

# ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq<sup>1</sup>

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## Executive Summary

During the reporting period, DigitalGlobe satellite imagery revealed that Russian military forces occupied the archaeological site of Palmyra, specifically the area known as the Northern Necropolis within the UNESCO World Heritage site boundaries. Russian forces have constructed a paved military base that includes multiple structures, a helicopter landing pad, roadways (paved and unpaved), earthen berms, and fences. Areas within and around the base are being used for light and heavy vehicle parking. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MOD) has described this construction as a temporary camp for sappers to clear the site of mines laid by ISIL militants during their occupation, although the Russian MOD has not specified the length of time the base will be operational. While the ongoing mine clearing operation is necessary, the site’s militarization exposes the fragile and poorly preserved archaeological remains in the Northern Necropolis to other threats. Camp Alpha, built by United States military forces in April 2003 on the archaeological site of Babylon in Iraq and later transferred to Polish military forces in September 2003, provides a comparative case study. Assessments of the damage have been undertaken by the United States Department of State,<sup>2</sup> the British Museum,<sup>3</sup> archaeologists attached to Polish forces,<sup>4</sup> and UNESCO,<sup>5</sup> all detailing the negative impacts of militarization. Subsurface archaeological features were damaged and destroyed by the digging of trenches and postholes for barbed wire fences and by earthmoving for filling sandbags, the construction of berms, and the grading and leveling of land for vehicle parking, roads, new buildings, and a helipad — many of these areas were covered with either gravel or asphalt. Military vehicles struck buildings and cut deep ruts into the surface, which reportedly caused unspecified damage to subsurface features by churning up or compressing earth, and the vibrations from heavy helicopter traffic contributed to the collapse of a poorly preserved structure. Furthermore, the militarization of Babylon rendered the site inaccessible to the SBAH, preventing routine

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> <https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/babylondamagereport.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.britishmuseum.org/PDF/BabylonReport04.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Olbrys, M., A. Dolatowska and T. Burda (2004) *Report Concerning the Condition of the Preservation of the Babylon Archaeological Site.*

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Iraq/pdf/Report%20on%20Damages%20in%20Babylon.pdf>

maintenance and emergency interventions, which caused further deterioration of the site. The Russian MOD has not further defined the term “temporary” as potentially entailing weeks, months or years, but the 18-month occupation of Camp Alpha resulted in significant and often irreversible damage. If Russian military forces have not already undertaken preventative mitigation efforts to counteract the negative impacts of militarization and are not in consultation with the DGAM, the already poorly preserved archaeological features in the Northern Necropolis of Palmyra could suffer the same types of damage documented at Babylon.

The actions of the Russian MOD may potentially represent a violation of Article 4 of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, commonly known as the 1954 Hague Convention. The Russian Federation is a State Party to the Hague Convention and the First Protocol (1954). Paragraph 1 of Article 4 of the 1954 Hague Convention asks States Parties “to refrain from any use of the property and its immediate surroundings [...] for purposes which are likely to expose it to destruction or damage.” Therefore, the question is not whether the Russian military camp is inside the World Heritage boundary or not — even if the camp is in the buffer zone or the immediate surrounding of the site, it violates Article 4 of the Convention. Placing a military camp inside the site or inside its immediate surrounding constitutes placing a “military objective” within the boundary of Palmyra, which may transform the site into a “military objective” as well, exposing the site to damage or destruction as a military target. According to the Customary International Humanitarian Law (CIHL), military objectives are: “those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose partial or total destruction, capture or neutralization, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage.” This definition was adopted by the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention in 1999. Although Russia is not a State Party to the Second Protocol, the rules of the CIHL can be applied in this case. Furthermore, the concept of military necessity, according to the Second Protocol, shall be judged on the basis of two conditions: 1. No other feasible alternative was available at the moment of the conduct of hostilities, and 2. The assessment of the situation by a commander was made from all sources reasonably available to him/her at the moment of the conduct of hostilities. While clearing mines from Palmyra is needed to ensure the safety of military personnel and civilians, it is not readily apparent that placing the base directly inside the archaeological zone constituted a military necessity given that there is an abundance of available open land just outside the site boundary.

Airstrikes continue to inflict significant damage to heritage sites across Syria. Multiple places of worship in Aleppo, Hasakah, and Homs Governorates were damaged, including up to 11 mosques in Aleppo city, and the Idlib Museum was struck for the second time in May. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Deir Semaan, also known as Saint Simeon, was also severely damaged, which has been documented by The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative site monitors. Additionally, a mosque in Fallujah was reportedly struck by US-led coalition airstrikes.

ISIL militants released propaganda photographs of the destruction of the Mashki and Adad Gates at Nineveh, which occurred during the previous reporting period.

## Key Points

- Aerial bombardment shows ongoing airstrikes in the vicinity of al-Kabir Mosque in the village of Deir al-Asafir, Damascus Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0009 UPDATE**).
- New footage reveals the extent of damage to the Church of the Virgin Mary in the village of Tel Nasri, Hasakah Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0032**).
- A Russian military base has been constructed within the Northern Necropolis at Palmyra, Homs Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0065**).
- Airstrikes damage UNESCO World Heritage Site Deir Semaan in Deir Semaan, Aleppo Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0066**). The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative has produced a report on the damage.
- Ongoing airstrikes damage Al Kabir Mosque in the town of As-Sukhna, Homs Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0067**).
- Mortar shells struck and damaged the St. George Church in the city of Hasakah, Hasakah Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0068**).
- Alleged SARG barrel bombs damage Abi bin Abi Talib Mosque in the village of Burj al Qa'ei, Homs Governorate, Syria (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0069**).
- Airstrikes struck and damaged the fence of the Idlib Museum in the city of Idlib, Idlib Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0070**).
- Suspected Russian airstrikes damage Al Bara bin Malek Mosque, Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque, Salah ad Din Mosque, and Khalid Ibn Al-Walid Mosque in and around the city of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0071**).
- New ISIL propaganda photographs show the destruction of the Mashki and Adad Gates at the ancient city of Nineveh, Ninawa Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0010 UPDATE**).
- Alleged US-led coalition airstrikes struck and damaged Al-Raqib Mosque in the city of Fallujah, Al Anbar Governorate (**ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 16-0014**).

## Heritage Timeline

May 24, 2016

**UNESCO published an article titled “UNESCO deploras destructions at the Maarrat al Numan Museum in Idlib province, Syria.”** In the second strike on the museum, one of the structure’s walls collapsed and the roof and main dome of the hammam sustained serious damage.

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco\\_deploras\\_destructions\\_at\\_the\\_maarrat\\_al\\_numan\\_museum\\_in\\_idlib\\_province\\_syria/#.V0cUued941i](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_deploras_destructions_at_the_maarrat_al_numan_museum_in_idlib_province_syria/#.V0cUued941i)

- May 23, 2016      **The Metropolitan Museum of Art** will hold a symposium titled “**Palmyra: Mirage in the Desert.**” Speakers include several archaeologists who have excavated at Palmyra.  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/events/programs/met-speaks/symposia/palmyra>
- **SNHR** published a post titled “**Suspected Russian forces targeted Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque in Kafr Hamra town in Aleppo governorate in May 23.**” An airstrike partially damaged a mosque in Kafr Hamra.  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/23/suspected-russian-forces-targeted-ammam-bin-yasser-mosque-kafr-hamra-town-aleppo-governorate-may-23/>
- May 22, 2016      **SNHR** published a post titled “**Government forces targeted National Museum in Idlib city in May 22.**” SNHR reports an airstrike damaged a museum in Idlib, damaging its fence.  
**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0070.**  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/22/government-forces-targeted-national-museum-idlib-city-may-22/>
- May 21, 2016      **SNHR** published a post titled “**Government forces targeted Ali Bin Abi Taleb Mosque in Burj Al Qa’ei village in Homs governorate in May 20.**” SNHR reports a mosque was severely damaged by barrel bombs. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0069.**  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/21/government-forces-targeted-ali-bin-abi-taleb-mosque-burj-al-qa-ei-village-homs-governorate-may-20/>
- May 20, 2016      *Apollo Magazine* published an article titled “**While the world watches Palmyra, another of Syria’s heritage sites risks destruction**” (by Ross Burns). Ross Burns discusses the history and importance of Qalaat Semaan, which was recently damaged in an alleged airstrike. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0069.**  
<http://www.apollo-magazine.com/while-the-world-watches-palmyra-another-of-syrias-heritage-sites-risks-destruction-st-simeon/>
- *The Economist* published an article titled “**Virtual reality: Introducing “RecoVR Mosul”, The Economist’s first VR experience.**” *The Economist* has collaborated with Rekrei, a non-profit group formerly known as Project Mosul, to recreate the Mosul Museum and many of its destroyed artifacts, explain why they matter, and examine how they were virtually reconstructed.  
<http://www.economist.com/blogs/prospero/2016/05/virtual-reality>

- **SNHR** published a post titled “**Government forces targeted Al Baraa Bin Malek Mosque in Hraitan city in Aleppo governorate in May 20.**” SNHR reports a mosque was partially destroyed in an airstrike. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0071.**  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/20/government-forces-targeted-al-baraa-bin-malek-mosque-hraitan-city-aleppo-governorate-may-20-2/>
  - *The Middle East Eye* published an article titled “**Looting rife, heritage sites destroyed: The state of Syria’s history**” (by Lizzie Porter). This article discusses damage and looting at cultural heritage sites throughout Syria with experts including Amr al-Azm and Diana Darke.  
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/looting-rife-and-heritage-sites-destroyed-state-syrias-history-984470166>
- May 19, 2016
- *The International Business Times* published an article titled “**War on Isis: Row rages over Russian military base in ancient Syrian site of Palmyra**” (by Brendan Cole). This article discusses objections to the Russian military base at Palmyra. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0065.**  
<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/war-isis-row-rages-over-russian-military-base-ancient-syrian-site-palmyra-1560925>
  - *The Politic* published an article titled “**A Doctrine of Destruction: ISIS Attempts to Erase History**” (by Sarah Donilon). This article explains the ideology behind ISIL’s destruction of Palmyra and other ancient sites.  
<http://thepolitic.org/a-doctrine-of-destruction-isis-attempts-to-erase-history/>
  - *Explorers Journal* published an article titled “**Lust for Loot: Collecting Is Driving the Demand for Plunder**” (by Sarah Parcak). The author argues archaeologists need to educate antiquities collectors on the issues surrounding the acquisition of looted artifacts.  
<http://ht.ly/1Qrz300n04I>
  - **The Metropolitan Museum of Art** posted a video in which Judith Weingarten gives a tour of the Met’s upcoming exhibit “**Palmyra: Mirage in the Desert.**”  
<https://www.facebook.com/metmuseum/videos/10153713085047635/>

- *Baladi News* published an article titled “بلدي نيوز تفتح ملف ”أثار“ (Monuments of Aleppo: The world watches while human heritage is on fire).” The many damaged cultural heritage sites and monuments in Aleppo governorate are discussed, including the Aleppo Citadel, the Umayyad Mosque, and Qalaat Semaan.  
<http://b-sy.net/2ak4077p>
  - *Sputnik* published an article titled “**Russian Archaeologists Ready for Mission to Restore Palmyra.**” According to Russian Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky, Russia is ready to send an archaeological expedition to Palmyra that will “take all the expenses and send a permanent archaeological expedition that will stay and work there.”  
<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160519/1039900009/russia-palmyra-expedition.html>
  - **Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society** at the **University of Chicago** will hold a conference titled “**Dealing with Heritage: New Policy Approaches**” May 19-20, 2016. Ancient art dealers and cultural heritage law experts will speak.  
<http://neubauercollegium.uchicago.edu/events/uc/heritage/>
- May 18, 2016
- The New York Times* published an article titled “**When Cultural Heritage Is Caught in the Crosshairs**” (by Andrew E. Kramer & Sewell Chan). This article discusses the Russian base at Palmyra and other cultural heritage sites around the world that have been “harmed as a result of negligence, recklessness or worse.”  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/19/world/middleeast/palmyra-russia-ancient-ruins.html>
- **APSA 2011** published a post titled “**Ma’arrat al-Numan: damage to Hammam al-Tekyia al-Muradyia 09.05.2016.**” APSA shared photos of a hammam and souq that were once part of a complex with Khan Murad Basha, which holds the recently damaged Museum of Maarat al-Numan.  
<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/man-09-05-2016/>
  - *Die Welt* published an article titled “**Russen bauen eine Militärbasis im antiken Palmyra.**” Michael Danti is interviewed regarding Russia’s construction of a military base within the ancient site of Palmyra. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0065.**  
<http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article155470242/Russen-bauen-eine-Militaerbasis-im-antiken-Palmyra.html>

- *The Washington Post* published an article titled “**Despite supposed withdrawal, Russia building up a new base in Syria, Pentagon says**” (by Thomas Gibbons-Neff). Army Colonel Steve Warren, a spokesman for the US-led campaign against ISIL, stated that the Pentagon was monitoring the new Russian base in Palmyra. ASOR CHI satellite imagery analysis proving the location of the base was included in the article. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0065.**  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/05/18/despite-supposed-withdrawal-russia-building-up-new-base-in-syria-pentagon-says/>

May 17, 2016

UNESCO published an article titled “**Director-General of UNESCO deplores severe damage at Church of Saint Simeon, in northern Syria.**” Irina Bokova called on “all parties to the conflict to refrain from any military use and from targeting cultural heritage sites and monuments across all of Syria.” **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0066.**  
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1499>

May 16, 2016

*CNN* published an article titled “**Fear and living in Syria: Ancient Christian community rebuilds**” (by Frederik Pleitgen & Paul Armstrong). Several important sites in Maaloula were damaged when the town was taken by al-Nusra in 2013.  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/16/middleeast/syria-maaloula-christians/>

- *TASS* published an article titled “**Experts say innumerable ancient treasures of Syria are lost.**” This article discusses illegal excavation and intentional destruction at Palmyra.  
<http://tass.ru/en/society/875992>

- *Al Monitor* published an article titled “**UNESCO steps in to save what’s left of Syria’s Palmyra**” (by Tamer Osman). UNESCO recently sent a mission of experts headed by Mechtild Rossler, director of UNESCO’s World Heritage Center, to take preliminary stock of the destruction at Palmyra.  
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/syria-palmyra-archaeological-heritage-sites-destroyed-fight.html#>

- The Architect's Newspaper* published an article titled **“Problems in Palmyra: How should we rebuild our ancient ruins?”** (by Jason Sayer) This article discusses the debate amongst archaeologists and politicians surrounding how, if, and by whom the destroyed monuments of Palmyra should be reconstructed.

<http://archpaper.com/2016/05/palmyra-preservation/>
- Several media outlets reported on the construction of a base by Russian forces in the Northern Necropolis of Palmyra.

