

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

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Weekly Report 75–76 — January 6–19, 2016

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Executive Summary

Sectarian tensions in Iraq are escalating as a result of the ongoing conflict with ISIL, and Muslim places of worship have become flashpoints for violence. ISIL’s expansion in the region brought attacks on Shia religious sites and neighborhoods. In response, Shia militias have targeted Sunni populations, including religious sites. During the reporting period, Shia militiamen attacked several Sunni mosques in the city of Muqdadia, Iraq in the wake of ISIL attacks a day earlier. At the time of publication, it was difficult to ascertain which mosques were targeted in this specific incident, and which may have been damaged at other times. As such, all mosques named by media outlets covering the attack have been listed in the corresponding incident report. This report will be updated as more information becomes available. ASOR CHI remains concerned as to the ongoing sectarian violence in Diyala Governorate and will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Since the escalation of aerial bombardment campaigns in September 2015, ASOR CHI has observed an increase in the damage sustained to civilian buildings, including mosques, across Aleppo, Damascus, Deir ez-Zor, and Idlib governorates. The incidents that took place during the current reporting period continue to reflect this trend. Five mosques were struck by aerial bombardment in Aleppo Governorate, two of which were located in Aleppo city. Airstrikes also damaged a mosque in the city of Deir ez-Zor, two mosques in Damascus Governorate, and a mosque in Idlib Governorate. The First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel in Aleppo city was also struck, but the perpetrators are believed to be opposition forces.

The DGAM also reported looting and illicit excavation in Quneitra. This is the second DGAM report of such activity from the region since late October 2015 ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0163](#) in [Weekly Report 71–72](#) and [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0139](#) in [Weekly Report 63–64](#)).

Only one new satellite image was made available during the reporting period, covering Latakia.

¹ This report is based on research conducted by the “Cultural Preservation Initiative: Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq.” 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.

Key Points

- Shia militias attacked several Sunni mosques in the city of Muqdadiya, Diyala Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0002**).
- Russian airstrikes damaged the interior of Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque in Bayanoun Town in Aleppo Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0002**).
- Suspected Russian airstrikes damaged two mosques in Aleppo city including the Abdullah bin Abbas Mosque and the Agha Jaq Mosque (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0003**).
- DGAM reported illegal excavation, looting, and illegal construction in Quneitra Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0004**).
- Regime airstrikes damaged the Aisha Mosque in the city of Deir ez-Zor (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0005**).
- Regime shelling severely damaged Al Hadi Mosque in Babeis Town in Aleppo Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0006**).
- Suspected Russian airstrikes damaged al-Kabir Mosque in Mu'arrassat al Khan Town in Aleppo Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0007**).
- Regime airstrikes targeted Al Kabir Mosque in Al Mouzra village in Idlib Governorate, causing severe damage (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0008**).
- Regime warplanes fired missiles on al-Kabir Mosque in Deir al-Asafir village in Damascus Governorate, causing severe damage (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0009**).
- Regime shelling damaged an unidentified mosque in Zamalka in Damascus Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0010**).
- Opposition forces shelled the First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel in Azizeyah Neighborhood in Aleppo City in Aleppo Governorate, causing severe damage (**ASOR CHI Incident Report 16-0011**).

Heritage Timeline

January 19, 2016

DGAM posted a report entitled "**Latest news from Bakirha in Djebel Barisha, Rural Idleb.**" Recent photos submitted to DGAM by local staff members demonstrate that several monuments in the Dead City of **Baqirha** are in good condition, including a church and **Burj Baqirha**.

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1897>

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1898>

January 18, 2016

Al Monitor published an article titled "**Babylonian temple now Islamic healing shrine**" (by Adnan Abu Zeed). The Shiite shrine Mashhad al-Shams was once a temple dedicated to the Babylonian sun god Shamash. Today it has become a mosque believed to hold miraculous powers for those who come there to pray.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/01/iraq-babylonian-shrine-turned-islamic.html>

- Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)** published a report titled “**Armed opposition targeted Emmanuel Church for Armenians in Al Manshiyeh neighborhood in Aleppo city in January 17.**” SNHR reported that the church was shelled by locally-made artillery shells shot from “armed opposition territory.” **ASOR CHI Incident Report 16-0011.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/18/16607/>

<https://www.facebook.com/emmanuel.church.official/posts/421654284712007>
- January 16, 2016 **SNHR** published a report titled “**Not less than 1114 Vital Facilities Targeted in 2015.**” The 24-page report details destruction of and damage to vital facilities including places of worship, archaeological sites, and museums.
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/17/16586/>
- January 15, 2016 **SNHR** published a report titled “**Regime forces targeted mosque in Damascus suburbs Jan 15.**” According to SNHR, regime forces fired shells on the mosque causing severe damage. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0010.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/15/16540/>
- The Wall Street Journal* published an article titled “**Sarah Parcak, Space Archaeologist**” (by Alexandra Wolfe). Parcak discusses how she is using satellite imaging to find undiscovered ruins and track damaged or looted sites.
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/sarah-parcak-space-archaeologist-1452887899>
- SNHR** published a report titled “**Regime forces shelling targeted Al Kabir Mosque in Deir Al Asafeer in Damascus suburbs in January 15.**” According to the report, regime warplanes fired missiles on the mosque, damaging it severely and causing at least eight fatalities. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0009.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/15/16533/>

<http://www.interpretermag.com/russia-announces-humanitarian-operation-in-syria-not-for-madaya-but-deir-ez-zor/#11905>

<https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1297492210277912>

- January 14, 2016 *The Huffington Post* published an article titled “**Archaeologists Revive Missing Activist’s Dream of Reconstructing Palmyra**” (by Alexandra Ma). The New Palmyra Project hopes to continue the work of Palestinian-Syrian computer engineer and activist, Bassel Khartabil, of reconstructing Palmyra using 3D technology. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/new-palmyra-project-bassel-khartabil_us_5694175de4b0c8beacf80a9a
- January 13, 2016 **SNHR** published a report titled “**Regime forces targeted Al Kabir Mosque in Al Mouzra village in Idlib governorate in January 13.**” According to the report, regime warplanes hit the mosque, causing severe damage. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0008.** <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/13/16459/>
- **The Cipher Brief** posted an interview with retired Brigadier General Russell Howard titled “**Trafficking in Antiquities.**” Howard, the director of the Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program, discusses the ISIL’s methods of trafficking antiquities. <http://thecipherbrief.com/article/trafficking-antiquities>
 - *Deutsche Welle* published a video report titled “**Experts track down stolen art from Syria and Iraq**” (by Joachim Eggers). The Syrian Heritage Archive in Berlin works to track down artifacts being trafficked and sold online illegally. <http://www.dw.com/en/experts-track-down-stolen-art-from-syria-and-iraq/av-18975324>
- January 12, 2016 **DGAM** posted a report titled “**Training on using new techniques in archaeological documentation started in Beirut.**” The first phase of *Project Anqa*, a joint CyArk and ICOMOS initiative to provide 3D surveys of the endangered monuments and sites in the Middle East, has begun. This phase is focused on training a team of DGAM staff and providing them with the necessary equipment for 3D scanning. <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1896>
- **SNHR** published a report titled “**Suspected Russian forces targeted Al Kabir Mosque in Ma’arseta Al Khan town in Aleppo governorate in January 12.**” According to SNHR, suspected Russian warplanes fired missiles near the mosque, damaging it. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0007.** <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/13/16436/>
 - *Al Monitor* published an article titled “**Ancient madrassa lies forgotten, neglected in Baghdad**” (by Wassim Bassem). Mustansiriya Madrassa is a historic school building situated in the ancient Abbasid district of Rusafa in central Baghdad. The building

has been neglected as the security situation in Baghdad has deteriorated.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/01/iraq-historical-school-mustansiriya-madrasag-neglect.html>

