

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

NEA-PSHSS-14-001

Weekly Report 57–58 — September 2-15, 2015

Michael D. Danti, Allison Cuneo, Susan Penacho,  
Kyra Kaercher, Katherine Burge, Mariana Gabriel, and LeeAnn Barnes Gordon

## Executive Summary

During the reporting period, ASOR CHI documented severe damage to seven of Palmyra’s tower tombs caused by ISIL deliberate destructions using explosives. During this same period, ISIL released information on social media sites and in its magazine *Dabiq* on its deliberate destructions of several major buildings at the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Palmyra — the Baalshamin Temple and the Temple of Bel — and the Deir Mar Elian (Mar Elian Monastery). The Baalshamin Temple and Temple of Bel destructions have been verified using satellite imagery. ASOR CHI also documented new looting and other damage at the sites of Apamea and Tell Houach in Hama Governorate while under Syrian Regime control. This report also includes a special report from The Day After Protection Initiative on ISIL looting in northern Syria including details on damage to 11 sites in the Membidj area and 5 sites in the Jerablus area in Aleppo Governorate.



Map of Palmyra indicating monuments intentionally damaged or destroyed during ISIL occupation (DigitalGlobe annotated by ASOR CHI; September 2, 2015)

<sup>1</sup> This report is based on research conducted by the “Cultural Heritage Initiative: Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq.” Weekly reports reflect reporting from a variety of sources and may contain unverified material. As such, they should be treated as preliminary and subject to change.

## Key Points

- ASOR CHI discovered new evidence of undocumented destruction in the Valley of the Tombs at Palmyra, including severe damage and total destruction of seven Tower Tombs using DigitalGlobe satellite imagery (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0128**).
- Satellite imagery shows ongoing looting and militarization at the site of Apamea (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0129**) and new evidence of these activities at Tell Houach (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0130**).
- New propaganda from ISIL was released, depicting the destruction of the Deir Mar Elian monastery (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0123 UPDATE**), the Baalshamin Temple (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0124 UPDATE**), and the Temple of Bel (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0127 UPDATE**).
- DigitalGlobe satellite imagery confirms the extent of damage to the Baalshamin and Temple of Bel.

## Heritage Timeline

- September 14, 2015      *The Washington free Beacon* published an article titled “**The Link Between the Islamic State and the Western Art Trade**” (by Daniel Wisner). <http://freebeacon.com/culture/the-link-between-the-islamic-state-and-the-western-art-trade/>
- September 13, 2015      *Sputnik* published an article titled “**Russia Condemns Destruction of Ancient Monuments in Syria by ISIL.**”  
<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20150913/1026946123.html>
- *Middle East Eye* published an article titled “**The Archaeologist who Watched as Palmyra Was Blown Up**” (by Peter Osborne).  
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/syrian-soldiers-account-watch-over-palmyra-584247653>
- September 12, 2015      **Heritage for Peace** published a summary of damage titled “**Damage to Syria’s Heritage 12 September 2015.**”  
<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-12-september-2015/>
- September 11, 2015      **DGAM** published an article titled “**In Photos: ISIS Setting Up Explosives and Destroying the Sella of Bel Temple in Palmyra.**”  
**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0127 UPDATE.**  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1800>
- *Apollo Magazine* published an article titled “**Can 3D Recording Help Preserve Threatened Sites in Syria and Iraq?**” (by Adam Lowe).  
<http://www.apollo-magazine.com/can-3d-recording-help-preserve-threatened-sites-syria-iraq/>

September 9, 2015

CBC published an article titled "**Following the trail of Syria's looted history.**" <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-looted-syrian-ancient-artifacts-black-market-us-and-europe/>

- *TO BHMA* published an article titled "**From Jihadists to Antiquities Dealer**" (by Μητροπούλου Ειρήνη). <http://www.tovima.gr/world/article/?aid=735811>
- *The Sacramento Bee* published an article titled "**Disrupting the Islamic State, Saving Ancient Civilization and Virtual Reality**" (by Markos Kounalakis) [.http://www.bradenton.com/2015/09/09/5981251\\_disrupting-the-islamic-state-saving.html](http://www.bradenton.com/2015/09/09/5981251_disrupting-the-islamic-state-saving.html)
- *The Times* published an article titled "**ISIS Looted Syrian Historic Artifacts Make it to Black Market in Us and Europe.**" <http://www.suffieldtimes.com/breaking/isis-looted-syrian-ancient-artifacts-make-it-to-black-market-in-us-and-europe/107735/>
- *Jewish Journal* published an article titled "**ISIS Looting and Destruction of Heritage Sites has Roots in Ideology and Finance**" (by Robert Swift). [http://www.jewishjournal.com/world/article/isis\\_looting\\_and\\_destruction\\_of\\_heritage\\_sites\\_has\\_roots\\_in\\_ideology\\_and\\_fi](http://www.jewishjournal.com/world/article/isis_looting_and_destruction_of_heritage_sites_has_roots_in_ideology_and_fi)

September 8, 2015

*Neue Zurcher Zeitung* published an article titled "**Zerstörte Vergangenheit, verlorene Zukunft**" (by Iris Gerlach). [http://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/kunst\\_architektur/zerstoerte-vergangenheit-verlorene-zukunft-1.18609127](http://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/kunst_architektur/zerstoerte-vergangenheit-verlorene-zukunft-1.18609127)

