/nid=396/rob84/>

<http://www.daserste.de/information/politik-weltgeschehen/mittagsmagazin/videos/kultur-kommt-zurueck-102.html>

<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/07/17/syria-iraq-islamic-state-conflict-antiquities-trafficking-coin-count-imagej-analysis/>

• *International Business Times* published an article titled “**ISIS And Syrian Artifacts In Sweden: Islamic State-Stolen**”

Art Being Investigated By Swedish Police” (by Christopher Harress) <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-syrian-artifacts-sweden-islamic-state-stolen-art-being-investigated-swedish-2010223>

- **APSA** published a picture album titled **“Palmyra: Pictures of the citadel posted by ISIS on 15.07.2015.”** ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0086 UPDATE <http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/palmyra-pictures-of-the-citadel-posted-by-isis-on-15-07-2015/>

- *The Conversation* published an article titled **“Museums are using virtual reality to preserve the past – before it’s too late”**. ASOR CHI Academic Director Michael Danti is quoted in this article. <http://theconversation.com/museums-are-using-virtual-reality-to-preserve-the-past-before-its-too-late-44600>

- *DGAM* published an article titled **“The Eastern Countryside in Daraa: Damages at the ancient mosque at Maaraba town.”** ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0112. <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1743>

July 12, 2015

ISIL militants allegedly **destroy a Yezidi shrine** in the town of Gabara near Sinjar, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq. CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0089. <http://twitter.com/EzidiPress/status/620251868770496512>

July 9, 2015 **ISIL** militants allegedly **destroy tombstones** in the town of al- Mayadin, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Syria. CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0111. <https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/photographs/a.150495128392167.28686.121855461256134/721098537998487/?type=1>

July 8, 2015 *Russia Today (RT)* published an article titled **“Asymmetric terror funding - How ISIS is exploiting Western capitalism”** (Catherine Shakdam). <http://www.rt.com/op-edge/272401-islamic-terrorism-art-capitalism/>

June 16, 2015 **The Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities** released a report titled **“The official annual report of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Iraq for the destruction of cultural heritage in the province of Nineveh, from June 10 2014- June 10, 2015 (لتقرير السنوي الرسمي لوزارة السياحة والآثار العراقية عن تدمير الموروث (2015) الحضاري في محافظة نينوى من 10 حزيران 2014 - 10 حزيران 2015)”** <http://www.tourism.gov.iq/index.php?name=Pages&op=page&pid=228>

Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo Governorate
 - On Saturday, July 18, water and electricity returned to the city of Aleppo following a three-week period when the al-Qaeda affiliated al-Nusra Front cut off water supply to the city in an effort to pressure the Syrian government.²
 - During the reporting period, U.S.-led coalition airstrikes continued to hit ISIL targets around the city of Aleppo.³

Other key points:

- During the reporting period, field investigators reported that ISIL appears to have used chemical warfare shells to attack Kurdish positions in Iraq and Syria. Many of the shells struck areas near militia forces, but a number of shells have also hit civilian areas over the past few years. Chemical weapons are internationally condemned and banned in most nations.⁴

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

1. Diyala Governorate
 - On Tuesday, July 14, ISIL claimed responsibility for a car bomb in the Khalis district, northwest of Baquba, killing a number of people and wounding many others.⁵
 - On Friday, July 17, ISIL militants claimed responsibility for a suicide car bombing in Khan Bani Saad, about 30 kilometers/20 miles northeast of Baghdad. The blast, which used three tons of explosives, collapsed several buildings and killed at least 100 people. ISIL stated that Shi'ite Muslims celebrating Ramadan were targeted in the attack to avenge the killing of Sunni Muslims in the northern town of Hawija.⁶
2. Al Anbar Governorate
 - As part of the counter-offensive to reclaim Ramadi from ISIL, U.S.-coalition led airstrikes continued to target the city. Ramadi was hit on Tuesday July 14, Wednesday July 15, Thursday July 16, Friday July 17, and Saturday July 18. The strikes hit various ISIL fighting positions, tactical units, and other ISIL targets.⁷

² <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/18/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0PS0DZ20150718>

³ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/

⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/18/world/middleeast/islamic-state-isis-chemical-weapons-iraq-syria.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/18/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0PS0DZ20150718>

⁵ <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/07/iraq-situation-report-july-14-16-2015.html> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/07/17/Car-bomb-kills-21-celebrating-Eid-in-Iraq.html>

⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/17/us-iraq-violence-blast-idUSKCN0PR2BU20150717> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/18/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0PS0DZ20150718> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33577817>

⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/19/us-mideast-crisis-airstrikes-idUSKCN0PT0HB20150719> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/17/us-iraq-violence-blast-idUSKCN0PR2BU20150717> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/18/us-mideast-crisis-airstrikes-idUSKCN0PS0ME20150718> ;

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0086 UPDATE

Report Date: July 20, 2015

Site Name: UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra

Date of Incident: May 13, 2015 and ongoing

Location: 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.⁸

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

Incident Summary: Tensions between the armed group occupying the the Deir Samaan complex and the local population have given rise to recent negotiations over the extent of the group's continued military presence

Incident Source and Description: Palmyra Citadel allegedly taken by ISIL, and undated photographs show minor damage from explosives to the citadel.

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

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

http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/ ; <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/07/iraq-situation-report-july-14-16-2015.html>

⁸ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23>

various figures of the local community in order to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the cultural heritage.”⁹

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.¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ 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.” 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 photographs taken by the Department of Antiquities of Palmyra showing the general condition of monuments at the site, including the Bel Temple and tower tombs. 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.

On May 21, 2015, the DGAM reported that “hundreds of Palmyrean statues and museum objects have been transferred out from Palmyra to safe locations outside the city.”¹²

On May 23, 2015, news sources reported that Islamic State fighters had broken into the Palmyra museum, “though a Syrian official said its artifacts have been removed and are safe.” However, a local resident reported that ISIL members had smashed a statue in the foyer of the museum, and the Director General of Antiquities and Museums, Mamoun Abdulkarim, said that some modern plaster statues had been destroyed by ISIL (likely the same statue referenced by the local source).

Meanwhile, a U.S.-led coalition conducted airstrikes on ISIL installations near Palmyra.¹³ Though the location of the airstrikes was not disclosed, local informants described them as clustering around the oil fields northwest of the city.

On May 26, 2015, APSA published video footage to Youtube showing various views of the site of Palmyra and labelled “posted by Daesh.” The footage includes shots of the citadel (Qalaat Shirkuh)

⁹ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1696>

¹⁰ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1700>

¹¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32772894>

¹² <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1704>

¹³ <http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/palmyra-artifacts-are-safe-despite-isis-museum-break-in-syrian-official-says-1.2387513>

filmed from within the modern city, as well as shots taken walking around the ancient site. Monuments shown include the Temple of Bel, the colonnaded street, and the amphitheatre.¹⁴

On May 26, 2015, an ASOR CHI source reported that over the last several days the general region around Palmyra has been bombarded by the regime, including one strike inside the archeological site. As of May 26, 2015, the bombardment continues but not inside the archeological zone.

On May 27, 2015, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that the “Roman archaeological theater in the city of Palmyra” has been used by ISIL for executions of captured Shiite and Alawite regime soldiers and militiamen. These reports have not been confirmed.¹⁵

On May 27, 2015, APSA (Protect Syrian Archaeology) published photographs that were originally published online by ISIL, showing various architectural monuments within the site of Palmyra as well as the site museum. The photographs include images of the Roman amphitheater, shown with a black ISIL flag posted atop the monument.¹⁶

On May 27, 2015, the *International Business Times* and other online news outlets reported that “the destruction of Palmyra has begun” with the demolition of an ancient statue of a lion god. According to the same sources, the “Lion of al-Lat” dated from the first century AD and stood at the entrance to the Bel Temple. On May 29, 2015, however, the DGAM reported that they had so far had no confirmation of the destruction of this statue.

On July 15, 2015, APSA published pictures of the Palmyra Citadel said to have been taken by ISIL. These photographs show minor damage from explosives to the citadel. It is unknown when this damage occurred.