- *Business Insider* published an article titled “**ISIS’ looting of the Middle East is 'the largest-scale mass destruction of cultural heritage since' WWII**” (by Pamela Engel).
<http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-antiquities-destroyed-smuggling-2016-1>
- SNHR posted a report titled “**Regime forces targeted Agha Jaq Mosque in Qadi Askar neighborhood in Aleppo city in January 12.**” According to the report, a regime airstrike struck the mosque, killing at least 10 people. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0003.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/12/16398/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JcMzC3uuSo&feature=youtu.be>

<http://www.amc-sy.net/details.php?id=486#.VpVbz8ArI1h>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1521162207990885.1073741917.324869057620212&type=3>

<http://eaworldview.com/2016/01/syria-feature-report-russia-damages-mosque-kills-worshippers/>
- *Reuters* published an article titled “**Sunni mosques in east Iraq attacked after IS-claimed blasts**” (by Ahmed Rasheed). At least nine Sunni mosques as well as dozens of shops and homes in eastern Iraq, were firebombed on Tuesday, one day after 23 people were killed in two blasts claimed by ISIL. *BBC* reports that several of the mosques were located in the al-Asiri neighborhood of Muqdadiya, Diyala Governorate. **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0002.**
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-violence-idUSKCN0UP1R420160112>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35290903>

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/01/12/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>

<http://english.aawsat.com/2016/01/article55346485/ten-sunni-mosques-bombed-in-iraq>

- America: The National Catholic Review* published an article titled “**ISIS seeks to control the country’s future by destroying its Christian past**” (by Michael Peppard). The author discusses the ongoing looting of the ancient city of Dura Europos by ISIL and other groups.
<http://americamagazine.org/issue/saving-syria>
 - Heritage for Peace** posted their “**Damage to Syria’s Heritage**” newsletter.
<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-12-january-2016/>
- January 11, 2016
- SNHR** posted a report titled “**Regime forces targeted Aisha Mosque in Al Hamidiyeh neighborhood in Deir Ez-Zour city in January 11.**” According to SNHR, regime warplanes fired 2 missiles near the mosque, damaging its structure and partially destroying its fence. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0005.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/11/16351/>
- SNHR** posted a report titled “**Al Hadi Mosque in Babeis town in Aleppo governorate destroyed by Russian forces shelling in January 11.**” According to SNHR, suspected Russian warplane missiles struck the mosque. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0006.**
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/12/16359/>
- January 10, 2016
- Iranian Student News Agency* published an article titled “سروقت آثار تاریخی عراق توسط داعش اداره دارد” (ISIS continues to steal Iraq’s historic treasures).” A senior official of the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party reports that ISIL removed at least 211 artifacts from Mosul and has transferred them to an unknown location.
<http://www.isna.ir/fa/news/94102011438/توسط-عراق-تاریخی-آثار-سروقت>
 دارد اداره داعش
- Russia Today* posted a video report on Youtube titled “**Heritage for sale: Ancient treasures stolen from Syria by ISIS turn up in Lebanon**” (by Paula Slier). Citizens in the Lebanese town of Ras Baalbek have saved Christian icons looted from the Syrian town of Maaloula, often buying them directly from Al-Nusra Front.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU9E13I4pUM>

- *Al Arabiya* published an article titled “**In old Damascus, war threatens Syrian handicrafts.**” The article reports that by the end of 2015, between 70 and 80 percent of Syrian handicraft workers left their trade.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/features/2016/01/10/In-old-Damascus-war-threatens-Syrian-handicrafts-.html>

- **DGAM** posted a report titled “**Latest news from sites in Rural Quneitra.**” Locals have observed illegal excavation and construction in **ar-Rafid, Tell Muheir, Tell Ahmar Gharbi, Tell Hawi Gharbi, and Sweissa.** **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0004.**

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1894>

<http://sana.sy/en/?p=66188>

<http://www.syriaonline.sy/?f=Details&pageid=20411&catid=27>

- **SNHR** posted a report titled “**Russian warplanes targeted Abdullah Bin Abbas in Al Ameriya neighborhood in Aleppo city in January 9.**” According to SNHR, suspected Russian warplanes fired missiles near the mosque, damaging it. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0003.**

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/10/16293/>

<http://www.syriaahr.com/en/?p=42397>

January 9, 2016

The New York Times published an article titled “**‘Broken System’ Allows ISIS to Profit From Looted Antiquities**” (by Steven Lee Meyers & Nicholas Kulish). According to the article, the fight against illicit trade in antiquities is hampered by laws that are often weak and inconsistent. Few countries have shown an interest in imposing new restrictions to curb the booming trade in antiquities.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/10/world/europe/iraq-syria-antiquities-islamic-state.html>

January 8, 2016

SNHR published a report titled “**Suspected Russian warplanes shelling on Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque in Bayanon town in Aleppo governorate in January 7.**” According to SNHR, the blast from suspected warplanes damaged furniture and “cladding materials.” **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0002.**

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/08/16239/>

- *Nature* published an article titled “**The struggle to save the Middle East’s cultural treasures**” (by Zach Zorich). The article discusses a number of ongoing projects to protect cultural treasures threatened in Syria and to learn lessons that can be applied to conflicts elsewhere.
<http://www.nature.com/news/the-struggle-to-save-the-middle-east-s-cultural-treasures-1.19131>
- **Future Tense** will hold an event in Washington, D.C. on January 28, 2016, titled “**Deploying Technology to Rescue the Past**”. The event will discuss how technology can be deployed to restore what might otherwise be destroyed forever.
<https://www.newamerica.org/future-tense/deploying-technology-to-rescue-the-past/>
http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2016/01/08/deploying-technology_to_rescue_the_past_a_future_tense_event.html
- *Euronews* published an article and video titled “**Tackling antiquities trafficking**.” Zeynep Boz, from the United Nations’ Section for Cultural Heritage Protection Treaties, discusses the challenge in preventing the illicit trafficking of antiquities.
<http://www.euronews.com/2016/01/08/tackling-antiquities-trafficking/>
- *Apollo Magazine Blog* published an article titled “**Reconstructing Syria’s heritage is a hopeful but distant dream**” (by Averil Cameron). The article describes the obstacles facing site reconstruction in Syria as well as the possibilities for documentation of relevant materials and the need to create a complete digital record of endangered sites in the Middle East and North Africa.
<http://www.apollo-magazine.com/reconstructing-syrias-heritage-is-a-hopeful-but-distant-dream/>
- *Insight on Conflict* published an article titled “**Cultural heritage as peacemaker**” (by Gustav Rudd). Groups like Heritage for Peace look to use cultural heritage as an important tool for dialogue during armed conflict.
<http://www.insightonconflict.org/2015/01/cultural-heritage-peacemaker/>

- *Curbed* published an article titled “**How CyArk’s Laser Scanning Preserves Priceless Architecture**” (by Patrick Sisson). The nonprofit CyArk, an organization on the cutting edge of 3D laser scanning technology, has been deeply involved in efforts to digitally preserve heritage in the Middle East and elsewhere for more than a decade.