- *MSN News* published a video titled "**Louvre Showcases Antiquities as Palmyra is Destroyed.**" <http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/other/louvre-showcases-antiquities-as-palmyra-is-destroyed/vi-AAe4eTZ?ocid=se>
- **Association for Research into Crimes Against Art** published an article titled "**Destroying and Protecting the World's Shared Cultural Heritage: Iconoclasm and Psychological Warfare**" (by Joris D. Kila). <http://art-crime.blogspot.it/2015/09/destroying-and-protecting-worlds-shared.html>

September 7, 2015

*The Guardian* published an article titled "**Safeguarding the World's Archaeological Treasures**" (by Ian Sample). <http://www.theguardian.com/science/audio/2015/sep/07/syria-safeguarding-archaeology-technology>

- *Tert.am (Armenian News)* published an article titled **“Restoring Syrian Cultural Heritage to Cost Billions of Dollars.”**  
<http://www.tert.am/en/news/2015/09/07/syria/1784068>
  - The *UN News Centre* published an article titled **“Safeguarding the cultural heritage of Syria and Iraq is essential for future peace, say senior UN officials.”**  
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51817>
  - ISIL social media shared a new video of the **destruction of Deir Mar Elian monastery**, which took place on August 21, 2015. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0123 UPDATE.**  
[https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1)
- September 6, 2015 *The Australian* published an article titled **“Like Wolves after Blood, Islamic State Smashing Everything”** (by Christina Lamb).  
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/like-wolves-after-blood-islamic-state-smashing-everything/story-fnb64oi6-1227514882803?sv=18821ccbdef52efd2df96bd3ddf03c2>
- September 5, 2015 *Il Manifesto* published an article titled **“Palmira in ostaggio”** (by Valentina Porcheddu).  
<http://ilmanifesto.info/palmira-in-ostaggio/>
- *NPR* published an article titled **“As ISIS Destroys Artifacts, Could Some Antiquities Have Been Saved?”**.  
<http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/09/05/437616132/as-isis-destroys-artifacts-could-some-antiquities-have-been-saved>
- September 4, 2015 *Financial Times* published an article titled **“How to Buy Antiquities”** (by Kathryn Tully). *Financial Times* looks at the steps artifacts go through to reach the market, as well as warning collectors what to look for to make sure that they aren’t purchasing looted material. Amir al-Azm is quoted extensively about the antiquities market, ISIL, and large scale looting in Syria.  
<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d0784c78-50b0-11e5-b029-b9d50a74fd14.html#axzz3ldkjtzKK>
- Coverage of the damage to the **Baalshamin Temple** at Palmyra continued:  
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1798>  
<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/palmyra-destruction-of-multiple-tower-tombs-in-tadmor-by-isis/>  
[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/04/isis-destroys-ancient-tombs-palmyra?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/04/isis-destroys-ancient-tombs-palmyra?CMP=share_btn_fb)

<http://arabic.rt.com/news/793075>-تدمير في الأثرية شهرة مقابر بفتح داعش ب ف أ-  
سوريا/

<http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/islamic-state-militants-destroy-ancient-tombs-in-palmyra-says-syrian-official-1.2547826>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34150905>

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/09/04/islamic-state-militants-destroy-tombs-palmyra/71697462/>

<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/09/04/official-islamic-militants-destroy-ancient-tombs-in-syria>

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-destroys-ancient-tombs-in-palmyra-1441364218>

September 3, 2015

ASOR CHI published an article titled “**Special Report: Update on the Situation in Palmyra.**” Satellite imagery acquired by ASOR CHI provided new evidence of severe damage to seven Tower Tombs located in the Valley of the Tombs at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra. **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0128.**

<http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/special-report-update-on-the-situation-in-palmyra/>

- *Alwatan* published an article titled “**Heritage victim of the fierce war in Syria**”  
<http://alwatan.com/details/75161>
- *The Independent* published an article titled “**Isis profits from destruction of antiquities by selling relics to dealers - and then blowing up the buildings they come from to conceal the evidence of looting**” (by Robert Fisk).  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/isis-profits-from-destruction-of-antiquities-by-selling-relics-to-dealers--and-then-blowing-up-the-buildings-they-come-from-to-conceal-the-evidence-of-looting-10483421.html>
- *The Daily Mail* published an article titled “**How ISIS profits by wiping out history: Jihadis drive up the price of artefacts by sparking outcry over their destruction... then cashing in on their notoriety**” (by Simon Tomlinson)  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3220738/How-ISIS-profits-wiping-history-Jihadis-drive-price-artefacts-sparking-outcry-destruction-cashing-notoriety.html>

September 2, 2015

*The Irish Times* published an article titled “**In its destruction, Palmyra reaps what Saudi Arabia sowed**” (by Michael Jansen).

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/middle-east/in-its-destruction-palmyra-reaps-what-saudi-arabia-sowed-1.2336493>