**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0065.**

[http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/3d281c11a96b4ad082fe88aa0db04305/Article\\_2016-05-17-ML--Syria/id-cd7074baa70c4637a507f3f36154b5ef](http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/3d281c11a96b4ad082fe88aa0db04305/Article_2016-05-17-ML--Syria/id-cd7074baa70c4637a507f3f36154b5ef)

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/danvergano/a-new-russian-military-base-is-threatening-ancient-ruins-in>

<http://www.chron.com/news/world/article/Report-Russians-building-army-base-at-Syria-s-7520802.php#photo-10089292>

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/russians-building-army-base-at-syrias-palmyra-site.aspx>

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/05/17/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>

<http://eaworldview.com/2016/05/syria-feature-is-russia-building-a-military-base-near-palmyra/>

<http://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/russians-building-army-base-at-syria-s-palmyra-site-1.409876>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/russia-builds-military-base-at-palmyra-ruins-vj7sq89jp>

<http://freebeacon.com/national-security/report-russia-built-military-base-in-syria-palmyra/>
- The Times* published an article titled **“Palmyra could rise again from rubble”** (by Tom Coghlan). ICONEM used a drone and computer modeling to study Palmyra in April shortly after it was recaptured from ISIL.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tc-palmyra-tdwt2lrh2>

- The Times* published an article titled “**Aleppo’s old city is the real emergency**” (by Tom Coghlan). Maamoun Abdulkarim says that more than 150 ancient buildings have been destroyed by fighting in the old city of Aleppo.  
<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/aleppos-old-city-is-the-real-emergency-bl253wnvc>
- May 15, 2016  
**DGAM** published an article titled “استكمال أعمال التوثيق ثلاثي الأبعاد في موقع تدمر (The completion of the three-dimensional documentation at the site of Palmyra).” The DGAM and ICONEM have begun the process of using hundreds of photographs to create three-dimensional models of destroyed monuments at Palmyra in order to aid in their restoration.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=177&id=1988>
- May 14, 2016  
*Gulf News* published an article titled “**Russia wants glory of rebuilding Syria’s ancient city of Palmyra**” (by Sami Moubayed). This article discusses damage to monuments and the museum at Palmyra, and argues that Russia sees the city “as a symbol of its strength and influence in the new Middle East.”  
<http://gulfnnews.com/news/mena/syria/russia-wants-glory-of-rebuilding-syria-s-ancient-city-of-palmyra-1.1827392>
- May 13, 2016  
*Middle East Eye* published a book review titled “**The rise and fall of Aleppo, Syria’s great merchant city**” (by Chris Doyle). A new book by Philip Mansel discusses the history of Aleppo.  
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/reviews/rise-and-fall-aleppo-syrias-great-merchant-city-2078270977>
- Ruptly TV* published a YouTube video titled “**Russia: Hermitage Museum team digitally recreates Palmyra’s ancient wonders.**” Specialists from the Hermitage Museum in Moscow released a computer generated 3D model of Palmyra.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3\\_7Klj2JyK8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_7Klj2JyK8)
- The Telegraph* published an article titled “**Syrian monastery where St Simeon sat on a pillar for four decades damaged by missile attack**” (by Richard Spencer). Activists report a Russian airstrike damaged the pilgrimage site of the Church of St Simeon in Aleppo Governorate.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/13/syrian-monastery-where-st-simeon-sat-on-a-pillar-for-four-decade/>

- *Are you Syrious* published a blog post titled “**AYS report: UNESCO World Heritage site of Qal’at Se’man damaged in a Russian airstrike**” (by Shannon Steiner). The TDA report discussing the attack on Qalaat Semaan is discussed.  
<https://medium.com/@AreYouSyrious/ays-report-unesco-world-heritage-site-of-qalat-se-man-destroyed-in-a-russian-airstrike-c2ea4d36b8f3#.u1cluv1t9>
  - **DGAM** published an article titled “**Damage at the Church of Saint Simeon Stylites.**” The DGAM reports that Qalaat Semaan was “damaged due to the clashes at the western countryside of Aleppo.” **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0066.**  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1987>
  - *Rudaw* published an article titled “**From Persepolis to Palmyra: A precedent for the Russians to consider in Syria?**” (by Paul Iddon). The author compares Russia’s recent concert in the Theater at Palmyra to the last Shah of Iran’s controversial and extravagant party at Persepolis in 1971.  
<http://rudaw.net/english/analysis/13052016>
  - *Stars and Stripes* published an article titled “**Syrian agency fights to save country’s archeological heritage**” (by Slobodan Lekic). Maamoun Abdulkarim and Emma Cunliffe are interviewed regarding cultural heritage and antiquities looting in Syria.  
<http://www.stripes.com/news/syrian-agency-fights-to-save-country-s-archeological-heritage-1.409413>
- May 12, 2016
- **SNHR** published a post titled “**Government forces targeted Al Kabir Mosque in Al Sukhneh city in Homs governorate in May 11.**” SARG forces allegedly damaged a mosque. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0067.**  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/12/government-forces-targeted-al-kabir-mosque-al-sukhneh-city-homs-governorate-may-11/>
  - *Apollo Magazine* published an article titled “**We should all get behind the #Unite4Heritage campaign**” (by Garry Shaw). UNESCO launched #Unite4Heritage to counter extremist propaganda on social media. The campaign aimed at celebrating cultural heritage and diversity in Iraq, Syria, and other conflict zones.  
<http://www.apollo-magazine.com/we-should-all-get-behind-the-unite4heritage-campaign/>

- WYPR published an article and radio interview titled “**The Cultural Costs of the Conflict in Syria**” (by Sheilah Kast & Andrea Appleton). Amr al-Azm of The Day After organization discusses the destruction and damage of cultural heritage sites throughout Syria.  
<http://wypr.org/post/cultural-costs-conflict-syria#stream/0>
- The House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee posted a video of a hearing titled “**Following the Money: Examining Current Terrorist Financing Trends and the Threat to the Homeland.**” This hearing examined current and developing trends in illicit financial activity that may be used to support operations by global terrorist organizations, and with a focus on criminal activity, charity fraud, and antiquities smuggling.  
<https://homeland.house.gov/hearing/following-money-examining-current-terrorist-financing-trends-threat-homeland/>
- *Syria Direct* published an article titled “**In Idlib’s ancient Dead Cities, a few try to stem the tide of destruction**” (by Alaa Nassar & Samuel Kieke). This article discusses the efforts of various groups to protect and preserve cultural heritage sites and museums in Idlib governorate.  
<http://syriadirect.org/news/in-idlib%E2%80%99s-ancient-dead-cities-a-few-try-to-stem-the-tide-of-destruction/>
- DGAM published an article titled “**Meeting on Improving Inventories of Built Movable Cultural Heritage.**” As part of the EU-funded project “Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage,” a meeting was held on May 6, 2016 in Beirut to discuss ways of improving inventories for “built movable cultural heritage” in Syria.  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1984>
- *The World Post* published an article titled “**Where culture meets terrorism: art and the ongoing fight to save history**” (by Mark V. Vlastic). The author discusses antiquities looting perpetrated by all sides in the Syrian conflict.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-v-vlastic/where-culture-meets-terror\\_b\\_9935542.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-v-vlastic/where-culture-meets-terror_b_9935542.html)

- Quartz published an article titled “**Newly released stock footage offers a heartbreaking glimpse of life in Iraq and Syria before ISIL**” (by Anne Quito). Online stock photo agency Shutterstock has plans to release about 45,000 video clips depicting unique or hard-to-access places and people in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. Included in the collection is archival footage of ancient buildings and heritage sites that have been since destroyed or looted by the militant group ISIL.  
<http://qz.com/682267/newly-released-stock-footage-offers-a-heartbreaking-glimpse-of-life-in-iraq-and-syria-before-isil/>

- UNESCO published an article titled “**UNESCO holds consultations ahead of the International Expert Meeting in Berlin on Cultural Heritage in Syria.**” In preparation for the UNESCO experts’ meeting in Berlin in June on the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Syria, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova and UNESCO teams are pursuing consultations with representatives from Member States and experts to assess the situation.  
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1495>

May 11, 2016

*Reuters* published an article titled “**Libya's ancient sites not exposed to same risk as in Syria, Iraq - experts**” (by Aidan Lewis). Libyan and international experts say Libya has not faced the same risk to its antiquities as Syria and Iraq, though there is evidence Islamic State is involved in the smuggling of antiquities.  
<http://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL5N1886WP?sp=true>

- *Rudaw* published an article titled “**For travelers in on its secrets, Kurdistan remains tourist gem**” (by Simav Mazher). Given its relative security compared to the rest of Iraq, tourism officials in Erbil and elsewhere in Iraqi Kurdistan hope to draw more international tourists.  
<http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/110520162>

May 10, 2016

*The World Post* published an article titled “**Protecting cultural heritage, one act at a time**” (by Deborah Lehr). Deborah Lehr of the Antiquities Coalition discusses the “Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act” signed by President Obama on May 9, 2016.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/deborah-lehr/protecting-cultural-herit\\_b\\_9889182.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/deborah-lehr/protecting-cultural-herit_b_9889182.html)

- *Live Science* published an article titled “**Syrian Antiquities Import Restrictions Are Law, But Will They Work?**” (by Owen Jarus) The questionable effectiveness of similar restrictions placed on Iraqi antiquities causes some to doubt the efficacy of the new restrictions placed on Syrian antiquities.  
<http://www.livescience.com/54698-obama-signs-syrian-antiquities-import-restrictions.html>

## Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo Governorate:
  - During the reporting period, airstrikes, shelling, and clashes between armed groups continued to inflict damage across dozens of neighborhoods in the city of Aleppo. In addition, local sources reported ongoing airstrikes in the opposition-held area of Handarat, as well as the cities of Anadan and Hraitan.<sup>6</sup>
  - On May 12, Turkish shelling and US-led coalition airstrikes targeted ISIL positions in northern Aleppo, destroying an ISIL building, fortified defensive positions, and killing 28 militants.<sup>7</sup>
  - From May 16-20, pro-regime forces attempted to advance in opposition-held Handarat Camp north of the city of Aleppo.<sup>8</sup>
  - On May 13, Amnesty International released a report accusing armed opposition groups of war crimes in the Aleppo city neighborhood of Sheikh Maqsood as a result of the groups’ alleged indiscriminate, repeated shelling of civilian areas.<sup>9</sup>
  - On May 15, Turkish shelling and US-led coalition airstrikes targeted ISIL positions in northern Aleppo, killing 27 ISIL militants.<sup>10</sup>
  - On May 22, a rebel official and Syrian activists reported that Russian airstrikes had carried out attacks on Castello road, the only road leading in and out of rebel-held areas of Aleppo.<sup>11</sup>
2. Homs Governorate:
  - During the reporting period, local sources reported airstrikes by SARG and Russian forces over the al-Mazar Mountains, northwest of Palmyra, in an attempt to push out ISIL militants.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/May-11/351628-army-rebels-trade-fire-in-syrias-aleppo-as-truce-end-looms.ashx> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-idUSKCN0Y30ZP> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0Y30WE> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/air-strikes-target-syria-aleppo-truce-expires-160512094845550.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-idUSKCN0Y30ZP>

<sup>8</sup> <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/syria-armed-opposition-groups-committing-war-crimes-in-aleppo-city/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://aa.com.tr/en/turkey/27-daesh-terrorists-killed-in-northern-syria-/572929>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0YD0D8>

- During the reporting period, local activists and news outlets reported airstrikes by SARG and Russian forces struck areas across Homs Governorate including the cities of Ar Rastan and Kafr Laha.<sup>13</sup>
  - On May 16, ISIL militants blew up several gas pumping stations in the Shaer gas fields.<sup>14</sup>
  - On May 17, ISIL militants captured several pro-regime positions at the Jazal Oil Field.<sup>15</sup>
  - On May 20, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that Russian deminers had cleared approximately 19,000 explosive devices and 116 km (72 miles) of roads in Palmyra. According to Shoigu, the demining team has already arrived back in Russia, however a small group of Russian forces will remain in Palmyra to train SARG forces.<sup>16</sup>
  - On May 24, satellite imagery released by the “intelligence company Startfor” showed extensive fire damage to the T4 Airbase (aka Sharyat Airbase), 40 km southeast of the city of Homs. According to Stratfor’s analysis, “four helicopters and 20 lorries” were destroyed last week in a “series of fires inside..the base.” The cause of the fires remains undetermined, although some experts assert ISIL militants launched the attacks on the base. The Russian military has denied the report that ISIL had attacked the base.<sup>17</sup>
3. Damascus Governorate:
- On May 12, an ICRC aid convoy intending to deliver aid to the besieged town of Daraya, under siege since 2012, was cancelled by the Syrian government. Amnesty International reported that SARG shelling struck the area of the town where residents had gathered to receive aid, killing and wounding civilians.<sup>18</sup>
  - On May 13, a large explosion occurred near the Damascus airport, killing Hezbollah’s “most senior military commander in Syria’s war”, Mustafa Badreddine. On May 14, Hezbollah blamed “Sunni insurgents” (likely Islamist opposition forces) for the death of Badreddine.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.voanews.com/content/islamic-state-retaliates-with-car-bombing-in-baghdad/3332067.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/17/civilians-died-government-forces-shelling-al-rastan-city-homs-governorate-may-16/>; <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/17/women-died-government-forces-shelling-kafr-laha-town-homs-governorate-may-17/>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36325598>; <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/19/victims-died-government-forces-shelling-al-rastan-city-homs-governorate-may-19/>; <http://en.etilaf.org/all-news/local-news/28-civilians-killed-in-regime-airstrikes-in-homs-idlib.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/May-17/352469-militants-blasts-rock-major-syria-gas-field-observatory.ashx>

<sup>15</sup> <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

<sup>16</sup> <http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20160520/F1039969793/russia-palmyra-demining.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36368346>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/syria-aid-delivery-to-besieged-daraya/>; [https://twitter.com/ICRC\\_sy/status/730789392273575938](https://twitter.com/ICRC_sy/status/730789392273575938); <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/12/syrian-regime-stops-aid-convoy-entering-starving-damascus-suburb/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36283424>; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/hezbollah-blames-top-commanders-death-on-sunni-extremists/2016/05/14/d8357db2-19ac-11e6-924d-838753295f9a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/hezbollah-blames-top-commanders-death-on-sunni-extremists/2016/05/14/d8357db2-19ac-11e6-924d-838753295f9a_story.html)

#### 4. Rif Dimashq Governorate:

- On May 13, SARG forces, backed by pro-regime allies, regained control of the town of Zibdeen from Islamist opposition forces.<sup>20</sup>
- On May 16, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that clashes in Eastern Ghouta between Jaish al-Islam and two Al Nusra Front affiliated groups Faylaq al-Rahman and Jaish al-Fustat, had killed more than 300 fighters since April 28th.<sup>21</sup>
- From May 17-20, opposition forces reported the deployment of “heavy vehicles and reinforcements” on the outskirts of the city of Daraya in the Damascus suburbs of Western Ghouta.<sup>22</sup>
- On May 18, the UN and the ICRC delivered aid to the opposition-held town of Harasta in Eastern Ghouta for the first time since October 2012.<sup>23</sup>
- On May 18-19, SOHR reported that SARG forces and pro-regime allies recaptured large areas in the opposition-held Damascus suburbs of Eastern Ghouta including the town of Deir al-Asafir and nine surrounding villages.<sup>24</sup>
- On May 19, SOHR reported that SARG forces conducted dozens of airstrikes around the opposition-held town of Khan al Sheih.<sup>25</sup>

#### 5. Idlib Governorate:

- During the reporting period, local sources reported ongoing airstrikes by SARG and Russian forces in several towns across Idlib Governorate as well as in the cities of Jisr al Shoughour, Baath, and Idlib.<sup>26</sup>
- On May 13, an airstrike of unknown origin struck a meeting of Al Nusra Front members, at the “disused Abu al-Duhour air base”, killing 16 members of the group.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> [http://aranews.net/2016/05/syrian-army-recaptures-areas-islamist-rebels-near-damascus/?utm\\_source=twitter](http://aranews.net/2016/05/syrian-army-recaptures-areas-islamist-rebels-near-damascus/?utm_source=twitter)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/May-15/352181-rebel-infighting-near-syria-capital-kills-hundreds-activists.ashx> ; <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/17/massacre-due-government-forces-shelling-khan-al-sheih-camp-damascus-suburbs-may-17/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

<sup>23</sup> <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-damascus-idUSKCN0YA0K6> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36333199> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-damascus-idUSKCN0YA0K6>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2016/05/15/casualties-and-injuries-in-the-bombing-by-the-regime-forces-on-the-countryside-jisr-al-shughur-and-the-limits-of-idlib-with-latakia/> ; <http://en.etilaf.org/all-news/local-news/28-civilians-killed-in-regime-airstrikes-in-homs-idlib.html>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-nusra-idUSKCN0Y40M0> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

6. Deir ez Zor Governorate:
  - On May 14, ISIL militants stormed al-Assad Hospital, west of the city of Deir ez Zor, killing at least 35 pro-regime fighters and taking medical staff hostage before being forced out by pro-regime forces. In addition, the ISIL-affiliated news agency Amaq reported that militants had captured a fire station, university dormitories, grain silos, and areas near the al-Tayyam oil fields.<sup>28</sup>
7. Raqqa Governorate:
  - On May 14, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) released a report detailing two reported SARG aerial bombardments on civilian sites in the city of Raqqa that occurred on March 18-19, 2016.<sup>29</sup>
  - On May 15, local activist group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently (RBSS) reported that ISIL officials had canceled any vacations or leave requests from fighters and were bolstering their numbers in the city of Raqqa in anticipation of an upcoming “international assault on the city.”<sup>30</sup>
  - On May 19, the activist group RBSS reported that airstrikes had targeted the municipal sports stadium in the center of the city of Raqqa. The sports stadium has previously been reported to be near ISIL’s headquarters in the city.<sup>31</sup>
  - On May 19, RBSS released a photograph of a pamphlet that the group stated had been dropped by US-led coalition aircraft over the city of Raqqa warning the city’s residents to leave the city.<sup>32</sup>
  - On May 24, Rudaw reported that Kurdish YPG and Syrian Democratic Forces had begun a “three-pronged offensive” on areas north of the ISIL-stronghold of Raqqa. An SFD source confirmed that US-led coalition airstrikes were involved in the offensive.<sup>33</sup>
8. Hama Governorate:
  - On May 12, Syrian opposition forces, including Al Nusra Front, captured the Alawite village of al-Zara located north of the city of Homs and abducted residents. On May 13, it was reported that those forces had killed at least 19 civilians. Dozens of al-Zara’s residents remain missing.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36295288> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