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 14-0019](#)). 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: ASOR CHI is continuing to gather data on the condition of the monuments and artifacts at Palmyra as information becomes available.

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHCACFD0pOY&feature=youtu.be>

¹⁵ <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/05/for-the-first-time-the-roman-archaeological-theater-witnesses-executions-carried-out-by-is-against-20-members-of-the-regime-forces-and-allied-militiamen/>

¹⁶ APSA Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1362975580476216.1073741901.324869057620212&type=1>

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Syria Direct (May 13, 2015): <http://syriadirect.org/news/isis-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>

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

APSA (May 26, 2015): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHCACFD0pOY&feature=youtu.be>

APSA, Facebook page (May 27, 2015):

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1362975580476216.1073741901.324869057620212&type=1>

APSA (July 15, 2015): <http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/palmyra-pictures-of-the-citadel-posted-by-isis-on-15-07-2015/>

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>

DGAM (May 21, 2015): <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1704>

DGAM (May 29, 2015): <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1711>

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>

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (May 27, 2015): <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/05/for-the-first-time-the-roman-archaeological-theater-witnesses-executions-carried-out-by-isis-against-20-members-of-the-regime-forces-and-allied-militiamen/>

International Business Times (May 27, 2015): <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/syria-isis-palmyra-demolition-has-begun-ancient-god-lion-statue-destroyed-1503192>



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



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



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



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



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



Colonnaded Avenue, Palmyra (DGAM; May 18, 2015)



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



Palmyra (DGAM; May 18, 2015)



Citadel (Qalaat Shirkuh) in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Bel Temple precinct in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Bel Temple precinct in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Colonnaded street in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Bel Temple precinct in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Theatre in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Theater in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Temple of Baal-Shamin in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Theater in Palmyra, ISIL footage (APSA; May 26, 2015)



Theater in Palmyra, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



Palmyra Archaeological Museum, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



Theater in Palmyra, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



Theater in Palmyra, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



Temple of Baal-Shamin in Palmyra, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



Colonnaded Avenue in Palmyra, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



Colonnaded Avenue in Palmyra, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



Bel Temple in Palmyra, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



Palmyra Archaeological Museum, ISIL photographs (APSA; May 28, 2015)



The “lion god” statue allegedly demolished by ISIL (*International Business Times*; May 27, 2015)



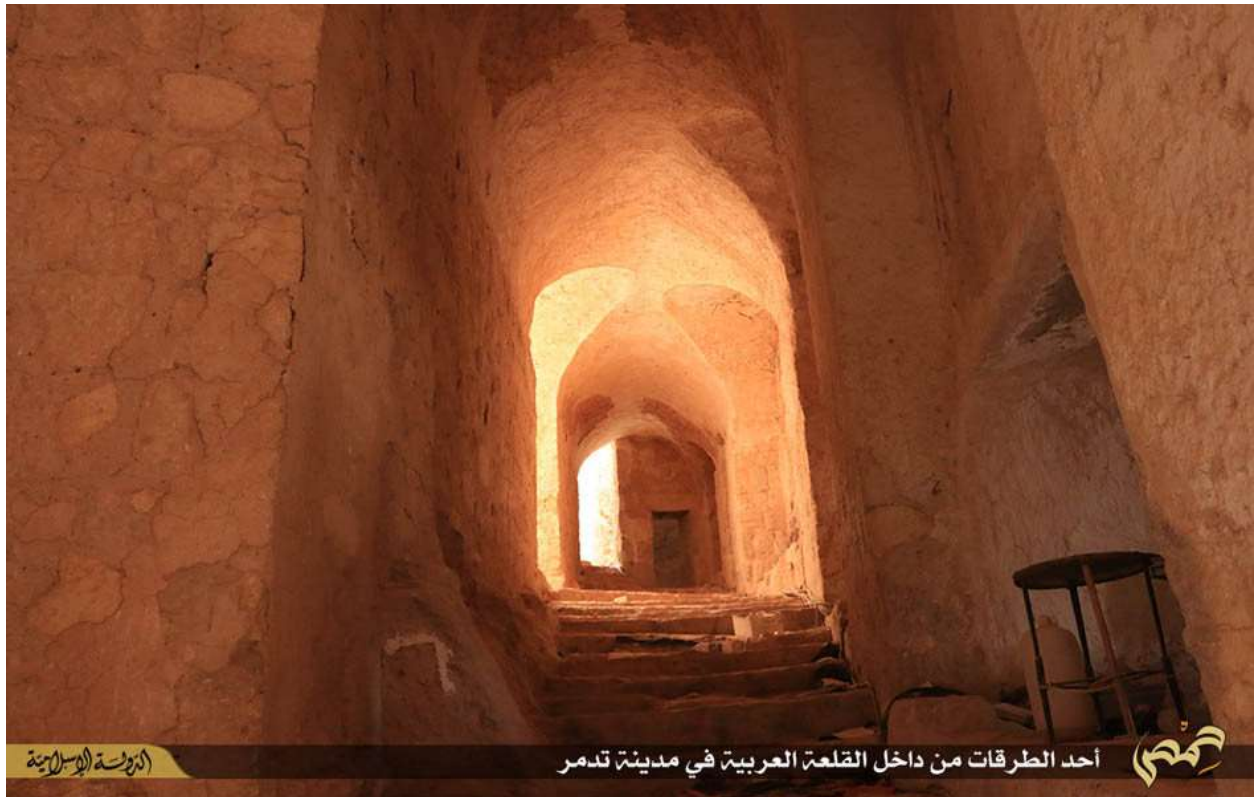
Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)



Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)



Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)



Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)



Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)



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Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)



Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)



Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)



Palmyra Citadel, ISIL photographs (APSA; July 2015)

SHI 15-0111

Report Date: July 21, 2015

Site Name: Tombstones in Al-Mayadin

Date of Incident: July 9, 2015

Location: al-Mayadin, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Cemetery outside the town of al-Mayadin, including the tomb of Sheikh Anas and the cemetery of Hurmuz or Turmuz.

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: ISIL destroyed tombstones in the al-Mayadin cemetery, and excavations and destructions are on-going in the area.

Incident Source and Description: On July 9, 2015, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that ISIL was forcing prisoners to destroy tombstones outside the site of al-Mayadin.¹⁷ ASOR CHI confidential sources confirmed this destruction, stating that two cemeteries in the area were vandalized around this time, one being the cemetery surrounding the tomb of Sheikh Anas, and the other named either Hurmuz or Turmuz. Heritage for Peace reported in May 2014 that the Tomb of Sheikh Anas was partially destroyed and there were illegal excavations occurring in the cemetery.¹⁸

Pattern: Illegal Excavation of Cemeteries and Military Activity: Intentional Destruction of Tombstones. The excavation and destruction of these cemeteries in Deir ez-Zor is continuing, and they confirmed that prisoners are involved in the process. In-country sources stated that the cemeteries contain nothing of value, but sources stated that they might contain important history but were uncertain. In-country sources further allege that ISIL is excavating in and around the site of Rahba for artifacts with the explicit intention of selling any finds.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the recent reports of damage at the site.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SOHR:

<https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/photographs/a.150495128392167.28686.121855461256134/721098537998487/?type=1>

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/syriahroe/photographs/a.150495128392167.28686.121855461256134/721098537998487/?type=1>

¹⁸ <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-08-may-2014/#mctoc15>

Heritage for Peace: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-08-may-2014/#mctoc15>

SHI 15-0112

Report Date: July 20, 2015

Site Name: Historic Structures, Old Town Marbaa (Mia'rbah)

Date of Incident: Prior to July 15, 2015

Location: Marbaa, Bosra, Daraa Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Al-Omari Mosque, Old Houses, Roman Palace ("Al Msaleh"), all located in Marbaa town, located near Bosra.

Site Date: The Mosque was constructed in the 9th century CE, rebuilt in 1351 CE. Unknown date for the Old Houses, likely Early Islamic. The Roman Palace dates to the Roman Period.

Incident Summary: New photographs show damage to the Old Town of Marbaa. The mosque, old houses, and Roman Palace have suffered major damage.