- *Daily Beast* published an article titled “**Can We Digitize History Before ISIS Destroys it?**” (by Nina Stochlic). <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/09/02/can-we-digitize-history-before-isis-destroys-it.html>
- *The Conversation* published an article titled “**After Palmyra, what can the world do to protect cultural treasures?**” (by Agnieszka Jachec-Neale). <http://theconversation.com/after-palmyra-what-can-the-world-do-to-protect-cultural-treasures-46839>
- *Yahoo News* published an article titled “**Syria's heritage victim of intractable war**” (by Sara Hussein). <http://news.yahoo.com/syrias-heritage-riches-victim-intractable-war-075803754.html>
- *Deutsche World* published an article titled “**Opinion: Powerless to stop Islamic State**” (by Martin Zagatta). <http://www.dw.com/en/opinion-powerless-to-stop-islamic-state/a-18690285>
- **Observatory Foundation for the Culture of Security** published an article titled “**Unesco’s call on Syria and Iraq cultural heritage: 90% currently at risk of destruction.**” (by Enrico Strina). <http://www.ofcs.eu/2015/09/02/unescos-call-on-syria-and-iraq-cultural-heritage-90-currently-at-risk-of-destruction/>
- *Los Angeles Times* published an article titled “**As Islamic State Destroys Antiquities, a Rush to get 3-D Images of What’s Left**” (by Ann M. Simmons). <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-antiquities-3d-preservation-20150901-htlmlstory.html>
- Issue 11 of *Dabiq* published a collection of photos titled “**Destruction of the Baalshamin Temple.**” **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0124 UPDATE.**

August 31, 2015

*The Agenda* published an article titled “**How can we stop ISIS and the Trafficking of our Cultural Heritage?**” (by Mark Vlasic and Helga Turku). <https://agenda.weforum.org/2015/08/isis-trafficking-cultural-heritage/>

## Military and Political Context

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

1. Raqqa:
  - On September 7 the US-led coalition conducted four airstrikes on ISIL targets in the Syrian towns of Raqqa, Mara, and Tamakh.<sup>2</sup>
  - During the reporting period, activist groups on the ground in Syria continued to report ongoing airstrikes and air surveillance activity by both Coalition forces and the Syrian regime.
2. Deir Ez-Zor:
  - During the reporting period, various Twitter accounts reported attacks and ongoing fighting, including a suicide bombing attack, many of which included images. News reports detailing the damage and casualties have been slow to emerge, as well as reports on which groups carried out the violence.

### Other Key Points:

- The Syrian army published images of Russian trucks and armored vehicles in Syria. It remains unclear as to the exact size and scope of Russia's participation in the Syrian conflict. It is also unclear as to who is leading this effort. There is a belief that the entrance of these military supplies into Syria will contribute to fighting ISIL. Russia remains firmly pro-Assad, and has been resolute in its support for the president remaining in the country when and if a peace deal is reached.<sup>3</sup>

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

1. Baghdad:
  - On September 2 unknown gunmen kidnapped 18 Turkish construction workers near Sadr City in Eastern Baghdad. Although no group has taken claim, it is widely believed to be the action of a Shi'a militia. The group released its demands on September 11 with a video showing five masked gunmen and the 18 hostages.<sup>4</sup>
  - On September 6 the Iraqi Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi confirmed that F16 aircraft had entered Iraqi Air Force service and conducted 15 airstrikes.<sup>5</sup>
  - On September 8 unknown gunmen kidnapped the Iraqi Deputy Minister of Justice and Director of General Investigations in the area of Bunug in eastern Baghdad.<sup>6</sup>
  - On September 14 ISIL detonated a car bomb in west central Baghdad, killing two people and wounding seven.<sup>7</sup>
2. Kirkuk:
  - On September 9 ISIL and Turkmen fighters clashed in the villages of Taza and Bashir, both located southwest of Kirkuk. Peshmerga forces came under attack by ISIL forces in the villages of Abu Mafrej and al-Humayra, also southwest of Kirkuk. The US-led coalition reported one airstrike.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rferl.org/content/anti-is-coalition-air-strikes-iraq-syria/27231820.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131573>

<sup>4</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/09/regional-conflict-between-iran-and.html> ;

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/world/middleeast/turkish-workers-abducted-in-baghdad.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/iraq%20SITREP%202015-9-8.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/iraq-situation-report-september-4-8-2015>

<sup>7</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/09/iraq-situation-report-september-15-17.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/map/iraq-situation-report-september-9-10-2015>

- During the reporting period, the PKK Peshmerga and PUK anti-terrorism forces were reported to have retaken seven ISIL-held villages in district of Daquq.<sup>9</sup>
  - During the reporting period, the Iraqi Air Force struck an ISIL-held bridge and other facilities in Hawija district.<sup>10</sup>
3. Ramadi:
- On September 9-10 the Department of Defense announced three airstrikes in areas near Ramadi and Habaniya.<sup>11</sup>
  - On September 11, ISIL and Iraqi Security Forces clashed in an area east of Ramadi.<sup>12</sup>
4. Anbar:
- During the reporting period, ISIL has continued to attack the areas of Barwana and Baghdadi. The Iraqi army and Sunni tribal fighters, with the support of Coalition airstrikes, have been able to prevent ISIL from advancing thus far.<sup>13</sup>
5. Salah ad Din:
- On September 2 the Iraqi Air Force conducted strikes on ISIL targets in Baiji.<sup>14</sup>
  - During the reporting period, ISIL made gains in Baiji including the regaining of some territory that had been regained by Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>15</sup>

**Other Key Points:**

- The United States government has confirmed that ISIL is using chemical weapons, including crude make-ups of mustard gas, in their attacks along the Syria-Iraq border. It is unknown whether ISIL is making these chemical weapons itself or if the organization has discovered caches in Syria or Iraq.<sup>16</sup>
- On September 8 Turkey deployed forces into northern Iraq from Hakkani province in Turkey to search out PKK Kurdish rebels responsible for attacks against Turkish troops. Fighting between the PKK and Turkish military forces has been ongoing.<sup>17</sup>
- The Iraqi government has called on Turkey for a coordination of efforts. Iraqi Foreign Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari has criticized Turkey for violating Iraqi sovereignty by conducting airstrikes northern Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