<sup>29</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/14/21736/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/15/isil-cancels-fighters-holidays-as-it-prepares-to-defend-raqqa/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.raqqa-sl.co/?p=2927> ; <http://el-akhbar.com/en/Syrian-Force-Targets-ISIL-92278/> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/syrians-insane-nights-french-bombing-151117052945111.html>

<sup>32</sup> [https://twitter.com/Raqqa\\_SL/status/733367223868362752](https://twitter.com/Raqqa_SL/status/733367223868362752) ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/May-20/353064-coalition-flyers-urge-residents-to-quit-isis-syria-bastion.ashx>

<sup>33</sup> <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/syria/24052016> ; <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-isis-raqqa-offensive-us-backed-sdf-coalition-kurdish-arab-fighters/> ; <http://www.raqqa-sl.com/?p=2990> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-raqqa-idinkcn0yf2g3>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-village-idUSKCN0Y30Y2> ; <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/05/12/Syria-s-al-Qaeda-branch-seizes-central-Alawite-village.html> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-village-idUSKCN0Y41ME> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

9. Latakia Governorate:

- On May 23, several car and suicide bombings struck two bus stations in the city of Tartus and the town of Jableh, killing at least 154 people and wounding more than 300. Three other suicide attacks occurred at the entrance of the emergency department at Jableh National Hospital and another attack struck near the offices of the electricity directorate. ISIL took responsibility for the attack.<sup>35</sup>

10. Hasakah Governorate:

- On May 14, a car bombing struck the town of Qamishli, killing at least two people including a Kurdish Asayish member.<sup>36</sup>
- On May 18, Kurdish news sources reported clashes between SARG and Kurdish forces in the city of Hasakah.<sup>37</sup>

Other Key Points:

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Abu Kamal, Ayn Isa, Deir ez Zor, Manbij, Mara, Palmyra, Raqqa, Shadaddi, Tamakh, and Tanf.<sup>38</sup>
- On May 17, diplomats from the US, Russia, Europe, and the Middle East met in Vienna in an attempt to save Syrian peace talk meetings. The meeting was planned by US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on May 16. Neither members of the Syrian opposition nor representatives of the Syrian government were present for the talks.<sup>39</sup>
- On May 20, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu proposed joint airstrikes between the Russian Air Force and the US-led coalition against al-Qaeda affiliate Al Nusra Front and other groups who were not signatories to the recent ceasefire, to begin as early as May 25, 2016. US officials later rejected the offer.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36358162> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-latakia-idUSKCN0YE0PB> ; <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/May-24/353558-death-toll-from-isis-bombings-in-assad-heartland-hits-154-activists.ashx>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.euronews.com/newswires/3193619-car-blast-kills-two-in-qamishli-northeast-syria-official/>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/c26423d7-be16-4dac-a172-d96cef945e20/Kurds-clash-with-Syrian-government-security-in-Hasaka> ; <http://aranews.net/2016/05/clashes-break-kurdish-asayish-forces-syrian-regime-troops-hasakah/> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/syria-situation-report-may-12-20-2016>

<sup>38</sup> See: "US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq". *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [757589](#), [758881](#), [759740](#), [759817](#), [760072](#), [761156](#), [775068](#), [776420](#), [777774](#), [778277](#), [778816](#), [780118](#), [781067](#)

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/content/kerry-lavrov-co-chair-syrian-peace-talks-vienna-may-17/27739923.html> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36310876>

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russia-proposes-joint-airstrikes-with-us-led-coalition-in-syria/2016/05/20/3f679bfc-1e92-11e6-9c81-4be1c14fb8c8\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russia-proposes-joint-airstrikes-with-us-led-coalition-in-syria/2016/05/20/3f679bfc-1e92-11e6-9c81-4be1c14fb8c8_story.html)

- On May 21, General Joseph Votel, the commanding general of US Central Command (Centcom) secretly visited US special operations forces along with members of the SDF in northern Syria. According to Voice of America, the visit angered Syrian rebels, as Votel reportedly chose to meet with Kurdish commanders to discuss the next steps against ISIL as opposed to Syrian rebel groups.<sup>41</sup>

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

1. Baghdad Governorate:

- On May 11, an ISIL car bombing in the Baghdad neighborhood of Sadr City killed at least 64 people and wounded at least 87 more. As many as three more additional car bombs struck shortly after the attack on Sadr City in the predominantly-Shia areas of Kadhimiya as well as in the predominantly-Sunni district of Adil, killing at least 27 people and wounding dozens more.<sup>42</sup>
- On May 12, two suicide bombings struck a police station in the Baghdad suburb of Abu Ghraib, killing five Iraqi police officers.<sup>43</sup>
- On May 14, an ‘explosion’ in the district of Madain, south of Baghdad, killed two people and wounded seven more.<sup>44</sup>
- On May 15, three ISIL car bombs and six suicide bombers conducted an attack on the Taji gas factory north of capital of Baghdad, killing at least 14 people. Four additional car bombings in and around Baghdad killed 15 people and wounded another 46.<sup>45</sup>
- On May 17, three ISIL bombings including two suicide bombings and one car bomb struck Baghdad, killing at least 77 people and wounding 140 more. The bombings struck a marketplace in the majority-Shia northern district of al-Shaab, the majority-Shia district of Sadr City, and in the mixed Shia-Sunni neighborhood of al-Rasheed.<sup>46</sup>
- On May 18, Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr ordered his “armed followers” known as “Saraya al-Salam, or Peace Brigades” to withdraw from the areas of Baghdad that had been hit in the recent ISIL bombings after al-Sadr had deployed the militia following the May 17, 2016 attack.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/778269/centcom-commander-visits-iraq-and-syria> ; <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-generals-surprise-visit-to-kurds-prompts-syrian-rebels-fury/3341868.html>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36265245> ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0Y20MV> ; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/iraq-baghdad-sadr-city-market-explosion-160511093350720.html> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isiss-explosive-attacks-greater-baghdad-area-april-4-may-11-2016>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-3586483/Twin-suicide-attack-hits-police-station-near-Baghdad-kill-5.html> ; <https://www.yahoo.com/news/residents-hold-protest-blaming-leaders-baghdad-carnage-170414881.html>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/iraqi-pm-blames-isis-violence-political-crisis-459986>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36295622> ; <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/647c63c5a08346d997c6195b0abd42ba/iraq-militant-attack-north-baghdad-kills-least-11>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0Y8103>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-security-idUSKCN0Y91Y4>

- On May 20, Iraqi security forces used rubber bullets, water cannons, teargas, and reportedly live ammunition to disperse protesters near Baghdad's Green Zone. At least three people were killed and 89 more injured. A curfew was later announced over the city.<sup>48</sup>
2. Al Anbar Governorate:
- On May 11, ISIL militants carried out several suicide car bombings against approaching Iraqi forces outside of the city of al-Baghdadi, killing 15 Iraqi soldiers and wounding more than 40.<sup>49</sup>
  - On May 12, ISIL militants carried out a suicide truck bombing attack against Iraqi security forces in the district of Jarayshi, north of the city of Ramadi, killing at least 17 Iraqi soldiers.<sup>50</sup>
  - On May 13, targeted US-led coalition airstrikes killed two ISIL emirs in Al Anbar Governorate.<sup>51</sup>
  - On May 14, ISIL militants staged an attack in the city of Amiriyat Fallujah, killing five Iraqi Security forces and wounding 13.<sup>52</sup>
  - On May 16, Iraqi security forces and allied fighters began an offensive to retake the town of Ar-Rutbah from ISIL militants.<sup>53</sup>
  - On May 18, Iraqi security forces, backed by tribesman and US-led coalition airstrikes, entered the town of Ar-Rutbah reportedly facing little resistance from ISIL militants.<sup>54</sup>
  - On May 22, the offensive to retake Fallujah was announced by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al Abadi. According to Iraqi authorities, "Iraqi police, counterterrorism forces, tribal fighters and Shiite militias were participating in the battle." However, media reporting has suggested that commanders and forces linked to Iran and other Shia organizations, including some led by US-designated 'terrorists', are also present.<sup>55</sup>
  - On May 23, Iraqi security forces, backed by US-led coalition airstrikes, recaptured the area of Niaimiyah, south of Fallujah. The Shia militia known as the Popular Mobilization Force announced that they had captured the nearby city of Garma.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/20f86cf980484f68b7397dd827d58f07/iraqi-protesters-storm-baghdads-green-zone-shooting-erupts> ; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36344996> ; <http://post.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/iraq-situation-report-may-11-24-2016>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/iraq-baghdad-sadr-city-market-explosion-160511093350720.html>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-blast-idUSKCN0Y30WL>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/775516/oir-spokesman-attacks-in-baghdad-show-isil-reverting-to-terrorist-roots>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/iraqi-pm-blames-isis-violence-political-crisis-459986>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/May-16/352316-iraq-launches-operation-to-retake-anbar-town.ashx>

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36320638>

<sup>55</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iraqi-military-preparing-to-retake-fallujah-from-islamic-state/2016/05/22/15c832cc-200c-11e6-aa84-42391ba52c91\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iraqi-military-preparing-to-retake-fallujah-from-islamic-state/2016/05/22/15c832cc-200c-11e6-aa84-42391ba52c91_story.html) ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-falluja-idUSKCN0YD0WO> ; <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/05/iranian-quds-force-leader-reportedly-in-fallujah.php>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/iraqi-military-claims-advances-in-jihadist-held-fallujah/2016/05/23/45b266c6-20e6-11e6-b944->

- On May 24, Iraqi security forces continued shelling ISIL targets in Fallujah. The forces were able to capture the villages of Haswahm, Albu Awda, and Abbasian.<sup>57</sup>
- 3. Salah ad Din Governorate:
  - On May 13, ISIL militants opened fire at a cafe in the majority-Shia town of Balad, killing at least 12 young men and wounding 25 more. The militants fled and one later detonated a suicide vest, killing four additional people.<sup>58</sup>
- 4. Ninawa Governorate:
  - On May 15, US Special Envoy in the fight against ISIL, Brett McGurk, reported that US-led coalition airstrikes were carrying out “precision strikes” in the city of Mosul “almost every day.”<sup>59</sup>
- 5. Kirkuk Governorate:
  - On May 19, an Iraqi news report obtained by *Time* confirmed that ISIL militants used toxic gasses during the May 8, 2016 attack on the town of Bashir that occurred shortly after the town’s recapture by Iraqi security forces.<sup>60</sup>

**Other Key Points:**

- During the reporting period, the US-led coalition conducted airstrikes in the areas of Albu Hayat, Baghdadi, Bashir, Beiji, Fallujah, Habbaniyah, Haditha, Hit, Kisik, Mosul, Qayyarah, Ramadi, Rutbah, Sinjar, Sultan Abdullah, Tel Afar, and Waleed.<sup>61</sup>

**Other significant political and military events during the reporting period:**

- On May 13, Belgium announced that it would begin carrying out airstrikes against ISIL targets in Syria as of July 1, 2016. Belgium is already carrying out airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq.<sup>62</sup>
- On May 16, Turkish authorities arrested seven suspected ISIL members, including two key figures described as a “senior leader and an executioner”, in the eastern region of Elazig.<sup>63</sup>
- On May 18, Human Rights Watch reported that ISIL in Libya had executed at least 49 people in the group’s stronghold city of Sirte.<sup>64</sup>
- On May 19, the US State Department declared sanctions against ISIL branches in Libya, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>65</sup>

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[52f7b1793dae\\_story.html](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-falluja-idUSKCN0YE0ZC) ; <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-falluja-idUSKCN0YE0ZC>

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-falluja-idUSKCN0YF14M> ; <http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=218384>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-violence-idUSKCN0Y40FM>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-usa-idUSKCN0Y60TN>

<sup>60</sup> <http://time.com/4327503/isis-chemical-weapons-iraq-bashir/>

<sup>61</sup> See: “US DOD News Release Military Strikes Hit ISIL in Syria, Iraq”. *Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve*. News Release No: [757589](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=757589), [758881](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=758881), [759740](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=759740), [759817](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=759817), [760072](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=760072), [761156](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=761156), [775068](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=775068), [776420](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=776420), [777774](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=777774), [778277](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=778277), [778816](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=778816), [780118](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=780118), [781067](http://www.dod.gov/newsroom/record.do?cid=781067)

<sup>62</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/05/13/Belgium-to-begin-air-strikes-against-ISIS-in-Syria-.html>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2016/May-17/352469-militants-blasts-rock-major-syria-gas-field-observatory.ashx> ; <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/turkey-detains-executioner-raids/>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/05/18/libya-isis-executed-dozens-newest-stronghold>

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-islamic-state-idUSKCN0YA205>

- On May 19, a “suspected high-ranking member of [ISIL] blew himself up during a police raid at an apartment in the central district of Sehitkamil” in the Turkish city of Gaziantep. The suspected militant’s brother was arrested.<sup>66</sup>
- On May 23, an ISIL suicide car bombing targeted army recruits in the Yemeni city of Aden, killed at least 40 recruits and wounded 60 more.<sup>67</sup>

## Syrian Network For Human Rights Videos

Beginning March 23, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has published back-dated videos on YouTube of combat damage inflicted on schools, bakeries, hospitals, marketplaces, and other types of infrastructure and civilian sites. ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the SNHR YouTube channel and archive videos that document heritage destruction. The following sites have been documented as damaged by SNHR in the videos released during the current reporting period:

1. Omar bin Yasser Mosque, damaged by a car bomb in Yadouda, Daraa Governorate on February 14, 2014.<sup>68</sup>
2. Al Farouq Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG artillery shelling in al Houla, Homs Governorate on February 24, 2014.<sup>69</sup>
3. Al Kabir Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG shelling in Kiseen Village, Homs Governorate on February 9, 2014.<sup>70</sup>
4. Ali bin Abi Tulab Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG shelling in Kafr Batna, Rif Dimashq Governorate on September 2, 2014.<sup>71</sup>
5. Al Shamali Mosque, damaged by barrel bomb in Morak, Hama Governorate on March 2, 2014.<sup>72</sup>
6. Abi Huraira Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG Aerial Bombardment in Al Mahta, Daraa Governorate on February 20, 2014.<sup>73</sup>
7. Al Ghazali Mosque, damaged by aerial bombardment in Alsenaa neighborhood, Deir Ez Zor Governorate on February 10, 2014.<sup>74</sup>
8. Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque, damaged by aerial bombardments in Maskan Hanoa, Homs Governorate on February 14, 2014.<sup>75</sup>
9. Al Sid al Jadeed Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG shelling in Tareq Alsid, Daraa Governorate on February 21, 2014.<sup>76</sup>
10. Al Sheikh Khalil Mosque, damaged by mortar fire in Al Balad, Daraa Governorate on May 7, 2014.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/isil-member-blows-turkish-police-raid-160520090343990.html>

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-idUSKCN0YE0LE>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAoyOSP1gSM> ;  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPGUhAPrR3Q>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iojJ5ostog8>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXebamTYUcc>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50A3uGzrYoo>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJUMPcJVTDA>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BN9n7I8URCQ>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFqIoWrD63s>

<sup>75</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVPXI\\_bJdml](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVPXI_bJdml)

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Li2COHLxiU>

11. Huzaifa ibn al-Yaman Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG artillery bombardment in Al-Salae, Damascus Governorate on May 9, 2014.<sup>78</sup>
12. Al Omri Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG shelling in Bosra Sham, Daraa Governorate on April 27, 2014.<sup>79</sup>
13. Bilal al Habashi Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG airstrikes in Morak, Hama Governorate on April 23, 2014.<sup>80</sup>
14. Othman bin Affan Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG airstrikes in Miskan Hanouna, Aleppo Governorate on April 20, 2014.<sup>81</sup>
15. Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG artillery bombing in Naemeh, Daraa Governorate on April 7, 2014.<sup>82</sup>
16. Village Mosque, allegedly damaged by two SARG airstrikes in Tel Fakhr, Idlib Governorate on April 6, 2014.<sup>83</sup>
17. Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG barrel bombs in Daraya, Rif Dimashq Governorate on April 4, 2014.<sup>84</sup>
18. Omar Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG barrel bombs in Miskan Hanano, Aleppo Governorate on May 9, 2014.<sup>85</sup>
19. Maliha Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG airstrikes in Al Maliha Al Sharqeya, Rif Dimashq on May 4, 2014.<sup>86</sup>
20. Al Rahman Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG airstrikes/barrel bombs in Daraya, Rif Dimashq Governorate on May 19, 2014.<sup>87</sup>
21. Jabar Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG airstrikes/barrel bombs in Miskeen Hanna, Aleppo Governorate on May 11, 2014.<sup>88</sup>
22. Al Omri Mosque, allegedly damaged by SARG airstrikes in Al Maliha, Rif Dimashq Governorate on May 30, 2014.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI62UeTnEwQ> ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBK7j-gL2GQ>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5sZGTm0Yy4>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ISOX1DLHvA>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOpgVniKV-A>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXrKyeP040U>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viD3AfrUZE>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqHsaMXys4E>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDg9HzwRySw>

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW7TR9PUSDQ> ;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tq28VvQtqM>

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QNs1Q1C5Ak> ;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SOzMSDKd9c>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVrPYTGr3XI>

<sup>88</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN6E8sI6N\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN6E8sI6N_M)

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7irWz8K00I>

## Incident Reports: Syria

### SHI 16-0009 UPDATE

**Report Date:** May 13, 2016

**Site Name:** al-Kabir Mosque, Deir al-Asafir village

**Date of Incident:** May 12-13, 2016

**Location:** Deir al-Asafir, Damascus Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosque. The structure is presumably modern. More details are needed to assess the structure's historic significance.