Incident Source and Description: On July 15, 2015, the DGAM published new photographs of the destruction of the historic mosque at Marbaa. They report that this damage caused by clashes during the last few months in this area. It is unknown if this was a targeted attack on the mosque or an accidental destruction.

On July 20, 2015, the DGAM published new photographs of the destruction of the Old Houses and the Roman Palace. The DGAM reports that this damage was caused by clashes during the last months in this area. It is unclear whether this was a targeted attack on the mosque or an accidental destruction.

Pattern: Military Activity: Explosives, Gunfire. The DGAM states in both reports that the damage is the result of armed conflict around the town of Marbaa. However, it is unclear if the damage to the heritage sites is collateral damage or intentional targeting by belligerents.

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

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM: (July 15, 2015) <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1743>

DGAM: (July 20, 2015) <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1745>



Al-Omari Mosque, Marbaa before destruction 2010 (<https://ssl.panoramio.com/photo/42873787>)



Al-Omari Mosque, Marbaa, After Destruction July 2015 (DGAM; July 15, 2015)



Al-Omari Mosque, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 15, 2015)



Al-Omari Mosque, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 15, 2015)



Al-Omari Mosque, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Al-Omari Mosque, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 15, 2015)



Old Houses, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Old Houses, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Old Houses, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Old Houses, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



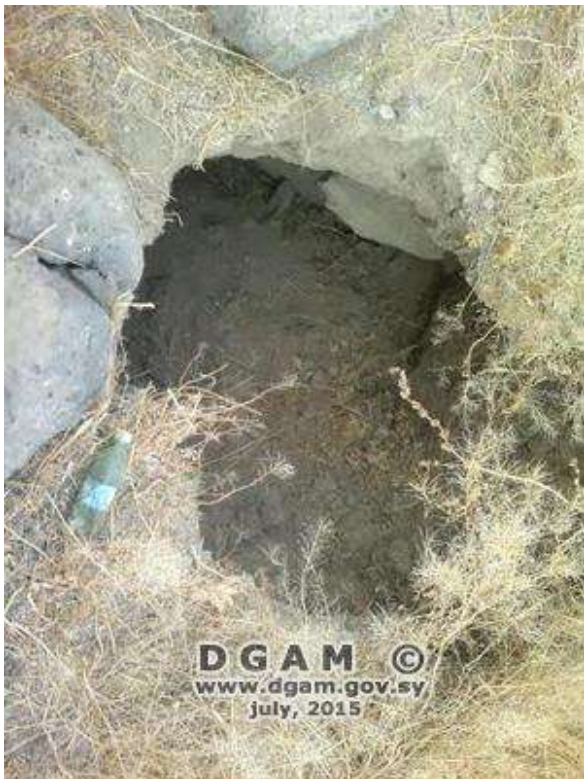
Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



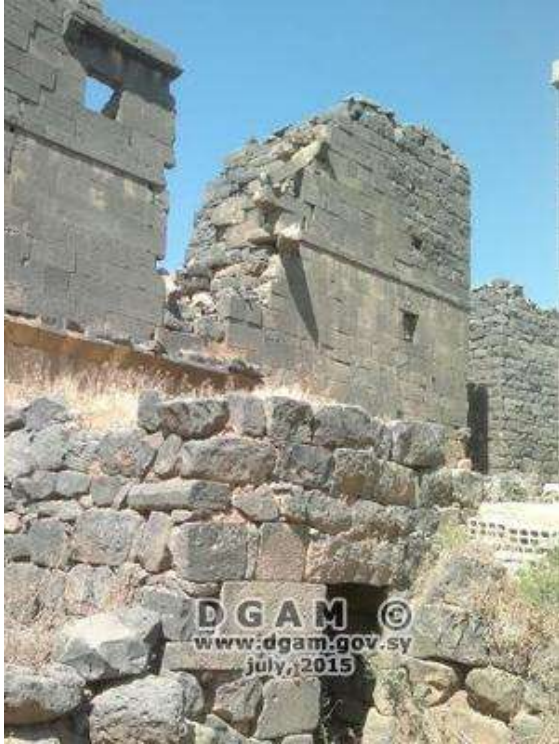
Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



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Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)



Roman Palace, Marbaa, after destruction (DGAM; July 20, 2015)

Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 15-0089

Report Date: July 18, 2015

Site Name: Yezidi Shrine in Gabara

Date of Incident: July 12, 2015

Location: Gabara, Sinjar, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Yezidi Shrine

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: ISIL deliberate destruction of Yezidi shrine in Gabara, Sinjar..