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

1. Hakkari Province:
- On September 8th, Turkey deployed forces into northern Iraq from Hakkari Province in Turkey to search out PKK Kurdish rebels responsible for attacks against Turkish troops. Fighting between the PKK and Turkish military forces has been ongoing.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-nr2\\_6qoz5Lc/VfdGlySN4KI/AAAAAAAAEAGE/sqOHgOHMBvo/s1600/iraq%2BSITREP%2B2015-9-14%2Bhigh.png](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-nr2_6qoz5Lc/VfdGlySN4KI/AAAAAAAAEAGE/sqOHgOHMBvo/s1600/iraq%2BSITREP%2B2015-9-14%2Bhigh.png)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/background/iraq-situation-report-september-4-8-2015>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/map/iraq-situation-report-september-9-10-2015>

<sup>12</sup> <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2015/09/iraq-situation-report-september-11-14.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/map/iraq-situation-report-september-1-3-2015>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/iraq%20SITREP%202015-9-8.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/16092015> ; <http://news.yahoo.com/retakes-part-iraqi-town-baiji-pentagon-202925435.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-34211838> ;

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/12/world/middleeast/ordnance-used-by-isis-shows-traces-of-chemical-agents.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34183797>

<sup>18</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/09/13/Iraq-calls-on-Turkey-to-coordinate-its-strikes-on-Kurdish-militants.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34183797>



## Satellite Imagery and Geospatial Analysis

DigitalGlobe recently released new satellite images covering portions of Syria and Iraq. During the current reporting period, ASOR CHI geospatial analysts processed and studied these images. Coverage areas of Bosra, Tell Hamoukar, and Tell Zeidan showed no visible changes to these locations. The site of Palmyra was severely damaged in recent months: DigitalGlobe satellite imagery from Sept 2, 2015 illustrates that the extent of damage to the ancient site was greater than expected based on recent reports concerning the deliberate destruction of the Baalshamin Temple and Temple of Bel (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0124 UPDATE**, **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0127 UPDATE**, and **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0128** for further analysis). Recent imagery from the sites of Tell Houach (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0129**) and Apamea (**ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0130**) shows extensive looting; the imagery from Apamea is particularly significant because it is the first available since November 2013. New imagery of the sites of Raqqa in Syria, dating to September 9, 2015, and Nineveh in Iraq, dating to August 29, 2015, were also analyzed and will be included in Weekly Report 59–60.

Previously dated satellite imagery from the site of Palmyra had shown minimal damage to the ancient Greco-Roman site. Until this point the most recent image from June 26, 2015 showed damage to the Shrine of Sheikh Mohammad b. Ali and the Sufi shrine and tomb of Shagaf/Nizar Abu Behaeddine (see **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0102** in Weekly Report 46).<sup>20</sup> Most of the previously reported damage incidents within the boundaries of the ancient site were to architectural features that were not visible in the satellite imagery, but since the destruction of the Baalshamin Temple, the Temple of Bel, and multiple tower tombs, this is no longer the case. Satellite images from August 27, 2015 and September 2, 2015 reveal a significant amount of visible damage across the ancient site of Palmyra. Using these recently available DigitalGlobe satellite images, ASOR CHI detailed the damage to both temples, as well as the total destruction of six tower tombs and damage to a seventh, in the special report released September 3, 2015.<sup>21</sup>

Looting at the site of Apamea has been well documented with extensive looting pits visible on a satellite image from April 3, 2012 (see images associated with **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0134** below, shown in red). A large area of the site was damaged in this initial period of looting, particularly along the eastern side of the site. It is not possible to pinpoint exact dates of the looting without additional data, but the satellite imagery illustrates the amount of looting taking place in the period between two images. Thus by using multiple images, we have created a timeline of damage to the site. Since the initial looting period, multiple satellite imagery has assisted in the continuing tracking of looting at the site. An image from December 15, 2012 showed more looting had taken place to the west and on the southeastern edge of the site (shown in yellow). Further looting took place between the December 15, 2012 image and November 28, 2013 (shown in blue) around previously looted areas on the northwest and northeast portions of the site. The most recent image from August 24, 2015 showed additional looting taking place outside the walls of the site to the north and northeast (shown in green). There was also expanded looting to the southwest outside of areas previously looted in 2012. Areas on the west, east, and within the center of the site also continued to be looted with larger pits being opened over areas that had already been damaged. Based upon these images, it is clear that the site has continued to be looted with new areas of the site being affected.

---

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/syrian-heritage-initiative-weekly-report-46-june-23-2015/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/special-report-update-on-the-situation-in-palmyra/>

Another site located close to Apamea, Tell Houach, was analyzed from the same set of images. The site of Tell Houach is a small mound that had been previously damaged prior to April 2012 with some embankments and a few small looting pits on the edge of the tell. The embankments continued to grow as seen in an image from December 15, 2012 as well as additional looting pits on the mound. However, images from November 2013 and April 2014 show the pits and embankments had gone out of use and were overgrown. However, the newest image from August 24, 2015 shows an increase in looting pits along the interior of the embankment wall as well as additional pitting along the southern edge of the mound.