**Site Date:** Unknown

**Incident Summary:** New video footage shows damage to mosque.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 12, 2016 Qasioun News Agency released video footage of reported SARG aerial bombardment near the al-Kabir Mosque in Deir al-Asafir Village.<sup>90</sup> The video footage shows extensive damage to the exterior of the mosque. According to the news network, SARG forces carried out 14 airstrikes on the outskirts of the village. SMART News Agency released a video that appears to show the same airstrikes and showing significant damage to the exterior of al-Kabir Mosque. In the footage large explosions are heard followed by large smoke plumes surrounding the mosque.

Video footage released by Qasioun News Agency on May 13, 2016 shows reported SARG airstrikes striking areas near the mosque for the second day in a row.<sup>91</sup> This footage gives a closer view of al-Kabir mosque and shows damage to the exterior of the building and the dome. Also present in the May 13, 2016 footage is what appears to be an explosive falling behind the mosque however the object appears to not detonate, or the detonation is not caught on film.

The al-Kabir Mosque has been damaged by airstrikes in at least one prior instance. On January 15, 2016 SNHR reported that SARG airstrikes struck the mosque, causing significant damage (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0009** in **Weekly Report 75-76**). The attack reportedly killed at least eight residents who were either inside or near the mosque and wounded dozens more.<sup>92</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

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<sup>90</sup> [http://www.qasioun.net/en/news/show/25822/airstrikes\\_on\\_Deir\\_Assafer\\_town](http://www.qasioun.net/en/news/show/25822/airstrikes_on_Deir_Assafer_town)

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rNF0mkTHm0>

<sup>92</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/01/15/16533/> ; <https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1297542770272856> ; <https://twitter.com/sakirkhader/status/688020394490605568>

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on the extent of the damage to the al-Kabir Mosque and will continue to monitor heritage sites in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Qasioun News Agency:

May 12, 2016:

[http://www.qasioun.net/en/news/show/25822/airstrikes\\_on\\_Deir\\_Assafer\\_town](http://www.qasioun.net/en/news/show/25822/airstrikes_on_Deir_Assafer_town)

May 13, 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rNF0mkTHm0>

Smart News Agency: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGs4yzK2KeE>

Scholarly:



Smoke rises from an airstrike near al-Kabir Mosque (Qasioun News Agency; May 12, 2016)



Video still shows smoke surrounding al-Kabir Mosque (SMART News Agency; May 12, 2016)



Video still shows smoke surrounding al-Kabir Mosque (SMART News Agency; May 12, 2016)



Video still of smoke continuing to surround al-Kabir Mosque (SMART News Agency; May 12, 2016)



Video still shows airstrikes on May 13, 2016 striking near al-Kabir Mosque. Damage is present to the exterior of the mosque as well as the dome (Qasioun News Agency; May 13, 2016)



Video still showing detail of damage to al Kabir Mosque as well as smoke rising from a nearby airstrikes, the explosive is seen as a small black object falling behind the mosque (Qasioun News Agency; May 13, 2016)

## SHI 16-0032 UPDATE

**Report Date:** May 22, 2016

**Site Name:** Church of the Virgin Mary (كنيسة السيدة العذراء) (St. Mary Church)

**Date of Incident:** April 5, 2015

**Location:** Tel Nasri Village, Tel Tamr Region, Hasakah Governorate

**Site Description:** Assyrian Church. The structure is modern. More details are needed to assess the structure's historic significance.

**Site Date:** 1934 CE

**Incident Summary:** New video footage and photographs show detail of damage to the church.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 22, 2016 RT released a video report from RT Arabic regarding ISIL destruction of Assyrian churches surrounding the Khabour River in Hasakah Governorate.<sup>93</sup> The video report detailed the destruction to the Church of the Virgin Mary, located in the village of Tel Nasri. According to one resident, the Church of the Virgin Mary was once the biggest church in the area. The building has largely been reduced to rubble. According to a resident interviewed by RT, ISIL militants “demolished residential buildings and looted personal belongings from the residents.”<sup>94</sup> Many locals in the area were kidnapped by ISIL militants and taken to Raqqa, before later escaping in small groups. According to the report, since the area was recaptured in the summer of 2015, no work has been done to repair damage to the church or other buildings destroyed by ISIL.

The damage to the Church of the Virgin Mary occurred on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2016 when ISIL militants reportedly detonated explosives inside of the building. The extent of the damage, as well as photographic evidence, has been documented previously (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0032** in **Weekly Report 81-82**).

**Pattern:** Military activity: intentional destruction.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on damage to the Church of the Virgin Mary and will continue to monitor religious heritage sites in regions under ISIL control.

### Sources:

#### Online Reporting:

RT: <https://www.rt.com/news/343980-syria-assyrians-isis-hasakah/>

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<sup>93</sup> <https://www.rt.com/news/343980-syria-assyrians-isis-hasakah/>

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.rt.com/news/343980-syria-assyrians-isis-hasakah/>



A fallen wall at the Church of the Virgin Mary (RT Arabic/RT; May 22, 2016)

## SHI 16-0065

**Report Date:** May 13, 2016

**Site Name:** Palmyra - Northern Necropolis (مقبرة الشمالية)

- Tower Tomb of Malku Moqimu (#155; P204)
- Tower Tomb #156 (P205)
- Temple Tomb #159 (P208)
- Tower Tomb #160 (P209)
- Temple Tomb #161 (P210)
- Tower Tomb #162 (P211)
- Tower Tomb #139 (P344)
- Tomb #139a (P301)
- Tower Tomb #141 (P345)
- Temple Tomb #171 (P352)

**Date of Incident:** Ongoing, construction took place March 30– May 10, 2016

**Location:** Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

### Site Description:

- Palmyra - Northern Necropolis (مقبرة الشمالية) - The Northern Necropolis is located directly north of the main group of ruins at Palmyra, and abuts the modern town on the necropolis' north and east side. This necropolis has not been extensively excavated. Though it has around the same number of tower tombs as the Valley of the Tombs (as well as many hypogea and several funerary temples), these are spread over a wide area and badly maintained. The Northern Necropolis once included tombs as far south as the Temple of Baal-Shamin, but the construction of Diocletian's Wall (a fortification built around Palmyra ca. 303 CE) cut the area in half, and broke with the Roman custom that necropoli must be outside a city's walls. Some of the extant tombs were even incorporated into the wall itself. The eastern part of the Northern Necropolis is especially difficult to study because it was the site of a village built in the 1930s by residents evicted from the Temple of Bel.<sup>95</sup> UNESCO determined that the Northern Necropolis and other features outside the fortification walls should be included in the protected zone when Palmyra was inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List.<sup>96</sup>
- Tower Tomb of Malku Moqimu (#155; P204) - The Tower Tomb of Malku Moqimu is unique in the Northern Necropolis in that it is the only tower tomb that also has a hypogeum (underground tomb).<sup>97</sup> Its foundation inscription indicates it was built by Malikho son of Moqimu in 79/80 CE. An inscription within the tower tomb refers to a descendent of the founder who died and was interred there in 185 CE.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Gawlikowski 1970: 162-5; Piacentini 2005: 246

<sup>96</sup> World Heritage Committee 1980: 4

<sup>97</sup> Henning 2001: 57 no. 208

<sup>98</sup> Gawlikowski 1970: 80-1

- Tower Tomb #156 (P205) - This tomb is undated, but the way its *loculi* (small spaces for individual remains) are arranged suggest a date towards the end of the 1st-century CE.<sup>99</sup>
- Temple Tomb #159 (P208); Temple Tomb #161 (P210); Temple Tomb #171 (P352) - Tombs P208, P210, and P352 are in a very ruinous state, but as Temple Tombs (or Funerary Temples, tombs built to look like small temples or houses) at Palmyra first appeared in the 140s CE, these structure must date to the second half of the 2nd-century or 3rd-century CE.<sup>100</sup>
- Tower Tomb #160 (P209) and Tower Tomb #162 (P211) - Tower Tombs P209 and P211 are of a type similar to Tower Tomb P320, and were probably built during the first half of the 2nd-century CE.<sup>101</sup>

**Site Date:** Northern Necropolis - 1st to 3rd-century CE

- Tower Tomb of Malku Moqimu - 79/80 CE
- Tower Tomb P205 - end of 1st-century CE
- Temple Tomb P208 - second half of the 2nd-century or 3rd-century CE
- Tower Tomb P209 - first half of the 2nd-century CE
- Temple Tomb P210 - second half of the 2nd-century or 3rd-century CE
- Tower Tomb P211 - first half of the 2nd-century CE
- Temple Tomb P352 - second half of the 2nd-century or 3rd-century CE

**Incident Summary:** A Russian military base has been constructed within the Northern Necropolis at Palmyra.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 2, 2016 the Palmyra Coordination Committee reported that a Russian military base was being constructed at Palmyra, with multiple media reports indicating that the compound was next to the archaeological area to serve as the base of operations for the mine-clearing operations at the ancient site.<sup>102</sup> AFP released a video of the Palmyra military base, which IHS Jane’s describes as “[...] secured by a high chain-link fence topped with razor wire and has prefabricated container buildings, large tents for equipment maintenance, a field kitchen, and satellite communications dishes.”<sup>103</sup>

DigitalGlobe Satellite imagery shows vehicles have been parked immediately west of the standing remains of the Tower Tomb of Malku Moqimu and Tower Tomb #156. Imagery released on April 22, 2016 shows the newly constructed military base inside the Northern Necropolis within the UNESCO World Heritage boundary in close proximity to numerous above ground and subsurface tombs and funerary temples. A graded lot with structures and two newly paved roads connecting the base to the main road can be seen in the April 22 imagery, and a paved helicopter landing pad is seen in the May 10 imagery. Military vehicles

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<sup>99</sup> Henning 2001: 52 no. 186

<sup>100</sup> Gawlikowski 1970: 129, 165

<sup>101</sup> Gawlikowski 1970: 163

<sup>102</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/09/middleeast/russia-military-syria/index.html> ; <http://www.janes.com/article/60102/russia-sets-up-palmyra-base> ; <https://www.facebook.com/revo.palmyra3/photos/a.433973920060886.1073741829.410518082406470/502394679885476/?type=3&theater>

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqzypNS0ocA>

and equipment are stationed both on and off the base. The base was built adjacent to a previously constructed animal racetrack.

Based upon previous survey data of the Northern Necropolis,<sup>104</sup> the base was not constructed on top of any previously identified tombs. However, the tombs located within the zone immediately to the east of the base may potentially have been damaged during the base construction using an earthmover or deminer. Tombs #139, 139a, and 141 were located within this area, and #139 and #139a had minimal remains still visible on the surface. After the area was leveled, no remains can be seen. A new unpaved road passes south of Temple Tomb #171. A previously unpaved road across the necropolis was paved to provide access to the paved base.

Located to the west of the base, the area around Temple Tombs #159 and #161, and Tower Tombs #160 and #162 has been used for storage of materials since 2013 after the area was enclosed with an earthen berm. In the DigitalGlobe image from April 22, 2016, trucks can be seen parked just north of the Valley of the Tombs. This area contains multiple subterranean hypogea, which are not visible on the surface.

On May 17, 2016 the Associated Press released an interview with Maamoun Abdulkarim regarding the construction of the Russian base at Palmyra. According to Abdulkarim, “the Russians are building small barracks that include(s) offices and clinics.” Abdulkarim told AP that his organization was not asked for permission for the base to be built. However, Abdulkarim also included that the presence of Russian (and Syrian) troops in Palmyra was important in order to keep the site under government control. Abdulkarim stated that his organization would refuse to give permission for even “a small room to be built inside the site whether it is for the Syrian army, Russian army or anyone else...[such an action would be] in violation of the archaeology law.” Abdulkarim assured AP that although during a war “sometimes archaeological authorities don’t have a say but security decisions dictate the orders...once the situation improves and peace is reached, then we will openly call for removal” of the base.<sup>105</sup>

The Russian Defense Ministry has denied the presence of a forward operating base within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra, instead describing the new construction as a “temporary camp,”<sup>106</sup> According to Major-General Igor Konashenkov, a spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry, the “camp” was built with the permission of the Syrian government and is comprised of a “few housing units” used by explosive experts charged with demining the area.<sup>107</sup> On May 17 the spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry disputed the satellite imagery and asserted, “The satellite pictures of this area posted by UNESCO... show the temporary camp of the International Demining Center of Russia’s Defense Forces, which were demining the archaeological monument of Palmyra, and

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<sup>104</sup> Schnädelback 2010: Maps 36-39, 44-45

<sup>105</sup> <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/210be68cbb43fe8e23f046ec85ff2b/report-russians-building-army-base-syrias-palmyra-site>

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.rt.com/news/343356-military-base-palmyra-ap/>; <http://eaworldview.com/2016/05/syria-feature-is-russia-building-a-military-base-near-palmyra/>

<sup>107</sup> <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/210be68cbb43fe8e23f046ec85ff2b/report-russians-building-army-base-syrias-palmyra-site>

now the broader area of Tadmor city.”<sup>108</sup> In addition, the spokesman reported that the “camp” contains “... a field hospital [that provides] medical assistance to the local population and a field bakery, whose production is also handed out to the Syrians.”<sup>109</sup> On May 18, 2016 the spokesman for the US-led campaign against ISIL, Colonel Steve Warren, stated that the Pentagon was monitoring the buildup of a “forward operating base (FOB) near the ancient city of Palmyra.”<sup>110</sup> Warren added, without releasing his sources, that the FOB was continuing to be enlarged.<sup>111</sup> We assume the base to which Warren refers is the same as that located in the Northern Necropolis.

An unnamed UNESCO official is quoted as saying that it was unclear whether or not the base was in a “buffer zone to the archaeological site” and stated that the base “does not form a threat to the historic area” and that the base is “in the middle of nothing.”<sup>112</sup> Another unnamed UNESCO official who visited Palmyra in late April reportedly stated that if the base was located in the buffer zone, it would be a “contravention to international treaties protecting heritage zones,” including the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property, of which Russia and Syria are both signatories.<sup>113</sup> On May 17, 2016 a UNESCO official reported that the organization would look at the satellite imagery of the base in order to see if it is within the “buffer zone.”<sup>114</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: occupation/militarization, vehicles/heavy weaponry, construction, earthworks/roadwork.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI maintains that the military base is located within the UNESCO site boundaries, and the poor condition of the Northern Necropolis makes it especially susceptible to damage and irreversible loss. The ongoing mine clearing operation is necessary for the safety of stationed military personnel and for the eventual return of civilians and tourists once the conflict is resolved. According to Customary International Humanitarian Law, the concept of military necessity shall be judged on the base of two conditions: 1. No other feasible alternative was available at the moment of the conduct of hostilities, and 2. The assessment of the situation by a commander was made from all sources reasonably available to him/her at the moment of the conduct of hostilities. It is not readily apparent if military necessity applies in this case. Regardless, it is hoped and expected that Russian military forces are actively taking mitigating actions to counteract the negative impact the temporary base will have on the surrounding archaeological remains, and it is understood that the militarization of Palmyra now classifies the site as a military target.