<http://curbed.com/archives/2016/01/08/cyark-laser-3d-technology-architecture-preservation.php>

January 7, 2016

The New Arab published an article titled “**15,000 artefacts stolen from Iraq since 2003.**” The publication previously reported that gang activity in the country had led to unprecedented theft of antiquities in the central and western regions of Iraq. During the past year these thefts increased, resulting in the looting of Sumerian and Akkadian treasures from more than 765 archaeological sites in the south of the country.

<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/1/7/15-000-artefacts-stolen-from-iraq-since-2003>

- *Adnkronos* published an article titled “**أشاري سروري سابق: الخسائر الأثرية لا تُعوض**” (Former Syrian archaeologists: Archaeological losses not compensated and the majority of specialists immigrated).” The former director of the DGAM, Abdul Razzaq Moaz, discusses the scale of destruction of cultural heritage in Syria over the last five years. A major issue is the number of archaeologists and other specialists who were forced to leave Syria, many of whom will likely not return even when the conflict is resolved.

<http://www1.adnkronos.com/AKI/Arabic/Business/?id=3.2.1607487720>

January 6, 2016

Times of Israel published an article titled “**Who should keep Iraqi Jewry’s archives, saved from Saddam, now on tour in US?**” (by Rich Tenorio). At a cost of \$3 million, the collection of over 2,700 books and tens of thousands of documents dating from the 16th to the 20th centuries has been preserved, cataloged, and digitized. Some of the objects are on display in a traveling exhibition in the US before being returned to the Iraqi National Archives in Baghdad.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/who-should-keep-iraqi-jewrys-archives-saved-from-saddam-now-on-tour-in-us/>

January 5, 2016

Rick St. Hilaire of **Cultural Heritage Lawyer** blog published a post titled ““**Antiques from Iraq**”: Trade Stats Raise Questions.” According to the author, “antiques” ranked as the #4 declared import to the United States from Iraq by value in 2014.

<http://culturalheritagelawyer.blogspot.in/2016/01/antiques-from-iraq-trade-stats-raise.html>

- **UNHCR** published an article titled “**Syria’s landmarks restored in miniature**” (by Charlie Dunmore). A group of Syrian artists living in Jordan’s Za’atari refugee camp are using their skills and various materials to build models of Syrian landmarks.
<http://tracks.unhcr.org/2016/01/syrias-landmarks-restored-in-miniature/>

December 29, 2015

Al-Monitor published an article titled “**Can tourism be revived in ancient Iraqi city?**” (by Wassim Bassem). Iraqis living near the ancient city of Nippur say the site should be developed to attract tourism after years of neglect.
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/iraq-ancient-city-nippur-ruins-government-neglect.html>

Military and Political Context

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

1. Deir ez-Zor Governorate:
 - From January 16–19, ISIL conducted an assault on the northwestern towns of Baghaliyeh and Ayyash near the city of Deir ez-Zor. ISIL militants reportedly executed between 50–75 Syrian regime soldiers and pro-government militiamen, as well as at least 85 civilians. The Syrian state news agency, SANA, placed the civilian death toll at ca. 300, with approximately 400 civilians taken as hostages. Local activists have disputed the number of reported hostages. Russia has reportedly begun humanitarian aid airdrops to civilians in Deir ez-Zor.²
2. Latakia Governorate:
 - On January 12, Syrian and pro-regime forces retook the strategic rebel-held village of Salma.³
3. Damascus Governorate:
 - On January 6, government and rebel bombardments killed at least 26 civilians and wounded dozens more in and around the city of Damascus.⁴

² <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/01/18/world/middleeast/ap-ml-islamic-state.html> ; <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/19/world/middleeast/isis-islamic-state-eastern-syria.html> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/isis-massacre-reported-syria-deir-ez-zor-160116192050214.html> ; <http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-release-idINKCN0UX2SE> ; http://ria.ru/syria_chronicle/20160115/1360168875.html

³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/siege-starvation-left-syrian-town-in-grim-state-un-says/2016/01/12/40a0e160-b9af-11e5-85cd-5ad59bc19432_story.html ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-8.html>

⁴ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-06/330552-syrian-army-rebel-fire-kills-20-around-damascus.ashx> ; <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/06/16178/>

- On January 11, aid convoys began entering the besieged town of Madaya where dozens of residents have died from starvation and lack of medical care.⁵
- 4. Idlib Governorate:
 - On January 9, Russian airstrikes struck a courthouse, reportedly held by Al-Nusra Front, and a prison in the rebel-held town of Maarat al-Numan, killing 81 people, including civilians, prisoners, and members of Al-Nusra front.⁶
 - On January 11, two aid convoys reached the besieged villages of Foah and Kefraya, where 20,000 residents have been trapped since March 2015.⁷
- 5. Aleppo Governorate:
 - On January 11, Russian airstrikes struck three schools in the town of Anjara, killing at least 35 civilians, including 17 children.⁸
 - On January 16, ISIL militants attacked a regime-held area outside of the ISIL-held town of Al-Bab, but were pushed back by regime forces. Heavy Russian airstrikes were reported in the area during the clashes.⁹
- 6. Raqqa Governorate:
 - During the reporting period, footage was released of ISIL militants in the stronghold of Raqqa developing highly advanced weapons previously thought unattainable for the group.¹⁰
- 7. Homs Governorate:
 - On January 13, the provincial governor of Homs, Talal Barazi, announced that Syrian rebels in the former opposition area of al-Waer would relinquish “nearly half of their heavy weapons” as a result of a truce with the Syrian government.¹¹

Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Abu Kamal, Ayn Isa, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakah, Manbij, Mar’a, Raqqa, Tal Abyad, and Washiyah.¹²
- During the reporting period, Russia carried out airstrikes in the areas of Aleppo, Damascus, Daraa, Deir ez-Zor, Hama, Hasakah, Homs, Idlib, Latakia, and Raqqa. Reports, disputed by Russia, continue to surface of Russian airstrikes targeting high-density civilian areas.¹³
- On January 6, Syrian activists reported the deaths of 20 Syrian opposition rebel commanders, many of them ‘hardline Islamists’, since early December. Analysts speculate as

⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35278173>

⁶ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/russian-air-strikes-syria-idlib-16011017555588.html> ; <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/199058-toll-in-russia-raids-on-nusra-run-syria-jail-rises-to-81> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-4.html>

⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35278173>

⁸ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-4.html> ; <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-airstrikes-school-classroom-ain-jara-aleppo-rebel-held-syria/>

⁹ <http://news.yahoo.com/toll-attack-syria-forces-deir-ezzor-rises-75-192919561.html>

¹⁰ <http://news.sky.com/story/1617197/exclusive-inside-is-terror-weapons-lab>

¹¹ <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/199287-syria-rebels-to-cede-heavy-weapons-in-homs-deal>

¹² See: “US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq”. *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [641685](#), [641829](#), [641968](#), [642113](#), [642132](#), [642168](#), [642676](#), [642848](#), [643040](#), [643280](#), [643410](#), [643426](#), [643436](#), [643479](#)

¹³ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1696451730597576&id=1492252324350852 ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-4.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-8.html> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/russian-airstrikes-in-syria-january-12.html>

to whether this could be part of an ‘assassination campaign’ by either the Syrian government or by ISIL.¹⁴

- On January 19, ISIL confirmed the death of Mohammed Emwazi (aka Jihadi John) who was well known for his participation in several beheading videos released by the group. Emwazi was killed in a targeted drone strike in the city of Raqqa in November 2015.¹⁵