## Incident Reports: Syria

### SHI 15-0123 UPDATE

**Report Date:** September 9, 2015

**Site Name:** Deir Mar Elian; Monastery of St. Julian; Mar Elian Monastery

**Date of Incident:** August 21, 2015

**Location:** Al Qariatayn, Homs Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** Deir Mar Elian is located in Al-Qariatayn, on the road between Damascus and Palmyra. The road leads to the Islamic palace of Qasr al-Hayr al-Garbi and the Roman Dam of Kherbaqa. The town of Al-Qariatayn formed an important station on the road of the commercial caravans between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean Coast, and was used as a resting point on the Silk Road. The prominent status of the city was established during the Roman period, and continued during the Byzantine period when the city was used as a stopping point for pilgrims. Many churches were built on this road, as was the church of Deir Mar Elian.<sup>22</sup>

Deir Mar Elian was constructed as a Syrian Orthodox Church on the death and subsequent grave site of Saint Elian (Saint Julian).<sup>23</sup> Saint Elian was martyred after refusing to renounce his Christianity at the hands of his father, a Roman officer. His remains rest in a small sarcophagus in the chapel. In the 1920s or 1930s, the monastery was converted to a Catholic Monastery under the French Mandate. When Mar Elian was renovated in 1969, the plaster that lined the walls was removed to reveal murals of Jesus, Mary, and Prophets dating back to the 6th Century CE.<sup>24</sup>

**Site Date:** Constructed in 432 CE

**Incident Summary:** The monastery at Mar Elian was intentionally destroyed by ISIL militants using earth-moving machines.

**Incident Source and Description:** On August 21, 2015, DGAM reported the destruction of the 5th century Mar Elian Monastery. The building, restored in 1969, was destroyed by ISIL using bulldozers.<sup>25</sup> ISIL posted pictures and video of the destruction to their Twitter account. The group captured Qaryatain, which lies southwest of Palmyra and 85km from Homs, after heavy clashes with regime forces on August 6th, 2015. ISIL abducted 230 Syriac Orthodox and Syriac Catholics as well as the head priest, Jacques Mourad — 48 people have been released and 110 were transferred to Raqqa.<sup>26</sup> It is unknown where the rest of the hostages are located. On September 8, 2015 video evidence was published of the destruction of the monastery. The destruction of Deir Mar Elian follows multiple episodes of destruction to religious monasteries and sites in Syria and Iraq.

---

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/culture/museum-for-dialogue/item/en/123/door-of-the-church-deir-mar-elian-al-sheikh#sthash.AeHXRQIT.dpuf>

<sup>23</sup> Beattie, Andrew; Pepper, Timothy (2001). *The Rough Guide to Syria*. Rough Guides.

<sup>24</sup> Beattie, Andrew; Pepper, Timothy (2001). *The Rough Guide to Syria*. Rough Guides.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1777>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/08/after-transporting-the-christians-to-the-city-of-al-raqqa-islamic-state-demolishes-the-monastery-of-saint-elian/>

**Pattern:** Intentional destruction by ISIL militants.

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

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1777>

APSA: <http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/homs-countryside-isis-destroy-5th-century-mar-ellian-monastery/>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34016809>

Daily Mail: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3204584/Bulldozer-civilisation-Shocking-new-images-ISIS-brutes-desecrating-priceless-1-500-year-old-Christian-monastery.html>

Yahoo: <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/isis-syria-1-500-old-073858453.html#AzebAmi>

SOHR: <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/08/after-transporting-the-christians-to-the-city-of-al-raqqa-islamic-state-demolishes-the-monastery-of-saint-elian/>

Assafir: <http://assafir.com/Article/5/438859>

Express: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/599816/ISIS-Islamic-State-Mar-Elia-monastery-Homs-Syria-bulldoze-saint>

UNESCO: [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/director\\_general\\_of\\_unesco\\_irina\\_bokova\\_condemns\\_the\\_destruction\\_of\\_the\\_mar\\_elian\\_monastery\\_in\\_syria/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/director_general_of_unesco_irina_bokova_condemns_the_destruction_of_the_mar_elian_monastery_in_syria/)

Video of Dier Mar Elian destruction: [https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1)

Scholarly:

Beattie, Andrew; Pepper, Timothy (2001). *The Rough Guide to Syria*. Rough Guides.



Deir Mar Elian, after destruction (DGAM; August 21, 2015)



Deir Mar Elian, after destruction (DGAM; August 21, 2015)



Deir Mar Elian, during destruction (DGAM; August 21, 2015)



Deir Mar Elian, after destruction (DGAM; August 21, 2015)



Deir Mar Elian, during destruction (ISIL social media; August 21, 2015)



Deir Mar Elian, during destruction (ISIL Social Media; August 21, 2015)



Deir Mar Elian, during destruction (ISIL Social Media; August 21, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Deir Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)





Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elia (https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\_MAIL\_1; Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elia (https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\_MAIL\_1; Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elia ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elia ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)





Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)



Video still of the destruction of Mar Elian ([https://archive.org/details/ISDAR\\_MAIL\\_1](https://archive.org/details/ISDAR_MAIL_1); Sept 7, 2015)

## SHI 15-0124 UPDATE

**Report Date:** September 1, 2015; September 3, 2015

**Site Name:** Baalshamin Temple

**Date of Incident:** August 23, 2015

**Location:** UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** From *Monuments of Syria*:

“The Baalshamin Temple (Lord of the Heavens in the Semitic Pantheon) was restored by a Swiss mission in the 1950s. The First work dates as early as AD 17. Further construction was carried out in the early second century funded by private bequest, but improvements were made in the third century under Odenathus. The small *cella* was constructed in AD 130, immediately after Hadrian’s visit. The *cella* is preceded by a six-columned vestibule, the side walls decorated with Pilasters, all in the Corinthian Order.

