

Crac des Chevaliers (Qalaat al-Hosn)

Homs Governorate





September 17, 2014

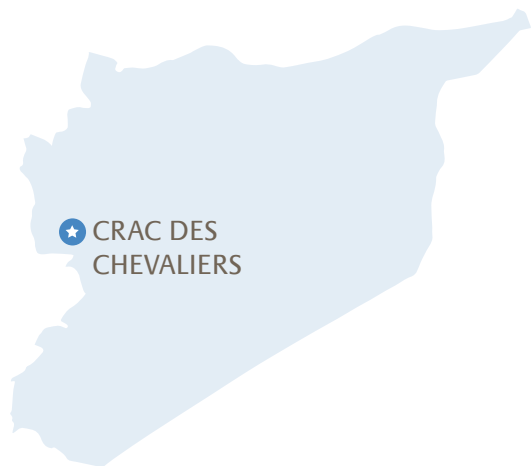
FIGURE 31. Overview of Crac des Chevaliers and locations where damage has occurred and is visible.



Site Description

The main feature of this area is the World Heritage Property of Crac des Chevaliers (inscribed in 2006 and added to the list of World Heritage in Danger by UNESCO in 2013). Crac des Chevaliers is a Crusader Castle, initially built by the Hospitallers, also known as the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, between 1142 and 1271 AD over a Kurdish settlement that was first inhabited in the eleventh century AD. The site was given to the Knights Hospitaller in 1142 AD by Raymond II, Count of Tripoli, and remained in their possession until 1271 AD when it fell to the Mamluks,⁽ⁱ⁾ who are responsible for most of the current structure. The Arabic name, Qalaat al-Hosn, means “the impregnable fortress.” It was not called Crac des Chevaliers until the nineteenth century. The castle is particularly famous for never falling to warfare or siege; it was only finally taken by the Mamluks through their use of deception:

“...Crac des Chevaliers is taken as the best preserved example of the castles of the Crusader period, and it is also seen as an archetype of a medieval castle particularly in the context of the military orders.”⁽ⁱⁱ⁾



Crac des Chevaliers Damage Level (Number of Heritage Locations)

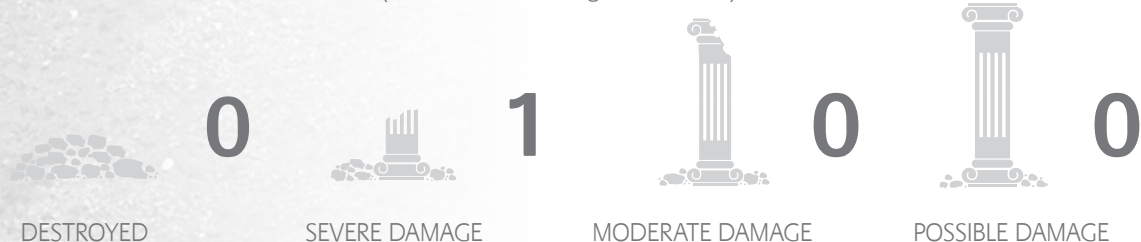




FIGURE 32. Overview of Crac des Chevaliers before damage occurred.

Status Overview

A review of the satellite imagery indicates that extensive fighting has occurred in the area. Shelling damage appears to be concentrated on and in the castle, but is also visible in the surrounding town, some of which dates back to the sixteenth century AD. Shelling of the castle has been reported since July 2012;⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ an airstrike^(iv) occurred in July 2013, during the siege of Homs,^(v) and a further airstrike was reported in October 2013.^(vi) After further bombardment and fighting, the citadel changed hands in March 2014.^(vii) This has caused severe damage, visible on the satellite imagery (see figures 31 and 32)

Debris is visible by the Square Tower in the southern wall, indicating impact damage to the façade. Debris is also visible around the Tower of the Windmill and the tower to its left in the northern wall, indicating further damage.

Further debris can be seen in three places on the inside of the fortification wall, and impact marks are visible on the inside of the southern wall (along the stables).

The castle itself has also sustained damage. There are holes in the roof of the square tower by the entrance, the eastern tower of the donjon (keep), the roof of the store in front of the keep and the chapel (which still contains traces of medieval frescos). In addition, the Gothic loggia, also known as the Hall of the Knights, is clearly damaged; a section has collapsed and debris is visible in the courtyard in front of it. The courtyard contains additional debris indicative of further heavy damage, most likely from the visible collapse of the lower courtyard staircase that led to the roof of the stores and the keep.

It should be noted that the satellite image post-dates the stabilisation and reconstruction work undertaken by the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, begun during the summer of 2014 when much of the debris was cleared away.^(viii) The true levels of damage to the site are therefore likely to have been much higher; certainly not all the damage reported by the DGAM^(ix) is visible.



Crac des Chevaliers/Photo: Wikimedia, Creative Commons.

Video is available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHPtHwNqaVE&spfreload=10>



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Effects of bombings on the citadel, 19 February 2014/
Photo: Le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger communtiy, Facebook



Debris inside fortification wall from collapsed stairs, 21 March 2014
/ Photo: REUTERS/Khaled al-Hariri



Image of the inner courtyard where the stairs have completely collapsed/Photo: DGAM, 03 July 2014

NOTE

This report provides a detailed analysis of significant changes to the cultural heritage of this site resulting from the ongoing conflict in Syria. World View 1 and 2 satellite imagery acquired on 08 March 2012, 04 August 2014 and 17 September 2014 was used for this report.

(i) UNESCO Site of Crac Des Chevaliers World Heritage Inscription. Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1229> [1]

(ii) UNESCO Site of Crac Des Chevaliers World Heritage Inscription. Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1229> [1]

(iii) AFP report, July 2012. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmOIQFlqNw> [2]

(iv) Report by the The Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology, July 2013. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHPtHwNqaVE> [3]

(v) Newspaper report in the Independent, 2013 (amongst others)

Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syrian-air-strike-damages-12th-century-castle-of-the-crusades-8707531.html> [4]

(vi) Newspaper report in Zaman al Wasl, 2013. Available at: <http://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/42311.html> (amongst others) [5]

(vii) Newspaper report in the Washington Post, 2014 [6]. Many (before and after) photos of the damage are available on the BBC website at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-26696113> [7], and the World Monuments Fund website available at

<http://www.wmf.org/slide-show/conditions-crac-des-chevaliers-syria-2009%E2%80%932014> [8]

(viii) The DGAM report on the restoration and stabilisation work is available at <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1307> [9]

(ix) The DGAM's report on the damage is available at <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=239&id=1180> [10] with photos.



Severe Damage