Incident Source and Description: On July 12, 2015, the Êzîdî Press Twitter account posted that ISIL militants had destroyed a Yezidi shrine in Gabara.¹⁹ The post included a photograph of the the destruction. Conflict Antiquities reported (July 14, 2015) that the shrine was destroyed when ISIL militants managed to occupy Gabara, after temporarily driving Kurdish/ Yezidi ground forces from the area.²⁰

Pattern: ISIL militants have repeatedly targeted Yezidi holy sites for demolition as part of the systematic persecution of the Yezidis and other minorities inhabiting areas under ISIL control, including forcible displacement, slavery, and sexual abuse. The population of Sinjar and its surrounding region is predominantly Yezidi with some Arab and Assyrian Christians. ISIL militants took control of Sinjar and the surrounding area in August 2014, resulting in the deaths of up to 5,000 civilians and forcing thousands of Yezidi, Shia, and Kurdish populations to flee.²¹

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

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11160906/Isil-carried-out-massacres-and-mass-sexual-enslavement-of-Yazidis-UN-confirms.html>

¹⁹ <http://twitter.com/EzidiPress/status/620251868770496512>

²⁰ <http://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/07/14/iraq-sinjar-gabara-yezidi-shrine-islamic-state-destruction/>

²¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11160906/Isil-carried-out-massacres-and-mass-sexual-enslavement-of-Yazidis-UN-confirms.html>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/EzidiPress/status/620251868770496512>

Conflict Antiquities: <http://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/07/14/iraq-sinjar-gabara-yezidi-shrine-islamic-state-destruction/>



Yezidi shrine in Gabara destroyed (ÊzîdîPress; July 12, 2015)

SHI 15-0090

Report Date: July 19, 2015

Site Name: Ramadi Olympic Stadium

Date of Incident: between July 18, 2015 and July 19, 2015

Location: Ramadi, Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq — the stadium is south of modern Ramadi/the Euphrates River and northwest of the Habbaniyeh Lake

Site Description: Partially complete 30,000-capacity stadium near Ramadi. The stadium has been under construction since the 2003 occupation by Western coalition forces.

Site Date: Early 2000s

Incident Summary: ISIL deliberate destruction.

Incident Source and Description: On 19 July, 2015 the Twitter account IraqiSuryani posted that ISIL militants had demolished the Olympic Stadium near Ramadi.²² The post included images of the demolition. The 30,000-capacity stadium, only partially complete, had been one of Iraq's major construction projects since the 2003 occupation by Western coalition forces.

Pattern: Military activity: Intentional destruction of Stadium (demolition). According to ARA News (July 20, 2015), ISIL militants had placed explosive charges around the facility over several days before withdrawing from the area. The devices were detonated remotely days after Iraqi forces had regained control of the stadium, resulting in the demolition of the building and possible casualties. The Shiite-majority Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU) had taken the stadium as a base from which to launch attacks on ISIL strongholds in the province.²³

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

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/IraqiSuryani/status/622714160212656128/photo/1>

ARA News: <http://aranews.net/2015/07/militants-of-isis-bomb-olympic-stadium-in-ramadi/>

²² <https://twitter.com/IraqiSuryani/status/622714160212656128/photo/1>

²³ <http://aranews.net/2015/07/militants-of-isis-bomb-olympic-stadium-in-ramadi/>



Olympic Stadium near Ramadi, July 18 or 19, 2015 (IraqiSuryani; July 19, 2015)



Olympic Stadium near Ramadi (IraqiSuryani; July 19, 2015)



Olympic Stadium near Ramadi (IraqiSuryani; July 19, 2015)



Satellite image of the Olympic Stadium near Ramadi (DigitalGlobe; June 22, 2014).