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<sup>108</sup> <https://www.rt.com/news/343356-military-base-palmyra-ap/>

<sup>109</sup> <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/russia-builds-military-base-at-palmyra-ruins-vj7sq89jp>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/05/18/despite-supposed-withdrawal-russia-building-up-new-base-in-syria-pentagon-says/>

<sup>111</sup> <http://www.france24.com/en/20160518-no-drop-russian-military-strength-syria-us>

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.chron.com/news/world/article/Report-Russians-building-army-base-at-Syria-s-7520802.php>

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.chron.com/news/world/article/Report-Russians-building-army-base-at-Syria-s-7520802.php> ; <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage/the-states-parties>

<sup>114</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/05/17/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>

Should military operations at Palmyra extend beyond the mine clearing operation, Russian forces should seek an alternative location for vehicle parking and camp operations if it does not impede strategic, tactical, and operational procedures or put military personnel at risk.

Furthermore, Russian military civil affairs officers, if present, should be in communication with DGAM and Ministry of Culture officials regarding current and future base operations as well as the continued care of the historic features at the site.

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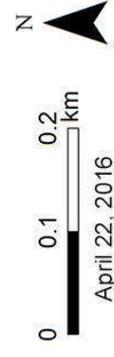
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**Blue** indicates visible architecture or remains  
**Green** indicates subsurface features or features that are no longer visible.

	Military Equipment
	New Construction
	Truck Parking
	Unpaved Road
	Paved Base
	Paved Road
	Helicopter Pad
	Bulldozed Area (possible demining)
	Tomb, unknown form
	Tower
	Tower
	Unknown Structure
	Tomb, unknown form
	Temple Tomb
	Temple Tomb
	Tomb, special form
	Tomb, unknown form

Tomb locations based upon Schnädelback, K. (2010) *Topographica Palmyrena: Volume 1 - Topography*.



April 22, 2016



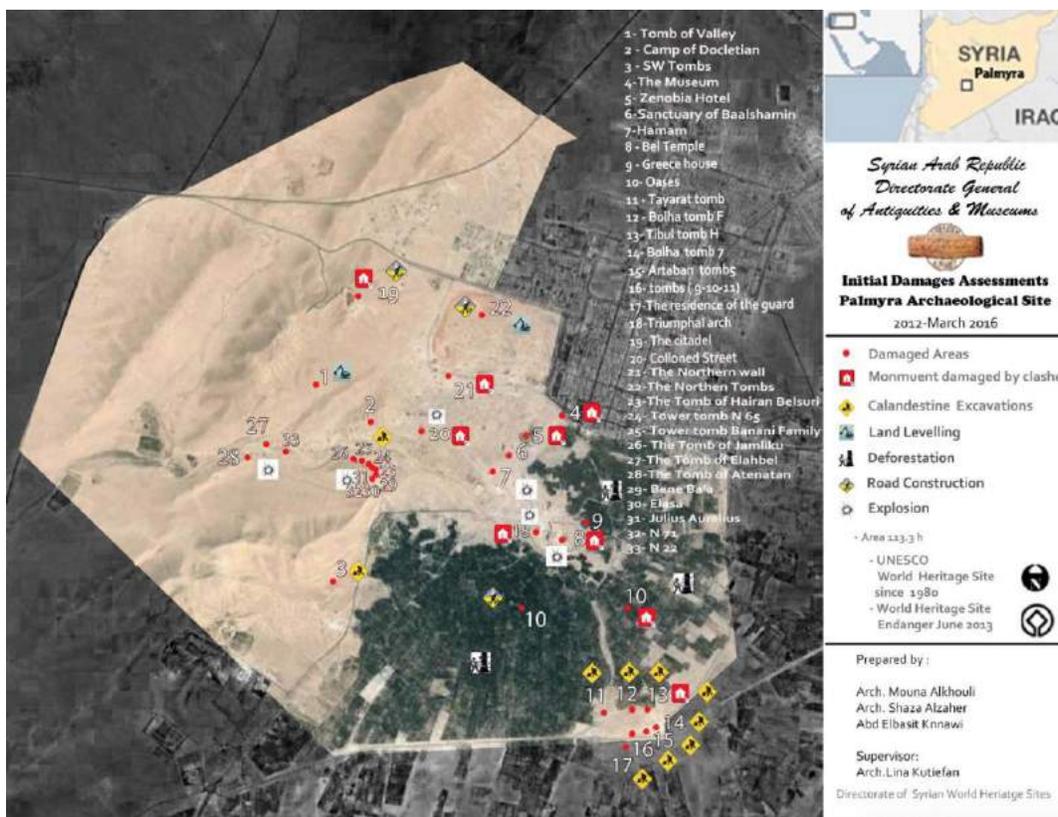
Northern Necropolis after the site was retaken from ISIL in March (DigitalGlobe; March 30, 2016)



Northern Necropolis after the base and roads were paved (DigitalGlobe; April 22, 2016)



Northern Necropolis with the addition of a helicopter pad. The image is hazy due to cloud cover (DigitalGlobe; May 10, 2016)



Map from report to UNESCO, which includes the Northern Necropolis within the site boundaries of ancient Palmyra, identified as No. 22 (DGAM; May 4, 2016)<sup>115</sup>

<sup>115</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/document/141067>



The reported Russian military base with Qalaat Shirkuh in the background (AFP; May 7, 2016)



Military weapons in Palmyra identified as a Pantsir-S1 air-defense system by IHS Jane's (AFP; May 7, 2016)



Armored personnel carriers at the newly constructed Palmyra military base (AFP; May 7, 2016)



Armored personnel carriers at the newly constructed Palmyra military base (AFP; May 7, 2016)



A view of Russian military equipment surrounded by a chainlink fence with the modern city of Tadmor visible in the background (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



Military equipment seen in Palmyra (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



Military trucks parked on the side of the Citadel (upper right) (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



Military equipment near the Citadel (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



Military vehicles parked near Temple of Bel (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



Russian soldiers stand near the Roman Colonnade and Tetrapylon (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



Russian soldiers in the ancient site of Palmyra (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



The ancient site of Palmyra with large buses parked near the Decumanus (upper right) (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



A Russian soldier, possibly a member of a demining crew, inside of the ancient Palmyra site hold what appears to be an IED. A tower tomb is visible in the background (Vasily Maximov via Stampsy; Taken May 4-5, 2016, Uploaded May 12, 2016)



A photograph shows what is likely the beginning stages of the building of a Russian military base in Palmyra (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar; April 14, 2016)



Russian vehicles in Palmyra (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar; April 14, 2016)



Journalists alongside Russian military vehicles and other equipment (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar; April 14, 2016)



A photograph of a Russian checkpoint near the base in Palmyra obtained by a Russian news crew (Aldin Abazović/Twitter; May 19, 2016)<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> [https://twitter.com/Ald\\_Aba/status/733271744375623681](https://twitter.com/Ald_Aba/status/733271744375623681)

**SHI 16-0066**

**Report Date:** May 12, 2016

**Site Name:** Qalaat Simeon (Deir Semaan; دير سمعان; Telanissos)

**Date of Incident:** May 12, 2016

**Location:** Deir Semaan, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:**

The Church of Saint Simeon Stylites (388-459 CE) is one of the oldest surviving Byzantine churches in the Near East. The architectural complex atop the hill consists of a basilica (built ca. 476-492 CE), baptistery, monastery (ca. 490 CE), two hostelries (ca. 490 CE and later), and a monumental arch. According to Ross Burns:

“Unlike the later cathedrals of medieval Europe, the great church [basilica] was conceived and executed more or less as a single project over a short space of time. The cruciform church comprising four separate basilica buildings was probably constructed shortly after the death of the ascete, St. Simeon....[who] took up residence on a platform atop a column around the remains of which the great building is centered. Construction of the complex began a few years after St. Simeon’s death (probably spanning AD 476 to 491)....[T]he column and the site of [St. Simeon’s] ascetic deeds was commemorated under imperial patronage, thus encouraging the continuation of the cult of St. Simeon through pilgrimage.”<sup>117</sup>

The site was fortified when the Byzantines retook the area from Arabs in the 10th century. It was retaken and sacked by the Hamdanids in 985 CE, and subsequently largely abandoned as a monastic-religious center. In 2011, the site of Deir Semaan (including the Church of St. Simeon Stylites) was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as one of the “Ancient Villages of Northern Syria.”<sup>118</sup>

**Site Date:** Byzantine (5th century CE); San Simeon Church Built: 490 AD<sup>119</sup>

**Incident Summary:** Airstrikes damage UNESCO World Heritage Site.

**Incident Source and Description:** Darretezza Media Center reported via their Facebook page that the site of Qalaat Semaan was struck by Russian missiles on May 12, 2016 shortly after midnight, and that the “column of St. Simeon and the facade to the cathedral...suffered damage.”<sup>120</sup> SNHR reported the attack as well, but blamed the airstrike on “government warplanes.”<sup>121</sup> From May 12-16, 2016 several news agencies visited the site to film the

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<sup>117</sup> Burns, R. 2009: 272-273

<sup>118</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1348/>

<sup>119</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/director\\_general\\_of\\_unesco\\_deplores\\_severe\\_damage\\_at\\_church\\_of\\_saint\\_simeon\\_world\\_heritage\\_site\\_in\\_syria/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/director_general_of_unesco_deplores_severe_damage_at_church_of_saint_simeon_world_heritage_site_in_syria/)

<sup>120</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Daretezzamediacenter/posts/1765108273710293>

<sup>121</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/13/government-forces-targeted-samaan-castle-darat-azza-city-aleppo-governorate-may-12/>

damage, including Information Office of Daret Izzah,<sup>122</sup> Wikalat Thiqa,<sup>123</sup> Al Jazeera Mubasher,<sup>124</sup> and Darretezza Media Center.<sup>125</sup> Based on these videos and an initial examination by the Heritage Protection Initiative of TDA, at least two missiles struck the site of Qalaat Semaan. One missile landed within the central courtyard of the basilica, and the other landed near the narthex at the main entrance to the basilica in its southernmost wing.

The missile that landed in the central courtyard left a large hole and a great deal of debris just next to the pillar of St. Simeon. The strike caused the pillar to topple off of its pedestal, which was badly damaged and now has several large cracks. The blast appears to have caused pieces of stone from the courtyard walls to fall to the ground. Stones that had previously fallen from the walls were also being kept in the courtyard and were no doubt also damaged.

The narthex of the basilica and the adjacent monastery building also suffered significant damage. A missile appears to have struck the area of the steps of the basilica's main entrance. The eastern side of the steps has been badly damaged and is covered in debris. The triangular pediment topping the easternmost arch of the facade has partially collapsed. The right column supporting the central arch of the narthex has broken in half. The interior entrance of this wing was also damaged — stones have fallen from the cornice above the four arches.

The most devastating damage occurred in the monastery that shares walls with the south and east wings of the basilica. The front of the monastery (including parts of its southern wall and western walls) has almost completely collapsed. Only the base of the front wall remains. The full extent of the damage to the western wall is somewhat unclear because it was already poorly preserved (a pile of stones nearby is evident in pre-damage photographs). But comparisons with earlier photographs indicate a significant section collapsed as a result of the airstrike.

According to Ross Burns, Deir Semaan was captured by 'Islamist forces' in 2013 "to serve as a logistics and training base." Deir Semaan also served as the backdrop for ISIL media footage of ISIL female members practicing weapon drills in front of the church's southern entrance.<sup>126</sup> Deir Semaan has also been impacted by small weapons damage, "stone removal, and illegal digging" (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report 14-0028** in **Weekly Report 6**; **SHI 14-0079** in **Weekly Report 15**; **SHI 14-0106** in **Weekly Report 21-22**).

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on damage to the Deir Semaan and will continue to monitor heritage sites in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

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<sup>122</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=saP3sXXn78I>

<sup>123</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xthpZissw>

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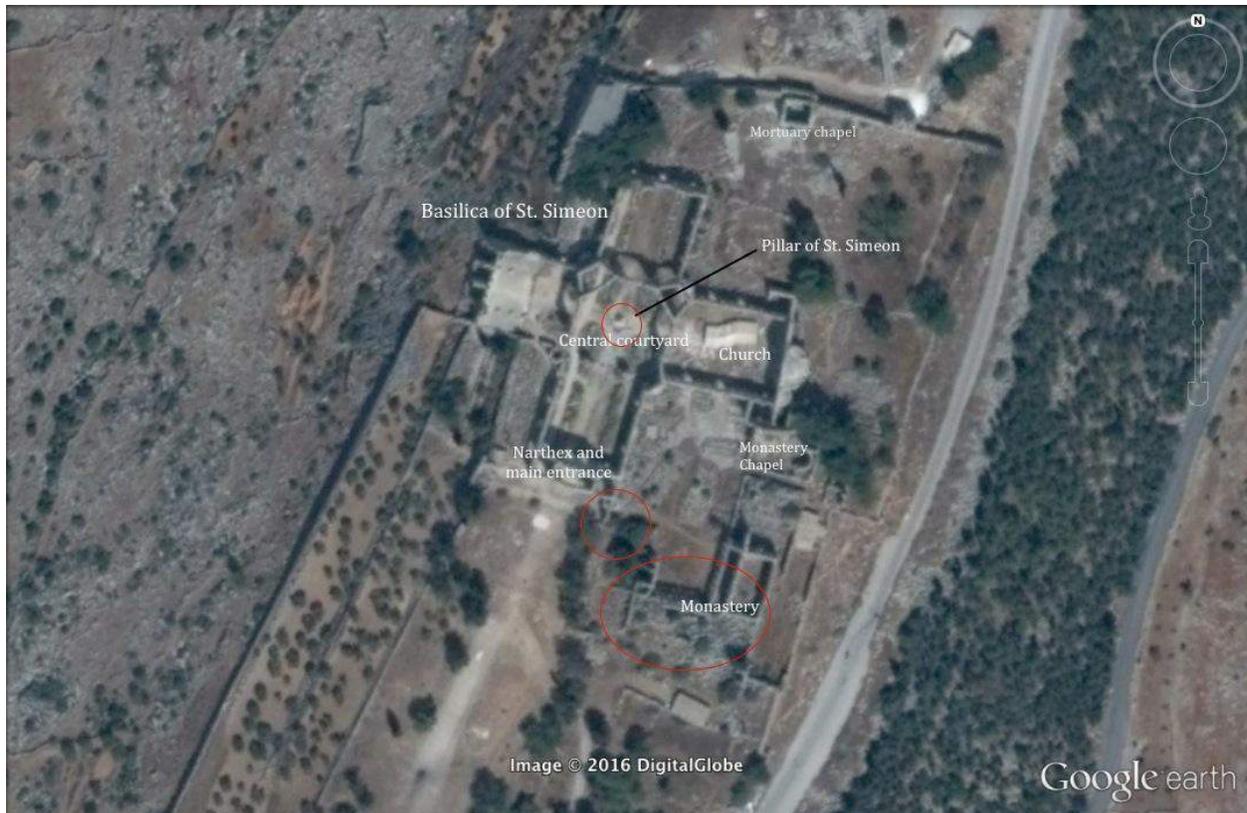
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Map of Qalaat Simeon with newly damaged areas circled in red. (ASOR CHI/DigitalGlobe; May 13, 2016; imagery from August 25, 2014)



View of damage to facade of main entrance to Church of St. Simeon (looking north)  
(Daretezza Media Center; May 15, 2016)



View of damage to facade of main entrance to Church of St. Simeon (looking north) (Daret  
Ezaa Media Office; May 14, 2016)



Pre-damage photo of central and eastern narthex arches (Ross Burns; December 24, 2013)



View of damage to central and eastern arches of main entrance (looking east) (Wikalat Thiqa; May 13, 2016)



Damage to pillar on central arch of main entrance (Wikalat Thiqa; May 13, 2016)



Damage to eastern exterior corner of narthex (Al Jazeera Mubasher; May 16, 2016)



Damage to narthex and destruction of monastery (facing southeast) (Daretezza Media Center; May 15, 2016)



Destruction of monastery adjoining Church of St. Simeon (facing east) (Daret Ezaa Media Office; May 14, 2016)



Destruction of western wall of monastery (facing east) (Daret Ezaa Media Office; May 14, 2016)



Pre-damage photo of monastery interior (facing southeast) (Ross Burns; December 24, 2013)