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

1. Diyala Governorate:

- On January 11, two ISIL attacks targeting the Shia militia known as the Popular Mobilization forces in the city of Muqdadhiya killed 42 people, and wounded 54 more. Another reported car bombing killed three people in the city of Baquba. Reprisal attacks against Sunni mosques, homes, businesses, as well as systematic killings, were reported the following day. On January 15, Iraq’s top Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, condemned the violence and urged the Iraqi government to prevent such attacks. On January 19, Sunni lawmakers staged a walkout from parliament to protest ongoing sectarian violence in Diyala province.¹⁶
- On January 12, masked militiamen, reportedly from the Shia Popular Mobilization Front, assassinated two Iraqi journalists from Sharqiya TV in the village of Abu Saida. A suicide car bomb attack critically wounded a senior Iraqi police officer and killed two of his guards in the city of Baquba.¹⁷

2. Anbar Governorate:

- During the reporting period, Iraqi forces continued to clear the city of Ramadi, rooting out small pockets of ISIL fighters and evacuating Iraqi civilians. On January 9, Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service declared Ramadi to be “fully recaptured” and began advancing into the eastern areas of al-Sufiyah and al-Sijariyah.¹⁸
- On January 6, images surfaced of ISIL militants using “fortified bulldozers and armored, machine-gun mounted trucks” in suicide bombing attacks in Anbar governorate, including in the town of Haditha. The same types of explosive-laden vehicles were used in the August 2015 destruction of the 1,500 year old Mar Elian

¹⁴ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-06/330537-string-of-attacks-kill-20-syria-rebel-commanders-activists.ashx>

¹⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-35358101>

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35285605> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35290903> ; <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/180733.aspx> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-violence-idUSKCN0UP1R420160112> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/sunni-mosques-firebombed-iraq-160112152046040.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-security-idUSKCN0UT19A> ; <http://www.wsj.com/articles/sunni-lawmakers-walk-out-of-iraqs-parliament-to-protest-violence-in-diyala-1453234093>

¹⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-violence-bomber-idUSKCN0UQOST20160112> ; <http://news.yahoo.com/two-iraqi-journalists-shot-dead-employer-130412330.html> ; <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/1/12/popular-mobilisation-militia-kills-tv-crew-in-iraqs-diyala>

¹⁸ <http://www.militarytimes.com/story/military/pentagon/2016/01/06/squad-size-isis-units-remain-ramadi/78356108/> ; <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/199069-iraq-forces-evacuate-hundreds-of-civilians-from-ramadi> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-7-january.html>

Monastery in the Syrian town of Al-Qaryatayn (See **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0123**).¹⁹

- On January 7, the Iraqi military announced that ISIL's chief spokesman, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, had been injured in an airstrike in the town of Barwana, near the city of Haditha.²⁰
- On January 9, the Iraqi military announced that ISIL's second deputy in command, Assi Ali Mohammed Nasser al-Obeidi, was killed in an airstrike in the town of Barwana, near the city of Haditha.²¹
- On January 11, Iraqi security forces and tribal fighters recaptured the areas of Barwana and al-Sha'i.²²
- On January 11, Iraqi Turkmen officials accused the Kurdish Regional Government of digging a politically motivated trench under the guise of fighting ISIL. The trench stretches from the Iraqi town of Rabia and ends in the town of Khanaqin, near the Iranian border, forming what the Turkmen officials see as a divisive new border in Iraq.²³

3. Baghdad Governorate:

- On January 6, 2,000 "members and supporters" of Iraq's Shia militias protested in Baghdad against Saudi Arabia's execution of the prominent Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr. The protests occurred on the same day as Iraq's national holiday of 'Army Day.'²⁴
- On January 11, ISIL detonated a car bomb outside the al-Jawhara shopping center in the neighborhood of Baghdad al-Jadida. Immediately following the bombing, gunmen wearing suicide vests opened fire inside the center, killing at least 32 people. Another car bombing in the Baghdad suburb of Nahwaran killed at least 7 civilians.²⁵
- On January 13, unknown assailants carried out several bombings, in and around Baghdad, killing at least 10 people.²⁶
- On January 15, three American contractors were kidnapped by an Iran-backed Shia militia from "a private resident" in the southeastern district of Dora in Baghdad.²⁷

¹⁹ <http://www.newsweek.com/new-images-show-isis-use-explosive-filled-bulldozers-attack-iraqi-forces-411782> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/isis-launches-major-assault-iraq-haditha-160105135657979.html>

²⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-adnani-idUSKBN0UL2E220160107>

²¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/09/middleeast/isis-commander-killed-iraq/>

²² <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-7-january.html>

²³ <http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-turkmens-alarmed-kurdish-trench-181539926.html>

²⁴ <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-06/330560-iraqi-shiite-militias-in-mass-anti-saudi-protest.ashx>

²⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35285605> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/sunni-mosques-firebombed-iraq-160112152046040.html>

²⁶ <http://www.albawaba.com/news/bombings-armed-attacks-kill-least-ten-iraq-793156> ; <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2016/01/14/445764/Iraq-Baghdad-bombing-shooting-civilians-police-casualties-Taji-Madian-Daesh-Takfiri-militants/>

²⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-kidnapping-idUSKCN0UX2HY>

4. Ninawa Governorate:
 - On January 8, Turkey announced that its troops had repelled an ISIL attack on Zaylkan camp in the town of Bashiqa, killing 17 ISIL militants. Two Turkish soldiers were reportedly killed in the attack.²⁸
 - Between January 9–11, ISIL executed 88 former security force members on charges of spying in the city of Mosul.²⁹
 - On January 10, a US airstrike struck a building in the center of Mosul that reportedly contained millions of dollars used by ISIL to pay for its recruits and operations.³⁰
5. Salah ad Din:
 - On January 14, ISIL militants regained control of the village of Tal Kusaiba, approximately 20 miles from Tikrit, as well as the main road connecting the cities of Tikrit and Kirkuk.³¹
6. Basra Governorate:
 - On January 15, a division of the Iraqi army and Iraqi police forces entered the city of Basra to disarm the city's population in lieu of "intensified feuding" between rival Shia tribes.³²

Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Albu Hayat, Baghdadi, Baiji, Balad, Erbil, Habbaniyah, Haditha, Hit, Huwayjah, Kisik, Mosul, Qaim, Qayyarah, Ramadi, Sinjar, Sultan Abdallah, Tal Afar, and Tikrit.³³
- On January 13, US Defense Secretary, Ash Carter, announced that an elite US Special Operations 'targeting force' had arrived in Iraq to join the fight against the Islamic State.³⁴
- On January 19, the UN released a report documenting the deaths of 18,802 civilians in Iraq between January 2014 and October 2015. In addition the report states that ISIL is holding 3,500 civilians, mainly women and children, as slaves. In addition, Amnesty International published a report that accused the Peshmerga and other Kurdish militias of "forced displacement and large-scale destruction of (Arab) homes in villages and towns" in the governorates of Ninawa, Kirkuk, and Diyala.³⁵

²⁸ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35262727> ; <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-7-january.html>

²⁹ <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2016/01/iraq-situation-report-january-7-january.html>

³⁰ <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/01/11/politics/us-bombs-millions-isis-currency-supply/index.html> ; <http://ara.tv/px9te>

³¹ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/01/14/ISIS-pushes-through-gap-in-Iraqi-army-frontline-.html> ; <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/14012016>

³² <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-basra-idUSKCN0UT0YM>

³³ See: "US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq". *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: 641685, 641829, 642113, 642132, 642168, 642676, 642848, 643040, 643280, 643410, 643426, 643436, 643479

³⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/01/13/elite-u-s-targeting-force-has-arrived-in-iraq-pentagon-chief-tells-soldiers/>