Colonnaded courtyards lay either side of the temple. The court to the north is larger and mostly belongs to the earliest phase of construction, except for the west portico which was completed under Odenathus. Whereas the earlier columns were in the classical Corinthian style, the western capitals show an interesting variation. The Corinthian acanthus leaves have been highly stylized and simplified in a distinctly Roman-Egyptian manner. This is one of the few instances of Egyptian influence on the architecture of Roman Syria. This south court is smaller but was also surrounded by a portico. The sole column which remains intact bears an inscription recording the building of the court, commemorated in AD 149.”<sup>27</sup>

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

**Incident Summary:** Temple was intentionally destroyed by ISIL militants.

**Incident Source and Description:** On August 23, 2015 reports surfaced concerning the destruction of the Baalshamin Temple in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra. Shortly after the first reports, other reports cited a SOHR report that said this destruction happened a month ago. This seems to be rectified in more recent articles.

On June 13, 2015, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra including Diocletian’s Camp, the Baalshamin Temple, and the Roman Theatre were bombarded during ISIL’s takeover of the site (See **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0096**). Sometime during July militants had lined the inner and outer walls of the temple with bottles and barrels of explosives.<sup>28</sup> Around 4pm on August 23, 2015, these explosives were detonated.<sup>29</sup> The *cella* was destroyed and columns around it collapsed.<sup>30</sup> *Dabiq* published photos of the destruction in their magazine.

---

<sup>27</sup> Burns (2010) *Monuments of Syria* p. 217.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-islamic-state-syria-ancient-ruins-palmyra-20150824-story.html>

<sup>29</sup> <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1783>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34036644>

**Pattern:** Intentional destruction by ISIL militants.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is directing attention to the condition of all periods of cultural heritage at Palmyra, given the high visibility and ongoing significance of the city and UNESCO World Heritage Site, while also closely monitoring areas occupied by militant jihadi-salafists like ISIL.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1783>

Al Gherbal: <http://www.algherbal.com/2015/08/24/2502/>

Al Hadath News: <http://alhadathpcnews.net/new/?p=17260>

Al Jazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/isil-destroys-ancient-temple-syria-palmyra-unesco-world-heritage-isis-baal-shamin-150823212050325.html>

Associated Press:

[http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/3d281c11a96b4ad082fe88aa0db04305/Article\\_2015-08-24-ML--Islamic%20State/id-9b68667711f24abea7c9a15e971e2a6d](http://hosted2.ap.org/APDEFAULT/3d281c11a96b4ad082fe88aa0db04305/Article_2015-08-24-ML--Islamic%20State/id-9b68667711f24abea7c9a15e971e2a6d)

BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p030jz02>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34036644>

BBC Arabic: [http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2015/08/150823\\_palmyra\\_syria\\_isis](http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2015/08/150823_palmyra_syria_isis)

Chicago Tribune: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-islamic-state-syria-ancient-ruins-palmyra-20150824-story.html>

Chicago Tribune: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-islamic-state-syria-ancient-ruins-palmyra-20150824-story.html>

The Independent: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-in-palmyra-militants-release-first-images-showing-destruction-of-baalshamin-temple-10470803.html>

The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/23/isis-blows-up-temple-dating-back-to-17ad-in-unesco-listed-syrian-city>

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/23/us-mideast-crisis-palmyra-idUSKCN0QS0WC20150823>

New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/24/world/middleeast/islamic-state-blows-up-ancient-temple-at-syrias-palmyra-ruins.html>

L'Orient le Jour: <http://www.lorientlejour.com/article/940580/lei-fait-exploser-un-celebre-temple-dans-la-ville-antique-de-palmyre.html>

US News and World Report: <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/08/23/iraqi-officials-say-23-soldiers-sunni-fighters-killed>

Art-Crime: <http://art-crime.blogspot.it/2015/08/further-information-on-dates-of.html>

Scholarly:

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



Baalshamin Temple, after destruction (ASPA; August 23, 2015)



Baalshamin Temple, during destruction (ASPA; August 23, 2015)



Baalshamin Temple, placement of explosives (ASPA; August 23, 2015)