Destruction of south and west walls of monastery (from interior, facing south) (Wikalat Thiqa; May 13, 2016)



Pre-damage photo of monastery exterior (facing north) (Ross Burns; December 24, 2013)



Destruction of western wall of monastery (facing west) (Al Jazeera Mubasher; May 16, 2016)



Pre-damage photo of western wall of monastery adjoining south wing of basilica (Ross Burns; December 24, 2013)



Destruction of south wall of monastery (from exterior, facing north) (Wikalat Thiqa; May 13, 2016)



Destruction of monastery (facing north) (Daretezza Media Center; May 15, 2016)



View of destruction of monastery (facing northwest) (Darezza Media Center; May 15, 2016)



Pre-damage photo of St. Simeon's pillar and central courtyard (Ross Burns; December 24, 2013)



Damage to central courtyard of basilica with fallen pillar in middle left field (facing east)  
(Daretezza Media Center; May 15, 2016)



Large hole in central courtyard from missile strike and damage to pedestal for pillar of St. Simeon (facing west) (Daretezza Media Center; May 15, 2016)



Damage to central courtyard with missile (facing north) (Wikalat Thiqa; May 13, 2016)



Large hole and rubble in central courtyard from missile strike (facing west) (Al Jazeera Mubasher; May 16, 2016)



Damage and rubble in central courtyard (facing west) (Al Jazeera Mubasher; May 16, 2016)



Damage to central courtyard and fallen pillar (facing northeast) (Al Jazeera Mubasher; May 16, 2016)



## The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative<sup>127</sup> Site Monitors Project

### Preliminary Damage Report to St. Simeon Due to Russian Airstrike May 12, 2016

St. Simeon (previously known as Tellanissos) is a monastery that lies to the north east of the city of Aleppo. It is named after Saint Simeon Stylites who was born in the year 389 AD south of Mount Simeon (part of Jabal Al-Zawiya). He fled to Tellanissos, in 412 AD and spent more than 40 years on top of a 15-meter high pillar without food or water for days at a time as a form of worship. People and his disciples would climb up to visit with him. The Church of Saint Simeon, one of the most magnificent churches, was built in the year 490 AD on Mount Simeon. It served as an impregnable fortress during the days of Saladin. St. Simeon was a popular destination for tourists and worshippers from all over the world and part of the “Dead Cities” listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. On Thursday May 12th, 2016, St. Simeon was targeted by the Russian air force shortly after midnight, causing devastating damage to the site. Site monitors from the TDA –HPI in cooperation with the Syrian Cultural Heritage Preservation Center documented the damages and recommend immediate action be taken to avoid further destruction.



View of the damage caused by the airstrike .

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<sup>127</sup> This report is based on research conducted by “The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative.” This report reflects analysis from an independent organization. As with the Weekly Reports produced by ASOR CHI, it should be treated as preliminary and subject to change.



General view St. Simeon prior to the airstrike.



Photo (facing north) showing the site prior to the airstrike with the remains of St. Simeon's pillar resting on its pedestal (Wikipedia 2010).



Location of the strike in the nave of the main cruciform church. Photo facing west



Damaged areas of Simeon Castle after the air strike.



Close up of the damage shown in the photo above.



The pedestal (badly damaged) with the remaining fragment of St. Simeon's pillar knocked over to the right.

Reported by:  
Bisher Al Issa (ASOR CHI)

**Site Monitors Project Coordinator**  
**Dr. Amr Al-Azm**



**SHI 16-0067**

**Report Date:** May 12, 2016

**Site Name:** Al Kabir Mosque (المسجد الكبير) (Al Farouq Mosque)

**Date of Incident:** May 11, 2016

**Location:** As-Sukhna, Homs Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosque

**Site Date:** Unknown

**Incident Summary:** Ongoing airstrikes damage mosque.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 11, 2016 the Palmyra Coordination Committee posted a photograph via the group's Twitter account of a damaged Al Kabir Mosque in the town of As-Sukhna. According to the Committee, the mosque was damaged as a result of ongoing aerial bombardment of the city. Syrian activist Khaled al Homsy was the first to share the photograph on the same day. The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) issued a post on damage to Al Kabir mosque, reporting that the site was targeted by SARG "(allied) forces" on May 11, 2016 rendering the mosque inoperable. On May 11, 2016 Halab News Network reported, via their Twitter account, that airstrikes carried out by unknown warplanes struck the town of As-Sukhna, causing significant damage.<sup>128</sup> On May 15, 2016 the Palmyra Coordination Committee again reported daily Russian bombardment on the city and shared photographs of destruction in As-Sukhna.<sup>129</sup> As-Sukhna has been under ISIL control since May 13, 2015.<sup>130</sup> However, the recapturing of Palmyra by SARG and allied forces in late March 2016 has opened up the route to the town, located approximately 70 kilometers (45 miles) north of Palmyra. Following the retaking of Palmyra, airstrikes were reported over As Sukhna in what was reported as the first attempts to recapture the strategic town.<sup>131</sup>

Since the start and subsequent breakdown of the cessation of hostilities in Syria, first declared on February 27, 2016 airstrikes and shelling have continued, intermittently, to damage cultural heritage sites across Homs Governorate (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0057** in **Weekly Report 89-90**).

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of Al Kabir Mosque as well as the condition of other heritage sites

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<sup>128</sup> <https://twitter.com/HalabNewsN/status/730281863760252928>

<sup>129</sup> <https://twitter.com/PalmyraRev1/status/731994919271837697>

<sup>130</sup> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2015/05/syria-regime-reinforcements-isis-palmyra-homs.html>

<sup>131</sup> <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/NewsReports/566807-syria-regime-pressing-desert-drive> ; <http://www.globalpost.com/article/6754217/2016/04/02/mass-grave-victims-found-syrias-palmyra>

located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

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Photograph shared online of extensive damage to Al Kabir Mosque (Khaled Al Homsy/Palmyra Coordination Committee; May 11, 2016)



Damage around Al Kabir Mosque (Palmyra Coordination Committee; May 15, 2016)

**SHI 16-0068**

**Report Date:** May 19, 2016

**Site Name:** St. George Church (كنيسة مار جرجس)

**Date of Incident:** May 18, 2016

**Location:** Hasakah, Hasakah Governorate

**Site Description:** Syriac Orthodox Church

**Site Date:** post-1920 CE

**Incident Summary:** Mortar shells strike and damage church.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 19, 2016 ARA News reported that clashes between Kurdish Asayish (police) forces and SARG forces erupted in the city of Hasakah on May 18, 2016. During the fighting, mortar shells, reportedly fired by SARG forces, struck the Assyrian Church (St. George).<sup>132</sup> Clashes between the two groups, who share control of the city, have been frequent in the past several months. Syrian activist Khaled al-Homsi and Assyria TV shared photographs of the damage to the church via their social media accounts.<sup>133</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of St. George Church as well as the condition of other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

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<sup>132</sup> <http://aranews.net/2016/05/clashes-break-kurdish-asayish-forces-syrian-regime-troops-hasakah/>

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/AssyriaTv/posts/1346238335402744> ; <https://twitter.com/PalmyraPioneer/status/733199122795270144>

Kurdistan 24:

<http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/c26423d7-be16-4dac-a172-d96cef945e20/Kurds-clash-with-Syrian-government-security-in-Hasaka>



Damage to the interior of St George Church (Khaled al Homsi; May 19, 2016)



Damage to the interior of St George Church (Khaled al Homs; May 19, 2016)



Damage to St George Church (Khaled al Homs; May 19, 2016)



Damage to the ceiling of St George Church (Hasakah City; May 18, 2016)

**SHI 16-0069**

**Report Date:** May 22, 2016

**Site Name:** Abi bin Abi Talib Mosque (مسجد برج قاعي)

**Date of Incident:** May 20, 2016

**Location:** Burj al Qa'ei (Dar as Salamlam), Homs Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Mosque

**Site Date:** Unknown

**Incident Summary:** SARG barrel bombs damage mosque.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 21, 2016 SNHR reported SARG helicopters dropped barrel bombs on Abi bin Abi Talib Mosque, damaging the mosque severely and rendering it inoperable.<sup>134</sup> A photograph accompanying the report shows damage to the northern entrance of the mosque. Homs Media Center posted photographs and a video showing damage to the interior of the mosque.<sup>135</sup>

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor the condition of the Abi bin Abi Talib Mosque as well as the condition of other heritage sites located in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

SNHR:

<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/21/government-forces-targeted-ali-bin-abi-taleb-mosque-burj-al-qaiei-village-homs-governorate-may-20/>  
<https://twitter.com/snhr/status/733870575597260800>

Homs Media Center:

May 20, 2016:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qK\\_H\\_jDpYcA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qK_H_jDpYcA) ; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBDrnNXkrR4>

May 21, 2016:

<https://www.facebook.com/Homs.Media.Center/posts/1724625724469856>

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<sup>134</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/21/government-forces-targeted-ali-bin-abi-taleb-mosque-burj-al-qaiei-village-homs-governorate-may-20/>

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBDrnNXkrR4>



Pre-damage photo of Abi bin Ali Talib Mosque (Homs Media Center; May 21, 2016)



Damage to northern entrance of Abi bin Ali Talib Mosque (SNHR; May 21, 2016)



Severe damage to Abi bin Ali Talib Mosque (Homs Media Center; May 21, 2016)



Severe damage to Abi bin Ali Talib Mosque (Homs Media Center; May 21, 2016)



Severe structural damage to Abi bin Ali Talib Mosque (Homs Media Center; May 20, 2016)



Debris and damage in Abi bin Ali Talib Mosque interior (Homs Media Center; May 20, 2016)



Debris and damage in Abi bin Ali Talib Mosque interior (Homs Media Center; May 20, 2016)

**SHI 16-0070**

**Report Date:** May 22, 2016

**Site Name:** Idlib Museum (متحف إدلب)

**Date of Incident:** May 22, 2016

**Location:** Idlib, Idlib Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** The main tourist attraction for the city, the Idlib regional museum reportedly contained more than 17,000 tablets from Ebla as well as other artifacts, including ceramics dating to the Ayyubid period.

**Site Date:** Various, Ceramics of the Ayyubid Period

**Incident Summary:** Missiles strike the museum causing partial damage to the fence.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 22, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that SARG airstrikes had struck the National Museum in Idlib City, causing partial damage to the fence.<sup>136</sup> On the same day, SNHR reported that at least three people had been killed in SARG airstrikes that struck the Al Mihrab Circle, adjacent to the museum.<sup>137</sup> Local video reports show damage to the fence surrounding the Idlib Museum, however it is unclear if this is recent damage or damage caused by previous airstrikes.<sup>138</sup>

This is the second incident of airstrike damage to the museum in the month of May, 2016 (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0062** in **Weekly Report 91-92**). The museum has previously suffered instances of theft, military occupation, and explosives damage (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0020** in **Weekly Report 3**; **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0060** in **Weekly Report 35**).

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to gather further information on damage to the Idlib Museum and will continue to monitor heritage sites in regions subject to ongoing aerial bombardment campaigns and intense military activity.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

Shaam News Network: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJTxEWEt780>

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<sup>136</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/22/government-forces-targeted-national-museum-idlib-city-may-22/>

<sup>137</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/22/victims-died-government-forces-shelling-al-mehrab-circle-idlib-city-may-22/>

<sup>138</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJTxEWEt780>

SNHR:

May 22, 2016: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/22/government-forces-targeted-national-museum-idlib-city-may-22/>  
<http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/22/victims-died-government-forces-shelling-al-mehrab-circle-idlib-city-may-22/>

Shaam News Network: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QITxEWet780>

**SHI 16-0071**

**Report Date:** May 19, 2016; May 20, 2016; May 23, 2016; May 24, 2016

**Site Name:**

- Agha Jaq Mosque (مسجد أجاق)
- Qadi Askar Mosque (مسجد قاضي عسكر)
- Haron Dada Mosque (مسجد هارون دادا)
- Al Haddadin Mosque (جامع الحدادين)
- Furat Alghorba Mosque (مسجد فرات الغوربة)
- Al Midani Mosque (جامع الميداني)
- Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (جامع البراء بن مالك)
- Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque (مسجد عمار بن ياسر)
- Salah ad Din Mosque (مسجد الدين صلاح)
- Khalid Bin Al-Walid Mosque (مسجد خالد بن الوليد)
- Umayyad Mosque (Great Mosque)

**Date of Incident:** Various; May 21, 2016; May 23, 2016; May 24, 2016

**Location:**

- Agha Jaq Mosque - Qadi Askar Neighborhood, Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate
- Qadi Askar Mosque - Qadi Askar Neighborhood, Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate
- Haron Dada Mosque - Sajlikhan Neighborhood, Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate
- Al Haddadin Mosque - Old Aleppo, Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate
- Furat Alghorba Mosque - Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate
- Al Midani Mosque - Al Almaji Neighborhood, Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate
- Al Bara bin Malek Mosque - Hraytan, Aleppo Governorate
- Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque - Kafr Hamra Town, Aleppo Governorate
- Salah ad Din Mosque - Ashrafeya Neighborhood, Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate
- Khalid Bin Al-Walid Mosque - Kafr Naha Town, Aleppo Governorate
- Umayyad Mosque - Old Aleppo, Aleppo City, Aleppo Governorate

**Site Description:** Mosques in Aleppo Governorate.

**Site Date:**

- Qadi Askar Mosque - Ottoman Era 1657 CE
- Haron Dada Mosque - Mamluk Era
- Al Haddadin Mosque - Mamluk Era with extensive 19th-century renovations
- Furat Alghorba - Ottoman Era
- Al Midani Mosque - likely built in 16th-century CE, restored/modified ca. 1722 CE
- Umayyad Mosque - 715 CE, reconstructed 11th-century CE

**Incident Summary:** New video footage shows damage to mosques in the city of Aleppo and suspected Russian airstrikes damage four mosques.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 19, 2016 a video was uploaded to YouTube featuring a man named Sheikh Muhammad Almaz, described as the Director of the Aleppo Endowment. Sheikh Almaz discusses the destruction of both ancient and modern mosques in the city of Aleppo as a result of ongoing airstrikes and clashes in the area. The video

features several mosques, all with varying but extensive degrees of destruction.<sup>139</sup> Included in the video is new video footage of Agha Jaq Mosque<sup>140</sup>, Qadi Askar Mosque<sup>141</sup>, Haron Dada Mosque<sup>142</sup>, Al Haddadin Mosque<sup>143</sup>, Furat Alghorba Mosque, and Al Midani Mosque<sup>144</sup>. The exact date of damage to each mosque varies, but many areas where they mosques are present have been struck on more than one occasion.

On May 20, 2016 the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) reported that a SARG airstrike had partially destroyed the Al Bara bin Malek Mosque in Hraytan, Aleppo Governorate.<sup>145</sup> A photograph accompanying their report shows damage to the northern exterior wall of the mosque. The windows and doors appear to have been bombed out. On May 22, 2016 the Information Center of Hraytan published a video showing damage to the Al Bara bin Malek Mosque and the surrounding neighborhood immediately after the airstrike.<sup>146</sup> In some of the video footage, running water is heard and seen in some areas of the mosque, perhaps signaling the presence of a water main that burst near the building or attempts to put out a fire caused by the airstrikes.<sup>147</sup> Additional video footage shows smoke billowing from the mosque following the airstrike.<sup>148</sup> DigitalGlobe satellite imagery from May 22, 2016 corroborates the damage to the north side of the building with obvious debris seen to the north.

On May 23, 2016 SNHR reported that “suspected Russian warplanes” fired missiles that struck near the Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque, in the town of Kafr Hamra.<sup>149</sup> The strike caused partial damage to the mosque. The media group Kafr Hamra posted a photograph of damage to a mosque, most likely to be the Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque, on the same day and reported at least two other additional airstrikes in the city of Aleppo and the town of Kafr Naha.<sup>150</sup> Airstrikes have been a frequent recurrence over the town of Kafr Hamra during the reporting period.

The Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque has been damaged on at least one prior occasion. Video footage from Shahba Press, published by Shaam Network (SNN), on June 22, 2013 shows damage to the minaret of the Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque, with the top of the minaret

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<sup>139</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtKUpw54NUA>

<sup>140</sup> For additional information on Agha Jaq Mosque see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 16-0003** in **Weekly Report 75-76**.

<sup>141</sup> For additional information on Qadi Askar Mosque see **SHI 15-0045** in **Weekly Report 30**.