³⁵ <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/01/19/463566860/nearly-19-000-civilians-killed-in-iraq-in-21-months-u-n-report-says> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35349861> ; <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/northern-iraq-satellite-images-back-up-evidence-of-deliberate-mass-destruction-in-peshmerga-controll>

Other significant political and military events during the reporting period:

- On January 7, a truck bomb at a police training center killed at least 47 people and wounded around 200 more in the town of Zliten, Libya. The ISIL-affiliate, IS Barqa Province, in eastern Libya later claimed responsibility for the attack. In the Libyan ports of Es Sider and Ras Lanuf fires, resulting from ISIL attacks on January 4, spread to seven oil tanks. The Libyan Air Force was ordered to defend the oil fields.³⁶
- On January 7, gunmen attacked an Israeli Arab tour bus outside of a hotel in Giza, Egypt. No casualties were reported. ISIL-affiliate “Sinai Province” later claimed responsibility for the attack. Another ISIL-affiliated group, Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis, bombed a gas pipeline connecting Jordan and Egypt’s North Sinai region.³⁷
- On January 12, a suspected ISIL member carried out a suicide bombing in the historic Sultanahmet district of Istanbul, Turkey, killing 10 tourists and wounding 15 more. In response to the attack, on January 14, Turkey announced that it had fired “close to 500 artillery and tanks shells” on ISIL positions in Syria and Iraq, killing 200 ISIL militants.³⁸
- On January 14, ISIL-linked suicide bombers and gunmen attacked a central area in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, killing 2 people and injuring 20.³⁹
- On January 19, ISIL released a memorandum stating that due to “exceptional circumstances,” all salaries paid to its fighters would be reduced by half. This statement follows recent victories by the US-led coalition that have damaged ISIL sources of revenue.⁴⁰

Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Analysis

During this reporting period, there was a single satellite image over Syria or Iraq made available by DigitalGlobe. The image was located over Latakia, an area that has been well covered in imagery with seven new images in the last five months. This image covered 36 different items in our site inventory, none of which showed any recent damage.

³⁶ <http://af.reuters.com/article/libyaNews/idAFL8N14R1J320160107> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35249860> ; <https://www.libyaherald.com/2016/01/06/hafter-orders-airforce-to-defend-oilfields-amid-fears-of-further-is-attacks/>

³⁷ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/is-egypt-affiliate-claims-attack-on-hotel-near-pyramids/2016/01/08/8d963dd4-b604-11e5-8abc-d09392edc612_story.html ; <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/180406/Egypt/Politics-/ISISaffiliated-militant-group-claims-bombing-of-Si.aspx>

³⁸ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35290760> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-turkey-idUSKCN0US11820160114> ; <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-fire-targets-isis-bombers-town-.aspx>

³⁹ http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/AS_INDONESIA_EXPLOSION

⁴⁰ <http://money.cnn.com/2016/01/19/news/world/isis-salary-cuts/index.html>

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 16-0002

Report Date: January 8, 2016

Site Name: Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque (مسجد عمر بن الخطاب)

Date of Incident: January 7, 2016

Location: Bayanoun Town, Azzaz District, Aleppo Governorate

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Missiles damage interior materials of the mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On January 8, 2016, the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that suspected Russian aircraft fired missiles at Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque, causing “damage to the furniture and interior materials.”⁴¹

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/08/16239/>

⁴¹ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/08/16239/>



Damage from missile attacks outside Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque (SNHR; January 7, 2015)

SHI 16-0003

Report Date: January 13, 2016

Site Name: Abdullah bin Abbas Mosque (مسجد عبد الله بن عباس) and Agha Jaq Mosque (مسجد آغا جاق)

Date of Incident: January 9, 2016 and January 12, 2016

Location: Al Ameriya neighborhood, Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate and the Qadi Askar neighborhood, Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate

Site Description: The Abdullah bin Abbas Mosque is a large, modern mosque in the al-Ameriya neighborhood of Aleppo. It is notable for its dual minarets.

The Agha Jaq Mosque is an Ottoman-era mosque in the Qadi Askar neighborhood of Aleppo. It is also known as the Acu Mosque.⁴²

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Unspecified damage to two mosques.

Incident Source and Description: The Syrian Network for Human Rights reports airstrikes by “suspected Russian warplanes” damaged the Abdullah bin Abbas Mosque, located in the Al Ameriya neighborhood Aleppo, on January 9, 2016. No photographs of the damage were available at the time of publication.

On January 12 the SNHR reported that Russian missile attacks hit the historic Agha Jaq Mosque located in Qadi Askar neighborhood. Seven people were also reported killed in this incident.⁴³ Photographs of the incident show that the dome is cracked, the minaret is damaged, and the majority of the structure has collapsed. Syrian Civil Defense workers are pictured sifting through the rubble for survivors.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Abdullah bin Abbas Mosque and the Agha Jaq Mosque as well as other mosques in the city of Aleppo. ASOR CHI is concerned by the ongoing collateral damage of heritage sites in the city of Aleppo and, in particular, sites located in the Old City.

⁴² <http://www.gettyimages.com/galleries/search?phrase=acu+mosque&family=editorial&sort=>

⁴³ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/13/16430/>

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Abdullah bin Abbas Mosque:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/10/16293/>

Agha Jaq Mosque:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/12/16398/>

Syrian Civil Defense - Aleppo:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JcMzC3uuSo&feature=youtu.be>

Aleppo Media Center: <http://www.amc-sy.net/details.php?id=486#.VpVbz8Ar11h>

APSA: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1521162207990885.1073741917.324869057620212&type=3>

Getty Images: <http://www.gettyimages.com/galleries/search?phrase=acu+mosque&family=editorial&sort=>



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Aleppo Media Center; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Aleppo Media Center; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Aleppo Media Center; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (reposted by APSA; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (posted by APSA; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the surrounding area near the Agha Jaq Mosque (Aleppo Media Center; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the surrounding area near the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the surrounding area near the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the interior of the Agha Jaq Mosque (Aleppo Media Center; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the interior of the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque with Syrian Civil Defense workers searching the rubble (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque with Syrian Civil Defense workers searching the rubble (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque with Syrian Civil Defense workers searching the rubble (Aleppo Media Center; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque with Syrian Civil Defense workers searching the rubble (Aleppo Media Center; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque with Syrian Civil Defense workers searching the rubble (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque with Syrian Civil Defense workers searching the rubble (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque with Syrian Civil Defense workers searching the rubble (Getty Images; January 12, 2016)



Damage to the Agha Jaq Mosque with Syrian Civil Defense workers searching the rubble (reposted by APSA; January 12, 2016)

SHI 16-0004

Report Date: January 10, 2016

Site Name: Rafid (الرفيد)

Tell Muheir (تل الموهير)

Tell Ahmar (تل الأحمر)

Tell Hawi Gharbi (تل الحاوي الغربي)

Khan Sweissa (خان سويسة)

Date of Incident: Unknown, reported by DGAM on January 10, 2016

Location: southern Quneitra Governorate, Syria

Site Description:

- Rafid - The DGAM describes Rafid as “rich with historical residences, churches, khans, and some tombs dating to the Byzantine and Islamic periods.”⁴⁴ Rafid has many Byzantine and Ghassanid-era buildings constructed of local basalt, and provides a fine example of medieval Hauran-style architecture.⁴⁵ First settled in the late 1st century BCE, the site grew prosperous in the late Roman era, as evidenced by its many large and high quality villas and private residences. Rafid was the heart of Ghassanid settlement in the Hauran following the decline of the Byzantine population there, until the site became virtually uninhabited from the 8th to 13th centuries.⁴⁶ Rafid flourished under the Mamluks, but was once again abandoned for centuries. The area was resettled in the 19th century.⁴⁷
- Tell Muheir - The DGAM describes Tell Muheir as “a significant regional tell.”⁴⁸
- Tell Ahmar - The DGAM notes that Tell Ahmar is located south of the Kudnah village in the province of Golan. The most important archaeological remains found there include ancient tombs located at the base of the tell that date to the Roman and Byzantine eras.⁴⁹ There are two adjacent tells called Ahmar (Tell Ahmar Gharbi and Tell Ahmar Sharqi). The DGAM does not indicate to which of these it refers. Probably Tell Ahmar refers to Tell Ahmar Gharbi, which is directly south of Kudnah.
- Tell Hawi Gharbi - The DGAM describes Tell Hawi Gharbi as “a significant regional tell.”⁵⁰
- Khan Sweissa - The DGAM describes Sweissa as consisting of a necropolis and other ancient buildings.⁵¹

⁴⁴ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1894>

⁴⁵ Urman 2006: 9

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 269.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 290.

⁴⁸ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1894>

⁴⁹ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1893>

⁵⁰ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1894>

Site Date: Rafid - Roman, Byzantine, Ghassanid, Mamluk, modern
Tell Muheir - unknown
Tell Ahmar - Roman, Byzantine
Tell Hawi Gharbi - unknown
Khan Sweissa - unknown

Incident Summary: Illegal excavation, looting, and illegal construction at multiple sites.

Incident Source and Description: According to the DGAM: "Heritage hunters are still active in the archaeological sites and tells in the southern section of rural Quneitra. Moreover, several unauthorized works of diggings and constructions were observed by the local society in the village of al-Rafid, which is rich with historical residences, churches, khans, and some tombs dating to the Byzantine and Islamic periods. Similar works are also observed in significant regional tells of Tell Muheir, Tell Ahmar, and Tell Hawi Gharbi. Unauthorized diggings also occurred in historical buildings in Khan Sweissa, while the surrounding necropolis was also looted."⁵² No photographs or other supporting evidence were available at the time of publication and the date of the incident was not indicated.

Pattern: Illegal excavation; Illegal construction by non-combatants.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the situation in Quneitra and other Syrian heritage sites vulnerable to looting as a result of decreased local security and economic instability.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1894>
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=239&id=1893>

Syrian Arab News Agency: <http://sana.sy/en/?p=66188>

Scholarly:

Urman, D. et al (2006) *Rafid on the Golan: A profile of a Late Roman and Byzantine village*. BAR International Series 1555. Oxford: Archaeopress.

⁵¹ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1894>

⁵² <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1894>

SHI 16-0005

Report Date: January 11, 2016

Site Name: Aisha Mosque (مسجد عائشة)

Date of Incident: January 11, 2016

Location: Al Hamidiyeh neighborhood, Deir ez-Zor, Deir ez-Zor Governorate

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: SARG airstrikes damage structure and fence of mosque.

Incident Source and Description: On January 11, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that SARG warplanes fired two missiles near the Aisha Mosque in Al Hamidiyeh neighborhood in the city of Deir ez-Zor, causing damage to the structure of the mosque and partially destroying its fence. No photographs or other supporting evidence was available at the time of publication.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Aisha Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/11/16351/>

SHI 16-0006

Report Date: January 11, 2016

Site Name: Al Hadi Mosque (مسجد الهادي)

Date of Incident: January 11, 2016

Location: Babeis Town, Aleppo Governorate

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown, likely modern

Incident Summary: Russian shelling damages mosque

Incident Source and Description: On January 11, 2016, the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that Russian forces shelled Al Hadi Mosque in the town of Babeis in Aleppo governorate, causing severe damage. An image released by SNHR shows extensive damage to the dome of the mosque.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Al Hadi Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/12/16359/>



Image shows destruction in Al Hadi Mosque ceiling in Babeis town in Aleppo governorate due to suspected Russian warplanes missiles, January 11, 2016. © SNHR

Destruction to Al Hadi Mosque (SNHR; January 11, 2016)

SHI 16-0007

Report Date: January 13, 2016

Site Name: Al-Kabir Mosque (المسجد الكبير), Mu'arrasat al Khan

Date of Incident: January 12, 2016

Location: Mu'arrasat al Khan, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Unspecified airstrike damage to mosque.

Incident Source and Description: According to the Syrian Network For Human Rights, suspected Russian warplanes fired missiles near the Al-Kabir Mosque in the town of Mu'arrasat al Khan located in Aleppo governorate, damaging the mosque, on January 12, 2016.⁵³ No photographs or other supporting evidence was available at the time of publication.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Al-Kabir Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/13/16436/>

⁵³ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/13/16436/>

SHI 16-0008

Report Date: January 13, 2016

Site Name: Al-Kabir Mosque (المسجد الكبير)

Date of Incident: January 13, 2016

Location: al-Maouzrah, Idlib Governorate, Syria

Site Description: The al-Kabir Mosque is located in Maouzrah, one of the Dead Cities of the Jebel Zawiya. The town has several well-preserved Roman and Byzantine remains, including Qalaat Farmiya.

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Severe damage to mosque from SARG airstrikes.

Incident Source and Description: According to Syrian Network for Human Rights, “regime warplanes targeted Al Kabir Mosque in Al Mouzra village in Idlib Governorate, damaging the mosque severely.”⁵⁴ The photograph provided by SNHR shows debris inside the structure and a large hole in the ceiling of the mosque.

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Al-Kabir Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/13/16459/>

⁵⁴ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/13/16459/>



Interior damage in the al-Kabir Mosque in al-Maouzrah (SNHR; January 13, 2016)

SHI 16-0009

Report Date: January 15, 2015

Site Name: Al-Kabir Mosque (المسجد الكبير), Deir al-Asafir village

Date of Incident: January 15, 2015

Location: Deir al-Asafir, Damascus Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Damage to mosque from SARG airstrikes.

Incident Source and Description: According to Syrian Network for Human Rights, regime warplanes fired missiles on Al-Kabir mosque in Deir al-Asafir, damaging it severely.⁵⁵ A video posted to Twitter by journalist Sakir Khadir shows a crowd of people running out of the mosque following the airstrike as well as debris and damage in the interior of the mosque.⁵⁶ Local Coordination Committees (LCC) reported at least eight dead and dozens injured as a result of the airstrike.⁵⁷

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Al-Kabir Mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

The Interpreter:

<http://www.interpretermag.com/russia-announces-humanitarian-operation-in-syria-not-for-madaya-but-deir-ez-zor/#11905>

Journalist Sakir Khadir (Twitter): <https://twitter.com/sakirkhader/status/688020394490605568>

Local Coordination Committee, via Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1297542770272856>

<https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1297492210277912>

⁵⁵ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/15/16533/>

⁵⁶ <https://twitter.com/sakirkhader/status/688020394490605568>

⁵⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1297492210277912>

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/15/16533/>

News.com.au:

<http://video.news.com.au/v/427454/SYRIA-Airstrike-Damages-Mosque-Near-Damascus-January-15>



Screenshot from video posted on News.com.au showing aftermath of airstrike (News.com.au; January 16, 2016)



Screenshot from video taken by Sakir Khadir showing dozens fleeing mosque in the aftermath of the airstrike (Sakir Khadir Twitter; January 15, 2016)



Screenshot from video taken by Sakir Khadir showing damage and debris in the interior of the mosque in the aftermath of the airstrike (Sakir Khadir Twitter; January 15, 2016)



Screenshot from video taken by Sakir Khadir showing damage and debris in the interior of the mosque in the aftermath of the airstrike (Sakir Khadir Twitter; January 15, 2016)

SHI 16-0010

Report Date: January 15, 2016

Site Name: Unidentified mosque in Zamalka (زملكا)

Date of Incident: January 15, 2016

Location: Zamalka, Damascus suburbs, Damascus Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Mosque

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Damage from SARG airstrikes.