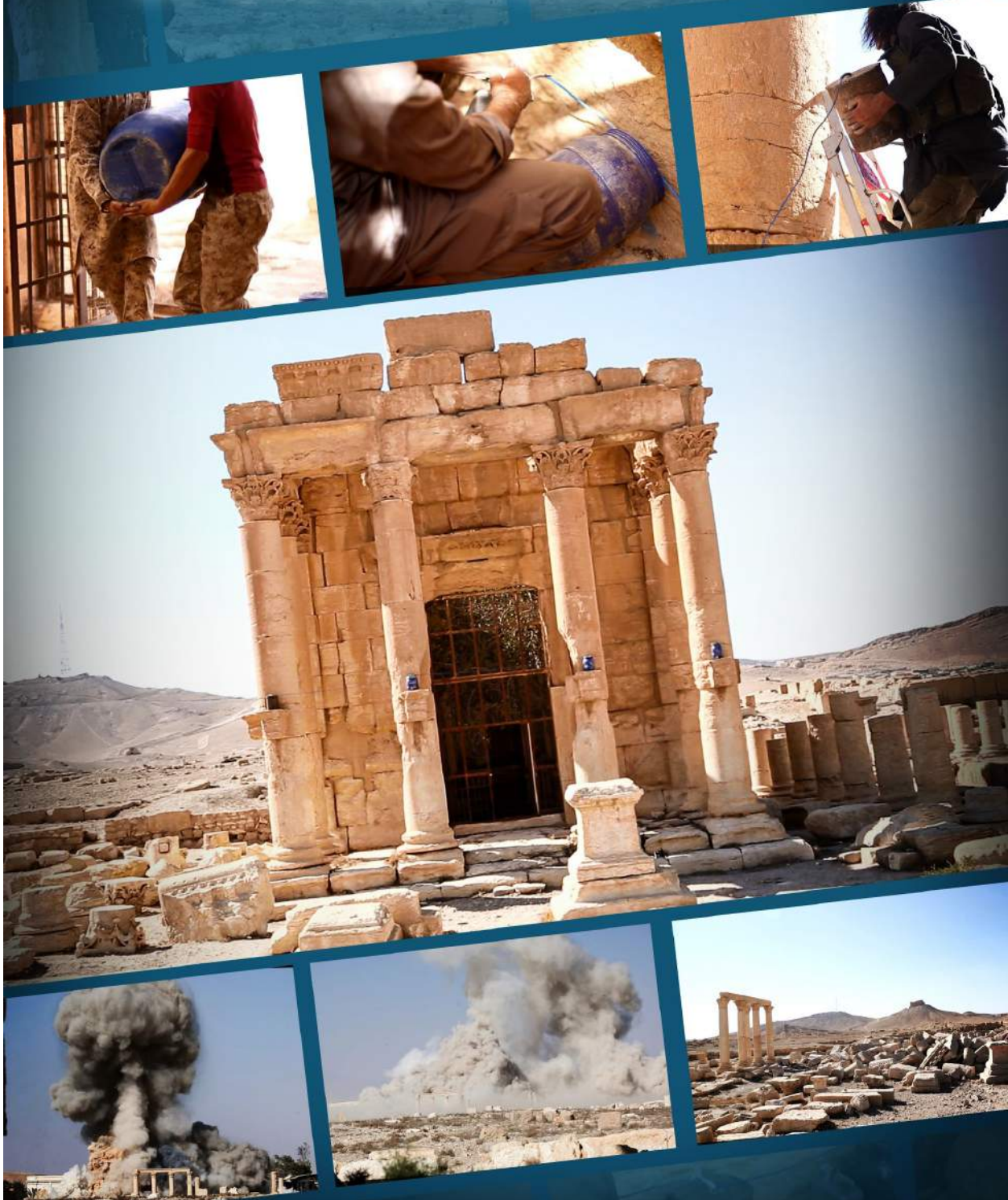


Baalshamin Temple, placement of explosives (ASPA; August 23, 2015)



Baalshamin Temple, placement of explosives (ASPA; August 23, 2015)

# DESTROYING THE SHIRK TEMPLE OF BAALSHAMIN



Temple of Baalshamin destruction (Dabiq; Issue 11)



Baalshamin Temple (DigitalGlobe; June 26, 2015)





Baalshamin Temple with visible damage (DigitalGlobe; August 27, 2015)

## SHI 15-0127 UPDATE

**Report Date:** September 12, 2015

**Site Name:** Temple of Bel; Temple of Bal

**Date of Incident:** August 30, 2015

**Location:** UNESCO World Heritage Site Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

### **Site Description:** Monuments of Syria:

“The Temple of Bel (broadly oriented towards the compass points) stands in its enormous compound at the eastern end of the main colonnaded street. The temple is certainly the most important religious building of the first century AD in the Middle East and is one of the few early imperial projects in the region to survive. The complex was built in several stages:

- Hellenistic temple (probably built on a Bronze Age site)- only fragments survive
- Central shrine or cella dedicated AD 32 but probably under construction since AD 17 or 19
- AD 80-120- temenos enlarged, surrounded by double colonnaded portico on north, east, south
- Late second century- west portico and propylaeum.

The undertaking of such a project on a truly imperial scale and to a high standard of craftsmanship reflects both the ubiquity of the Hellenistic tradition which inspired its architecture as well as the prosperity of the late Augustine period and the early years of his successor, Tiberius (r AD 14-37), which provided the wherewithal to construct it.”<sup>31</sup>

**Site Date:** 17–32 CE, enlarged 80–120 CE

**Incident Summary:** ISIL planted explosives in the Temple of Bel and detonated them, severely damaging the ancient structure.

**Incident Source and Description:** On August 30, 2015 the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that ISIL destroyed parts of the Temple of Bel.<sup>32</sup> Al Jazeera reports that 30 tons of explosives were detonated.<sup>33</sup>

On August 31, the Director General of Antiquities and Museums stated that there was a large explosion within the perimeter of the temple, but the basic structure was intact. However, the extent of the damage is unclear as people are not allowed close to the temple.<sup>34,35</sup>

On September 2, 2015 DigitalGlobe satellite images show the destruction of the temple. Of the inner cella, only the front gateway remains. The temple colonnades, main entrance, and surrounding wall all seem to still be standing.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Burns, R. 1999 *Monuments of Syria* p. 210

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/08/the-islamic-state-destroy-parts-of-the-most-famous-temple-in-palmyra-in-the-countryside-of-homs/>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/isil-blows-part-bel-temple-syria-palmyra-150830195420900.html>

<sup>34</sup> <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1792>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34107395>

<sup>36</sup> <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1794>

On September 11, 2015 the Director General of Antiquities and Museum published photos of the destruction of the Temple of Bel.