<sup>142</sup> For additional information on Haron Dada Mosque see **SHI 15-0047** in **Weekly Report 31**.

<sup>143</sup> For additional information on Al Hadaddin see **SHI 14-0004** in **Weekly Report 1**; **SHI 14-0025** in **Weekly Report 25**.

<sup>144</sup> For additional information on Al Midani Mosque see **SHI 14-0004** in **Weekly Report 1**; **SHI 14-0095** in **Weekly Report 18**; <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2015/09/26/government-forces-targeted-al-midani-mosque-in-al-almaji-neighborhood-in-aleppo-in-september-26/>

<sup>145</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/20/government-forces-targeted-al-baraa-bin-malek-mosque-hraitan-city-aleppo-governorate-may-20-2/>

<sup>146</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L78rkk\\_Fjto](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L78rkk_Fjto)

<sup>147</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCfZyurvncM>

<sup>148</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9cSm0H8gPY>

<sup>149</sup> <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/23/suspected-russian-forces-targeted-ammam-bin-yasser-mosque-kafr-hamra-town-aleppo-governorate-may-23/>

<sup>150</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Kafarhamra.Media.Center/photos/a.827516007290382.107374182.8.823740897667893/1145880742120572/>

missing.<sup>151</sup> The cause of the damage was reported by SNN to be the result of direct targeting. The source of the attack is unknown.

On May 23, 2016 Kafar Hamra Media Center listed the Salah ad Din Mosque in the neighborhood of Ashrafiyah, Aleppo City as having been one of three mosques that were ‘targeted’ on that date.<sup>152</sup> Shahba Press reported that SARG artillery fire struck the mosque.<sup>153</sup> Based on DigitalGlobe satellite imagery from May 24, 2016, the mosque was damaged on the west side with the majority of damage done to the exterior wall. The Salah ad Din Mosque has been damaged on at least one prior occasion. A photograph released by the Aleppo Media Center (AMC) showed the mosque with significant damage to the minaret in August 14, 2015.<sup>154</sup> Satellite imagery suggests that the damage to the minaret likely occurred between May-July, 2013.

On May 23, 2016 Kafar Hamra Media Center listed the Khalid Bin Al-Walid Mosque in the town of Kafr Naha as having been one of three mosques that were ‘targeted’ on that date.<sup>155</sup> Local sources reported that suspected Russian airstrikes struck and damaged the mosque. The Khalid Bin Al-Walid Mosque has been damaged on at least one prior occasion. One video uploaded to Youtube shows damage to the mosque’s minaret as a result of SARG shelling.<sup>156</sup>

On May 24, 2016 the Local Coordination Committees of Syria (LCCSY) reported that SARG sniper fire had started a fire in the Umayyad Mosque in the old city area of Aleppo. According to LCCSY, local defense forces were attempting to put out the fire. No additional information was available at the time of publication.<sup>157</sup> The Umayyad Mosque has been severely damaged through the Syrian conflict by fires, explosives, and militarization of the site (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0040** in **Weekly Report 9**; **SHI 15-0015** in **Weekly Report 26-27**; **SHI 15-0084** in **Weekly Report 40**; **SHI 15-0085** in **Weekly Report 31**).

**Pattern:** Military activity: explosives.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor reports of fire damage at the Umayyad Mosque in the city of Aleppo and will conduct an analysis of the video by Sheikh Mohammed Almaz for additional information.

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<sup>151</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZWREDDkr5E>

<sup>152</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Kafarhamra.Media.Center/photos/a.827516007290382.107374182.8.823740897667893/1146123878762925/>

<sup>153</sup> <https://twitter.com/ShahbaPress/status/734794434215350273>

<sup>154</sup> <https://twitter.com/AleppoAMC/status/632233443317940224>

<sup>155</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Kafarhamra.Media.Center/photos/a.827516007290382.107374182.8.823740897667893/1146123878762925/>

<sup>156</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5UsXtdjCpGo>

<sup>157</sup> <https://twitter.com/LccSy/status/735182083459551232> ; <https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1398953400131792>

## Sources:

### Online Reporting:

Ahmed Melham (Youtube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtKUpw54NUA>

### Information Center of Hraytan:

May 20, 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCfZyurvncM>

May 22, 2016: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L78rkk\\_Fjto](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L78rkk_Fjto)

### Kafar Hamra Media Center:

May 23, 2016:

<https://www.facebook.com/Kafarhamra.Media.Center/photos/a.827516007290382.1073741828.823740897667893/1145880742120572/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Kafarhamra.Media.Center/photos/a.827516007290382.1073741828.823740897667893/1146123878762925/>

### LCCSY:

May 24, 2016:

<https://twitter.com/LccSy/status/735182083459551232> ; <https://www.facebook.com/LCCSy/posts/1398953400131792>

### Qasioun News Agency:

May 22, 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59ebi2wQR50>

May 23, 2016: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_vBkasNRuk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_vBkasNRuk)

### Shahba Press:

May 23, 2016: <https://twitter.com/ShahbaPress/status/734724482993127424>

<https://twitter.com/ShahbaPress/status/734794434215350273>

### SNHR:

May 20, 2016: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/20/government-forces-targeted-al-baraa-bin-malek-mosque-hraitan-city-aleppo-governorate-may-20-2/>

May 23, 2016: <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/05/23/suspected-russian-forces-targeted-ammal-bin-yasser-mosque-kafr-hamra-town-aleppo-governorate-may-23/>

SNN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZWREDDkr5E>

Syrian Civil Defense, Aleppo: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2rd30EZYe8>

Thiqa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9cSm0H8gPY>



Video still of damage to Agha Jaq Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of Agha Jaq minaret (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to Agha Jaq Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of the exterior of Qadi Askar Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of the damaged minaret at Qadi Askar Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of detail of the damage to Qadi Askar Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of the name placard of Qadi Askar Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of the damage to Haron Dada Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of the damage to Haron Dada Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of the exterior of the Haddadin Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of interior damage to the Haddadin Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of a chandelier with a view of the mihrab to the Haddadin Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Interior damage in the Haddadin Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Damage to the Haddadin Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to an unidentified Ottoman-era mosque in the city of Aleppo (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of severe damage to Al Midani Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of severe damage to Al Midani Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to Al Midani Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to Al Midani Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to Al Midani Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to minaret of Al Midani Mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to an unidentified mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to an unidentified mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to an unidentified mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to an unidentified mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to an unidentified mosque (Ahmed Melham; May 19, 2016)



Video still of damage to unidentified mosque (Ahmed Malhim; May 19, 2016)



Damage to Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (SNHR; May 20, 2016)



Smoke and dust at Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (Information Center of Hraytan; May 22, 2016)



Material damage to Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (Information Center of Hraytan; May 22, 2016)



Damage to exterior of Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (Information Center of Hraytan; May 22, 2016)



Video still of smoke billowing from the Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (Thiqa; May 22, 2016)



Video still of smoke billowing Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (Information Center of Hraytan; May 20, 2016)



Video still of interior damage to Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (Information Center of Hraytan; May 20, 2016)



Video still of interior damage to Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (Information Center of Hraytan; May 20, 2016)



Video still of interior damage to Al Bara bin Malek Mosque (Information Center of Hraytan; May 20, 2016)



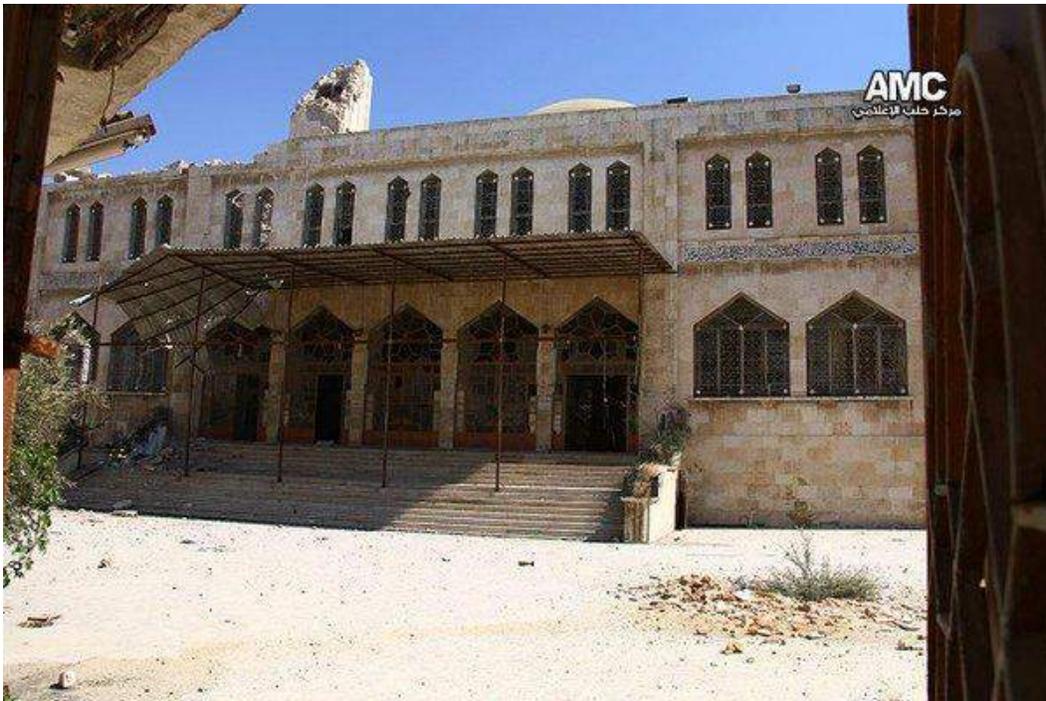
Video still of interior damage to Al Bara bin Malek Mosque(Information Center of Hraytan; May 20, 2016)



Video still of damage to doors inside Al Baraa Bin Malek Mosque (Qasioun News Agency; May 22, 2016)



Extensive damage to Ammar Bin Yasser Mosque (Shahba Press/Kafar Hamra Media Center; May 23, 2016)



Salah ad Din Mosque as it appeared on August 2015 (Aleppo Media Center; August 14, 2015)



Damage to Khalid Ibn Al-Walid Mosque (Twitter; May 23, 2016)<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> <https://twitter.com/ALAMAWI/status/734931199953670144>



Al Bara bin Malek Mosque seen with damage and debris on the north side (DigitalGlobe; May 22, 2016)



Salah ad Din Mosque seen with new damage to the western exterior wall. The minaret and dome on the northeastern corner were previously damaged in 2013 (DigitalGlobe; May 24, 2016).

## Incident Reports: Iraq

### IHI 16-0010 UPDATE

**Report Date:** May 15, 2016

**Site Name:** Nineveh including the Mashki Gate (بوابة المسقى), Adad Gate (بوابة ادد), and Nergal Gate (بوابة نركال)

**Date of Incident:** Mashki Gate: April 10, 2016; Adad and Nergal Gates: April 14, 2016

**Location:** Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

#### Site Description:

- Mashki Gate (بوابة المسقى) - The Mashki Gate is dated to the reign of Sennacherib (701-681 BCE). Located on the Tigris River, the gate's name may be translated as the "Gate of Watering Places." The exterior of the gate included stone steps leading down to the river, an indication that livestock would be driven through this gate to drink. Excavation and reconstruction of the gate took place between 1967-1971 under the auspices of the Iraq Department of Antiquities. The interior of the gate was excavated by David Stronach of UC Berkeley in 1989-1990.<sup>159</sup>
- Adad Gate (بوابة ادد) - The Adad Gate, named for the storm-god Adad or Hadad, is located east of the Nergal Gate, on the northern side of Nineveh. Excavations at this site turned up large tiles dating to the reign of Sennacherib (701-681 BCE).<sup>160</sup> This gate was excavated and reconstructed by the University of Mosul in the 1960s.<sup>161</sup> The reconstruction is a mixture of concrete and mudbrick.<sup>162</sup>
- Nergal Gate (بوابة نركال) - The Nergal Gate, named for the god Nergal, was located on the northern side of Nineveh. The gate was reconstructed by Iraq's Department of Antiquities in the 1950s in order to protect winged bulls located there and create a local museum.<sup>163</sup> Dating to the reign of Sennacherib, A.H. Layard, one of the first archaeologists to explore Nineveh, offers this description of the gate: It was apparently the remains of a gate leading into this quarter of the city, and part of a building, with fragments of two colossal winged figures, had already been discovered in it . . . Following the rows of limestone slabs, from the south side of the mound, and passing through two halls or chambers, we came at length to the opposite entrance. This gateway, facing the open country, was formed by a pair of majestic human-headed bulls, fourteen feet in length, and still entire, though cracked and injured by fire.<sup>164</sup>

**Site Date:** 700 - 681 BCE (Assyrian)

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<sup>159</sup> Madhloum 1968: 24-45

<sup>160</sup> Madhloum 1966: 22

<sup>161</sup> Sulaiman 1971: 45-97

<sup>162</sup> el-Wailly 1966: a-j

<sup>163</sup> al-Asil 1956: 3-9

<sup>164</sup> Layard 1853: 120

**Incident Summary:** New photographs show destruction of the Mashki and Adad Gates in the ancient city of Nineveh.

**Incident Source and Description:** On May 15, 2016 photographs began circulating online of the alleged destruction of the Mashki, Nergal, and Adad gates in the ancient city of Nineveh by ISIL militants. Following further assessment, we found the Nergal Gate had not been destroyed as of the time of this report. The photographs of the Mashki and Adad Gate destructions were released as ISIL propaganda — the first source attributed the work to the Islamic State (al-Doula al-Islamiya) and the Ninawa State (Wilayat Ninawa).<sup>165</sup> The photographs show earthmovers driving into and over the gates and the resulting destruction. Local activist groups Mosulyoon and Mosul Eye began sharing the photographs and reporting the destruction of the gates via their respective Facebook pages.<sup>166</sup>

ASOR CHI previously reported that ISIL had begun destroying the gates in early April of 2016.<sup>167</sup> The Mashki and Adad Gates as well as the ancient site of Nineveh have been subjected to damage and intentional destruction by ISIL militants (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0033** in **Weekly Report 30**, **IHI 15-0095** in **Weekly Report 59-60**, **IHI 15-0097** in **Weekly Report 67-68**, **IHI 15-0097 UPDATE** in **Weekly Report 79-80**, **IHI 16-0010** in **Weekly Report 89-90**, **IHI 16-0010 Update** in **Weekly Report 91-92**).

**Pattern:** Military activity: intentional destruction.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will continue to monitor reports of damage and looting at this and other cultural heritage sites in the city of Mosul and in Ninawa Governorate.

#### **Sources:**

##### Online Reporting:

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Arabi 21:

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Bloomberg:

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Mosul Eye: [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=920512894736880](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=920512894736880)

Mosulyoon:

<https://www.facebook.com/mosulyoon/posts/993741867388211>

<https://www.facebook.com/mosulyoon/posts/993741867388211>

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<sup>165</sup> [https://justpaste.it/dest\\_ath\\_m](https://justpaste.it/dest_ath_m)

<sup>166</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=920512894736880](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=920512894736880) ; <https://www.facebook.com/mosulyoon/posts/993741867388211> ; <https://www.facebook.com/mosulyoon/posts/993741867388211>

<sup>167</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/mosulyoon/posts/973626796066385:0>

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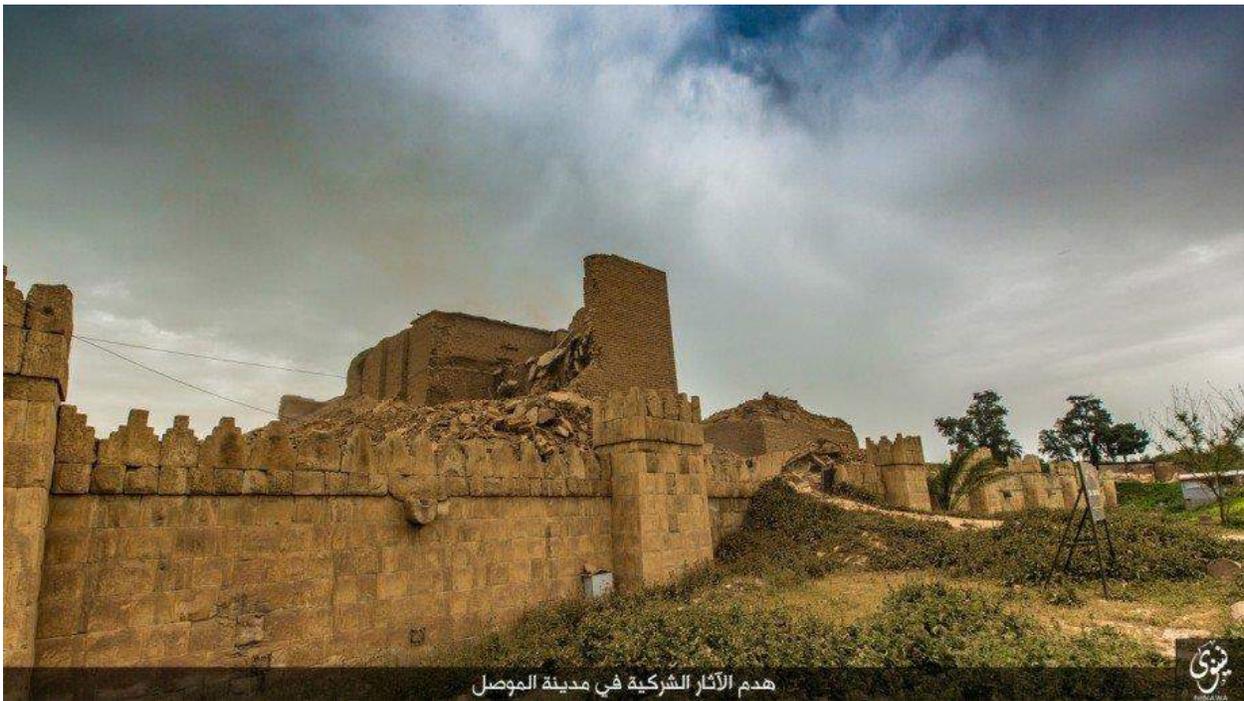
Madhloum, T. A. & A.M. Mahdi (1976) *Nineveh. Historical Monuments in Iraq I*. Directorate General of Antiquities, Baghdad.