Incident Source and Description: According to Syrian Network for Human Rights, “regime forces artillery fired several shells on a mosque in Zamlka [sic] city in Damascus suburbs, damaging the mosque partially.”⁵⁸ A video posted on YouTube by SMART News Agency purports to show the interior of the mosque, which is littered with debris. Large holes in the roof and walls of the mosque are highlighted.⁵⁹

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the Zamalka mosque as well as other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/15/16540/>

SMART News Agency: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pluG_w-BH6A&feature=youtu.be

⁵⁸ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/15/16540/>

⁵⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pluG_w-BH6A&feature=youtu.be



Screenshot from YouTube video showing damage to interior of mosque and large hole in wall (SMART News Agency; January 15, 2016)



Screenshot from YouTube video showing large hole in mosque roof (SMART News Agency; January 15, 2016)

SHI 16-0011

Report Date: January 18, 2016

Site Name: First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel (Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church of Aleppo-Syria) (كنيسة عمانوئيل للأرمن)

Date of Incident: January 17, 2016

Location: Aziziyeh neighborhood, Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: The First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel in Aleppo was founded in 1852. The present church building dates to 1923. Before the Syrian Civil War began, it is estimated the church had around 450 members (belonging to 150 families), with 160 to 180 parishioners attending weekly Sunday worship.⁶⁰

Site Date: 1923

Incident Summary: Missile damage to exterior and interior of church.

Incident Source and Description: Syrian Network for Human Rights reported that the church was shelled on January 17, 2016 by locally-made artillery shells shot from “armed opposition territory.” This damaged the church severely, and caused its roof to partially collapse.⁶¹ The church published photos of the damage on their Facebook page, showing major damage to the roof, debris littering the floor, and broken windows.⁶² No casualties were reported.⁶³

Pattern: Military activity: explosives.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will continue to monitor any reported damage to the First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel and other heritage sites located in regions vulnerable to collateral damage, especially in dense urban areas.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

First Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church: <http://www.aeechurch.com/about-aee-church/18/about-aee-church/>

<https://www.facebook.com/emmanuel.church.official/posts/421654284712007>

⁶⁰ <http://www.aeechurch.com/about-aee-church/18/about-aee-church/>

⁶¹ <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/18/16607/>

⁶² <https://www.facebook.com/emmanuel.church.official/posts/421654284712007>

⁶³ <http://www.armradio.am/en/2016/01/18/armenian-evangelical-church-in-aleppo-damaged-in-rocket-attack/>

SNHR: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/18/16607/>

Public Radio of Armenia: <http://www.armradio.am/en/2016/01/18/armenian-evangelical-church-in-aleppo-damaged-in-rocket-attack/>

Christian Today:

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/children.dead.and.church.damaged.in.rocket.attacks.and.bombings.in.syria/76960.htm>

Kantsasar: <https://www.facebook.com/kantsasar/posts/790381267730568>



Destruction and debris in church interior (Kantsasar; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (Kantsasar; January 17, 2016)



Damage to church roof (Kantsasar; January 17, 2016)



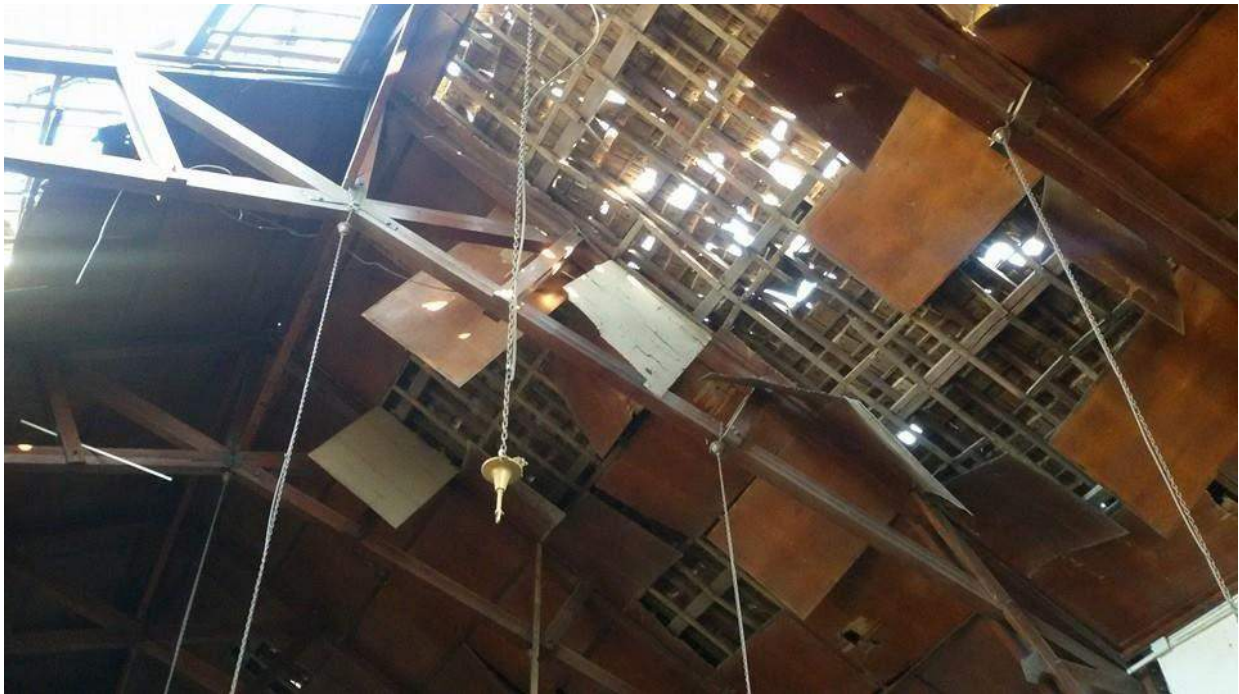
Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



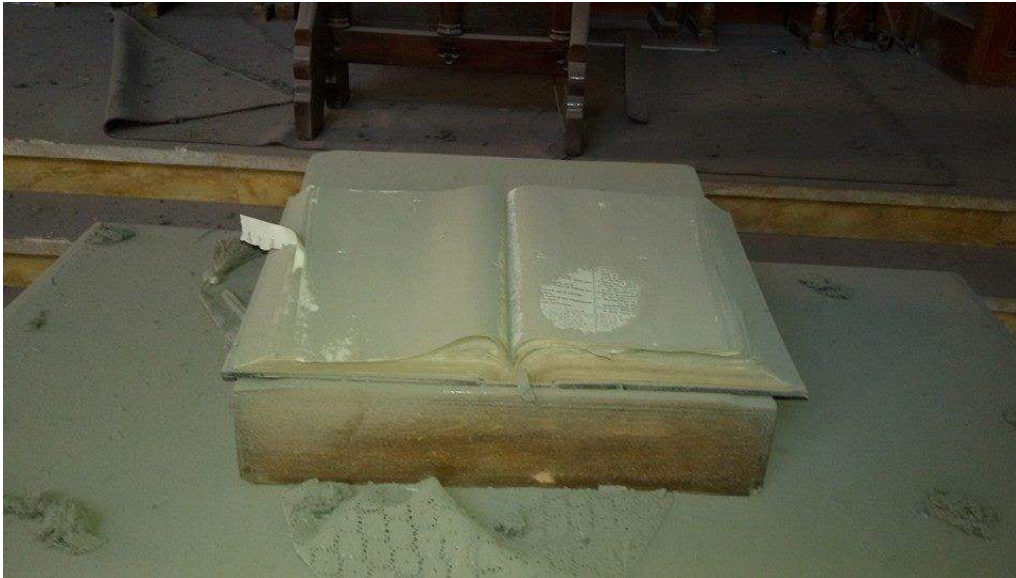
Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Damage to church roof (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Damage to roof of church (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Damage to roof of church (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)