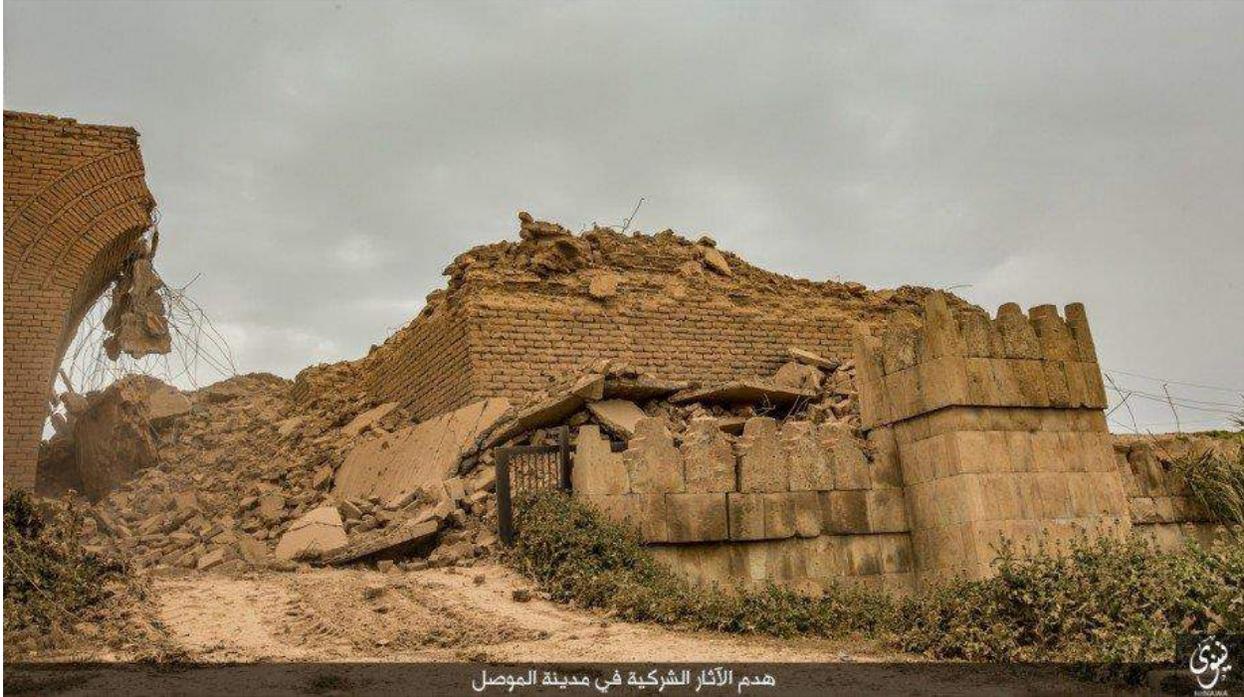
The presence of an earthmover at the Mashki Gate (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل  
Destruction of the Mashki Gate (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل  
The Mashki Gate (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

The Mashki Gate (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)(Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



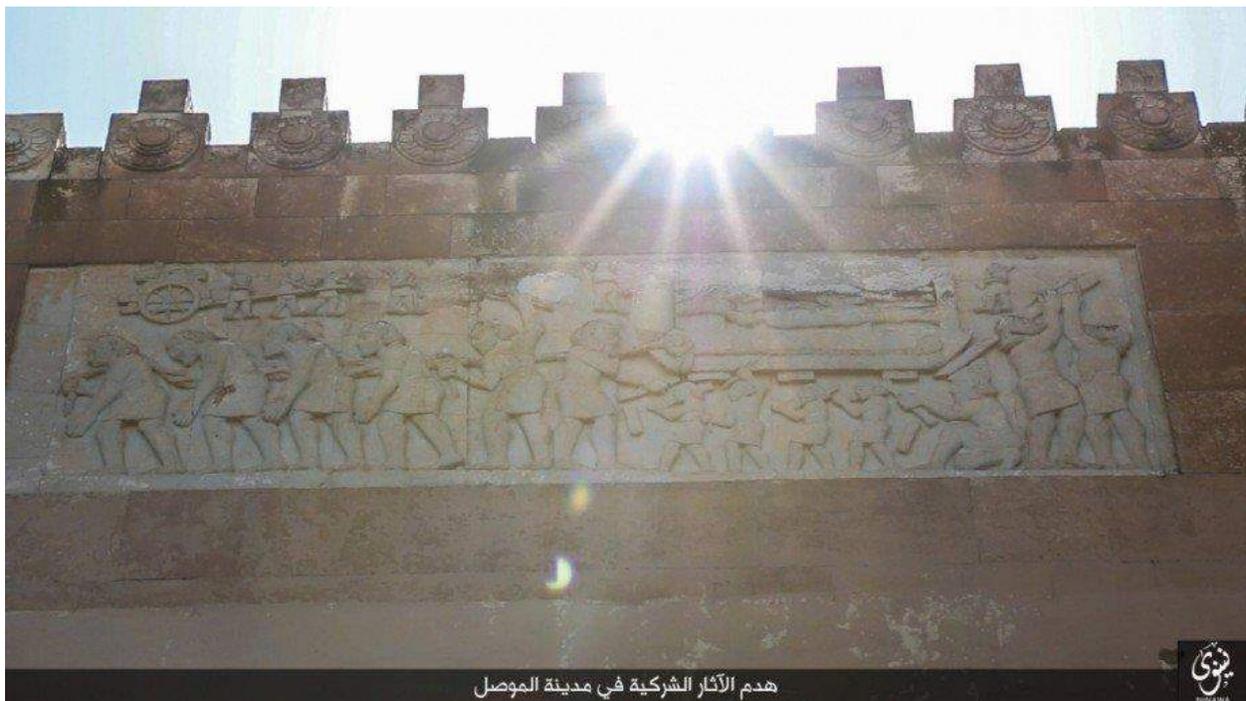
هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

An earthmover drives into the Mashki Gate (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

An earthmover knocking down the walls of the Mashki Gate (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

Photograph of an Assyrian relief located atop the Mashki Gate (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل  
ISIL-related photograph of an Assyrian relief at the ancient site of Nineveh. The relief is presumably associated with the areas of the fortification wall and city gates destroyed by ISIL (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)

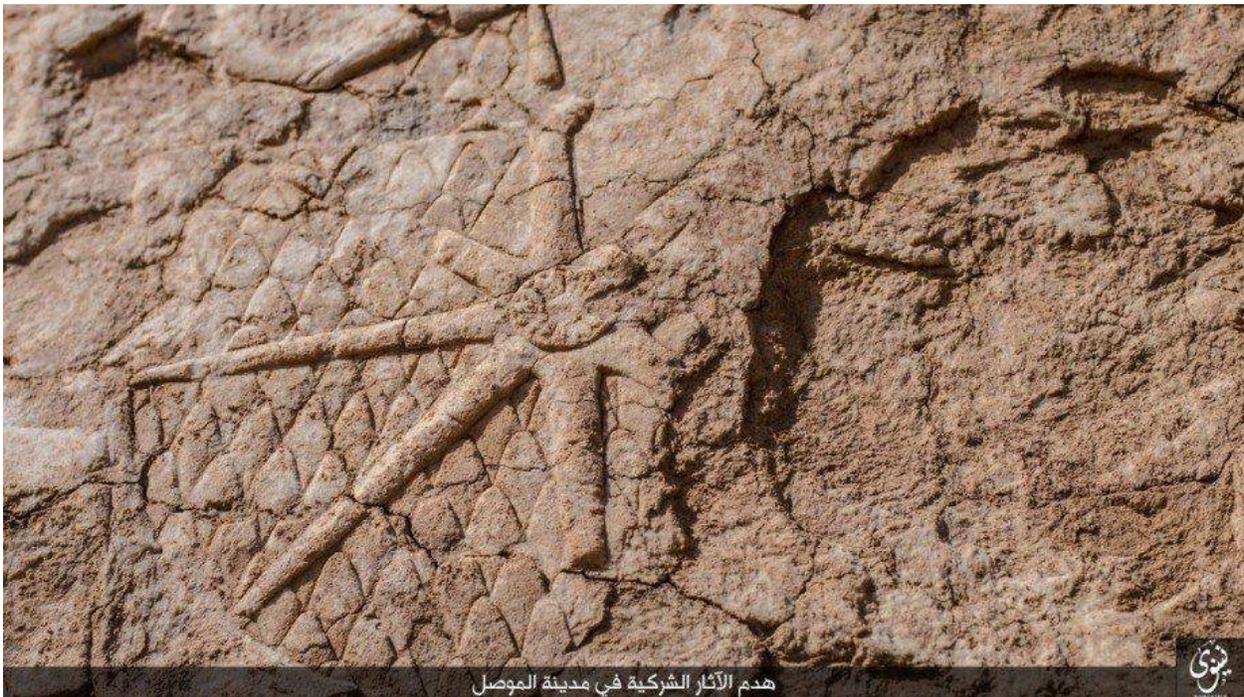


هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل  
ISIL-related photograph of an Assyrian relief at the ancient site of Nineveh. The relief is presumably associated with the areas of the fortification wall and city gates destroyed by ISIL (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الآثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

ISIL-related photograph of an Assyrian relief at the ancient site of Nineveh. The relief is presumably associated with the areas of the fortification wall and city gates destroyed by ISIL (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الآثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

ISIL-related photograph of an Assyrian relief at the ancient site of Nineveh. The relief is presumably associated with the areas of the fortification wall and city gates destroyed by ISIL (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

ISIL-related photograph of an Assyrian lamassu located near the fortification wall of the ancient site of Nineveh. The relief is presumably associated with the areas of the fortification wall and city gates destroyed by ISIL (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

An earthmover knocking down the walls of the Adad Gate (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

An earthmover at the ancient site of Nineveh (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



هدم الأثار الشركية في مدينة الموصل

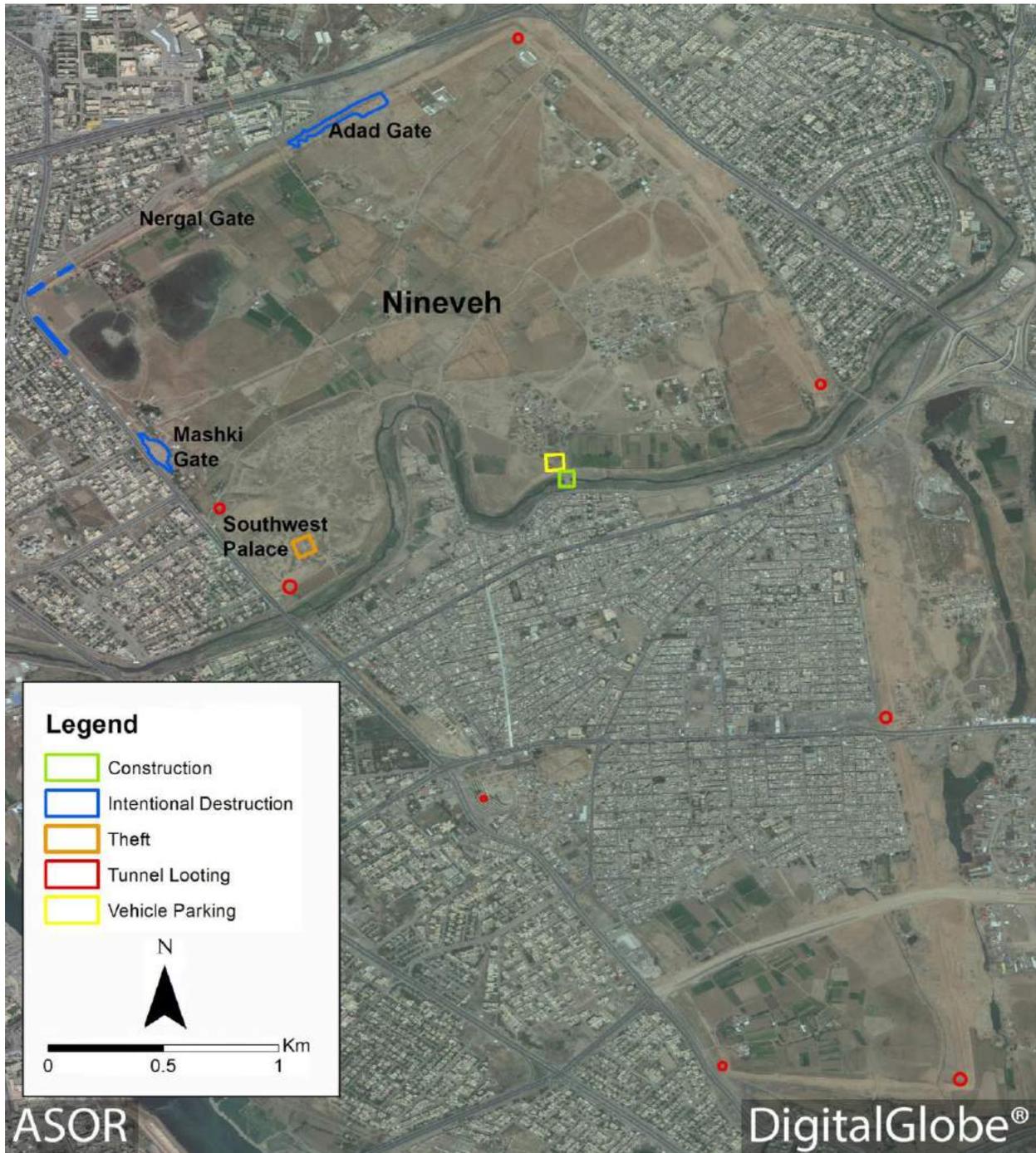
An earthmover destroying the walls at the ancient site of Nineveh (Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



(Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



(Just Paste It; May 15, 2016)



Map of Nineveh outlining the looting, construction, and theft from the site (ASOR CHI/DigitalGlobe; May 9, 2016)



Mashki Gate from above, with protective covering (DigitalGlobe; April 1, 2016)



Mashki Gate post destruction, with city wall destroyed and area bulldozed. (ASOR CHI/DigitalGlobe; May 2, 2016)



Ruined Mashki Gate (ASOR CHI in-country sources; received April 14, 2016)



Adad Gate and city wall prior to destruction (ASOR CHI/DigitalGlobe; April 1, 2016)



Adad Gate and city wall destroyed, with debris removed. Some foundation for Adad Gate still visible (ASOR CHI/DigitalGlobe; May 2, 2016)



Adad Gate with working earthmover in foreground leveling the mound by the gate as well as the site wall (ASOR CHI in-country sources; received April 14, 2016)



Nergal Gate (ASOR CHI/DigitalGlobe; April 1, 2016)



Nergal Gate still intact (ASOR CHI/DigitalGlobe; May 2, 2016)



Nergal Gate (ASOR CHI in-country sources; received May 4, 2016)