Destruction and debris in church interior (First Armenian Evangelical Church of Emmanuel; January 17, 2016)

Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 16-0002

Report Date: January 12, 2016

Site Name:

- Nazindh al Khatun Mosque (جامع نازنده خاتون)
- Al Orfali Mosque (مسجد الأورفالي)
- Muqdadaya al-Kabir Mosque (جامع المقدادية الكبير)
- Al Quds Mosque (جامع القدس)
- Muthanna al Shibani Mosque (جامع مثنى الشيباني) (Muthanna ibn Harith al-Shibani Mosque)
(المثنى بن حارث الشيباني)
- Al Oroba Mosque (جامع العروبة)
- Imam Bukhari Mosque (Bukhari Mosque) (جامع البخاري)
- Al Shaheed Abd al-Kareem Mosque (جامع الشهيد عبد الكريم)
- Basheer Mosque (جامع البشير)
- Tawfiq Ajaj Mosque (جامع توفيق عجاج)
- Muhammad Rasul Allah Mosque (جامع محمد رسول الله)
- Abdullah ibn Maktoum Mosque (جامع عبدالمطلب)
- Qadisiyah Mosque (مسجد القادسية)

Date of Incident: January 11–12, 2016

Location: Muqdadaya, Diyala Governorate, Iraq

- Nazindh al Khatun Mosque, Modern Neighborhood/District (حي العصري)
- Muthanna al Shibani Mosque, Palestine Neighborhood/District (حي فلسطين)
- Al Quds Mosque, Modern Neighborhood/District (حي العصري)
- Qadisiyah Mosque, Moalimeen Neighborhood/District (حي المولمين)
- Muqdadaya al-Kabir Mosque, Old Muqdadaya Market (سوق المقدادية القديمة)
- Al Orfali Mosque, Old Muqdadaya Market (سوق المقدادية القديمة)
- Muhammad Rasul Allah Mosque, Jalali Village (قرية الجاللي)
- Imam Bukhari Mosque, Dor al-Safir Region (دور الصفر)
- Al Shaheed Abd al-Kareem Mosque, Military Neighborhood/District (حي العسكر)
- Tawfiq Ajaj Mosque, Horreya Neighborhood/District (منطقة الحريّة)
- Basheer Mosque, Hamar Neighborhood/District (منطقة الحامر)

Site Description: Mosques in the city of Muqdadiya

Site Date: Unknown

Incident Summary: Militias attack and damage several Sunni mosques.

Incident Source and Description: On January 12, 2016 the BBC reported that Shia militiamen firebombed at least seven Sunni mosques in the al-Asiri district of the city of Muqdadiya, one day after two ISIL attacks on the city killed at least 23 people, including Shia militiamen.⁶⁴

According to the New York Times, two of the mosques were completely destroyed and the rest were partially damaged in the attacks. A Sunni imam was also killed during the violence.⁶⁵

Reuters reported that the attacks occurred in the central districts of Mualimeen, Asri, and Orouba. A member of the local council in Diyala Governorate, Haqqa al-Jabouri, blamed the burning of the mosques on “undisciplined (Shi’ite) militias”.⁶⁶

Sunni homes and shops were also firebombed and ten Sunnis were reportedly killed (later unconfirmed reports placed the death toll as much higher). Following the violence, the area was placed under a curfew. Amateur video footage released online appeared to show extensive damage to Sunni homes and business in Muqdadiya.

Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia groups has been ongoing in Diyala Governorate, with previous major attacks by either side, including attacks on mosques. On January 15, 2016 Reuters reported that Iraq’s top Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, had condemned the violence and urged the Iraqi government to prevent such attacks.⁶⁷ On January 19, the Wall Street Journal reported that “Sunni lawmakers walked out of Iraq’s parliament” to protest ongoing sectarian violence in Diyala Province.⁶⁸

Since the invasion of US-forces into Iraq and the toppling of Saddam Hussein, sectarian violence has been commonplace in many areas across Iraq. With the expansion of ISIL in the region attacks on Shia religious sites as well as areas populated mainly by Shia. As a result of the attacks, Shia militias often target the Sunni population, including religious sites, in retribution. ASOR CHI has documented several recent incidents of sectarian violence in Iraq that have resulted in the destruction of cultural heritage (See **ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0077**, **ASOR CHI Incident Report 15-0099**, **ASOR CHI Incident Report 16-0001**).

Pattern: Military activity: explosives, light weaponry.

⁶⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35290903>

⁶⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/01/12/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>

⁶⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-violence-idUSKCN0UP1R420160112>

⁶⁷ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-security-idUSKCN0UT19A>

⁶⁸ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/sunni-lawmakers-walk-out-of-iraqs-parliament-to-protest-violence-in-diyala-1453234093>

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI uncovered the names of 13 individual mosques in Muqdadiya that were reported by different sources as being targeted by militias. At the time of publication, it was difficult to distinguish which mosques were attacked during this specific incident and which may have been damaged previously. As such, they are included in this report with the intention of conducting further analysis on the situation as more information becomes available. ASOR CHI remains concerned as to the ongoing sectarian violence in Diyala Governorate and will continue to monitor the situation closely. ASOR CHI will document any additional information regarding the mosques targeted in Muqdadiya as well as additional damage in the surrounding areas.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

AFP: <http://news.yahoo.com/two-iraqi-journalists-shot-dead-employer-130412330.html>

Al Jazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/01/sunni-mosques-firebombed-iraq-160112152046040.html>

Al Jazeera, Inside Story (video): <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2016/01/iraq-government-stem-rising-sectarianism-160116174145352.html>

Al Jazeera Arabic (video Report): <https://twitter.com/AJArabic/status/686986207142625280>

Al Jahra News: <http://www.aljahra.news/?p=18654>

Associated Press: <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/492d158486bf423ab592b71ea9fddaea/iraqi-pm-vows-expel-after-deadly-mall-attack>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35290903>

Daily Star: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/Jan-12/331424-daesh-storm-baghdad-mall-killing-18.ashx>

New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/01/12/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>

NRT: <http://www.nrttv.com/EN/Details.aspx?jicare=4811>

Radio Free Europe: <http://www.rferl.org/content/iraq-baghdad-mall-attack/27481620.html>

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-violence-idUSKCN0UP1R420160112>

The World Weekly: <http://www.theworldweekly.com/reader/view/newswire/2016-01-12/day-of-violence-in-iraq-claims-over-50-lives/6291>

UN News Centre: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52984#.VpVZTJMrKYU>



Destruction of Al Qadisiyah Mosque (Diyala Alkhair; January 13, 2016)⁶⁹

⁶⁹ <https://twitter.com/DiyalaAlkhair/status/687265916351037440>