**Pattern:** Intentional destruction by ISIL militants.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of all periods of cultural heritage at Palmyra, given the high visibility and ongoing significance of the city and UNESCO World Heritage Site, while also closely monitoring areas occupied by militant jihadi-salafists like ISIL.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

DGAM (August 31, 2015): <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1792>

DGAM (September 1, 2015): <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1794>

APSA:

<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/a.324921080948343.76891.324869057620212/1449157798524660/?type=1&fref=nf>

Al Jazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/isil-blows-part-bel-temple-syria-palmyra-150830195420900.html>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34103994>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34107395>

Les Echos: <http://www.lesechos.fr/monde/afrique-moyen-orient/021292030662-syrie-lei-a-detruit-une-partie-du-temple-de-bel-a-palmyre-1149185.php>

The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/01/satellite-images-reveal-isis-destruction-of-palmyras-temple-of-bel>

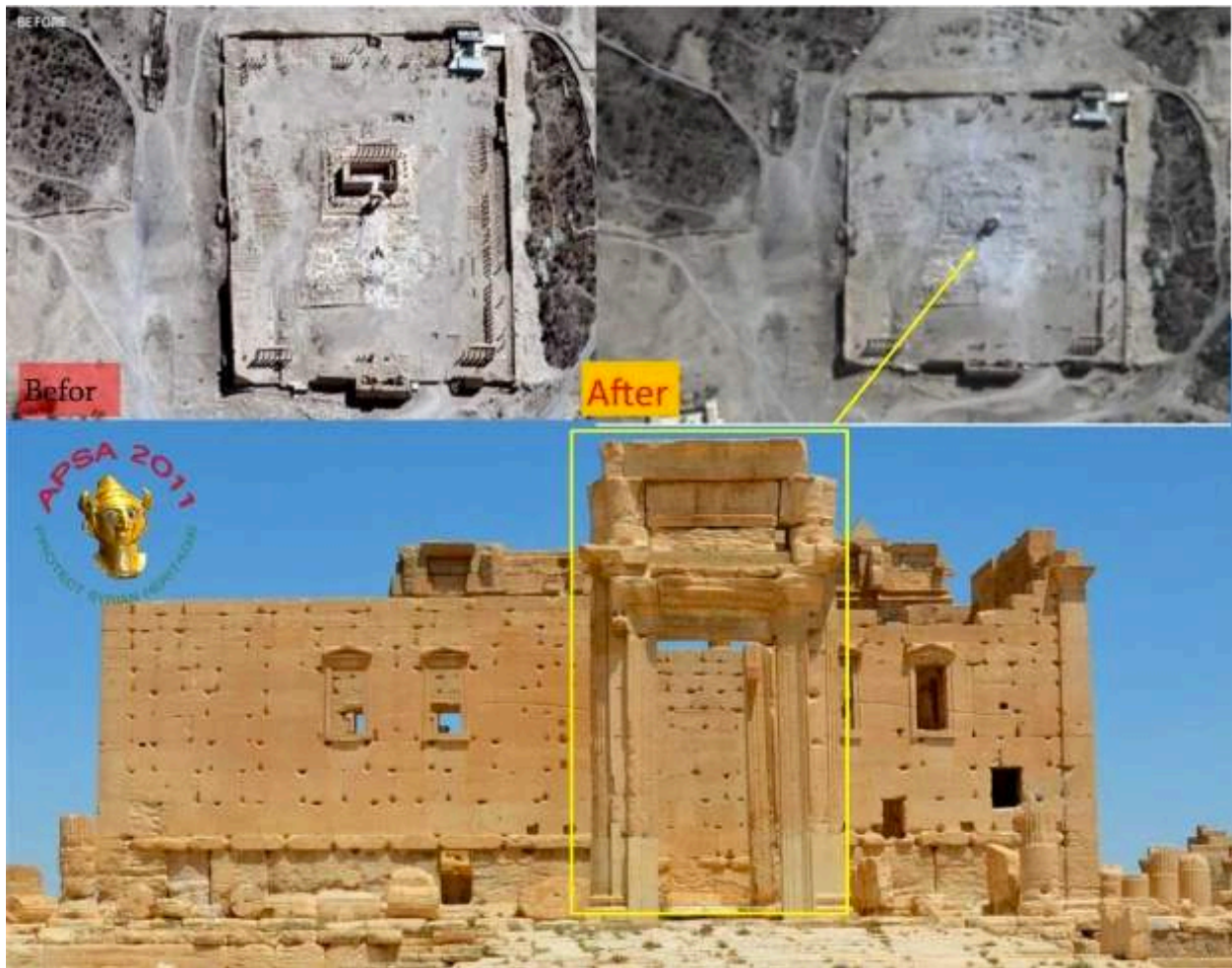
Internacionals: [http://www.ara.cat/mon/LEstat-Islamic-parcialment-Bel-Palmira\\_0\\_1422457831.html](http://www.ara.cat/mon/LEstat-Islamic-parcialment-Bel-Palmira_0_1422457831.html)

SOHR: <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/08/the-islamic-state-destroy-parts-of-the-most-famous-temple-in-palmyra-in-the-countryside-of-homs/>

Wall Street Journal: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-blows-up-temple-of-bel-in-syrias-palmyra-1441014202>

Scholarly:

Burns, Ross (1999) *Monuments of Syria*. I.B. Taurus & Co. London



Temple of Bel (APSA; August 31, 2015.)



Temple of Bel, planting of explosives (DGAM; September 11, 2015)



Temple of Bel, planting of explosives (DGAM; September 11, 2015)



Temple of Bel, planting of explosives (DGAM; September 11, 2015)



Temple of Bel, detonation(DGAM; September 11, 2015)

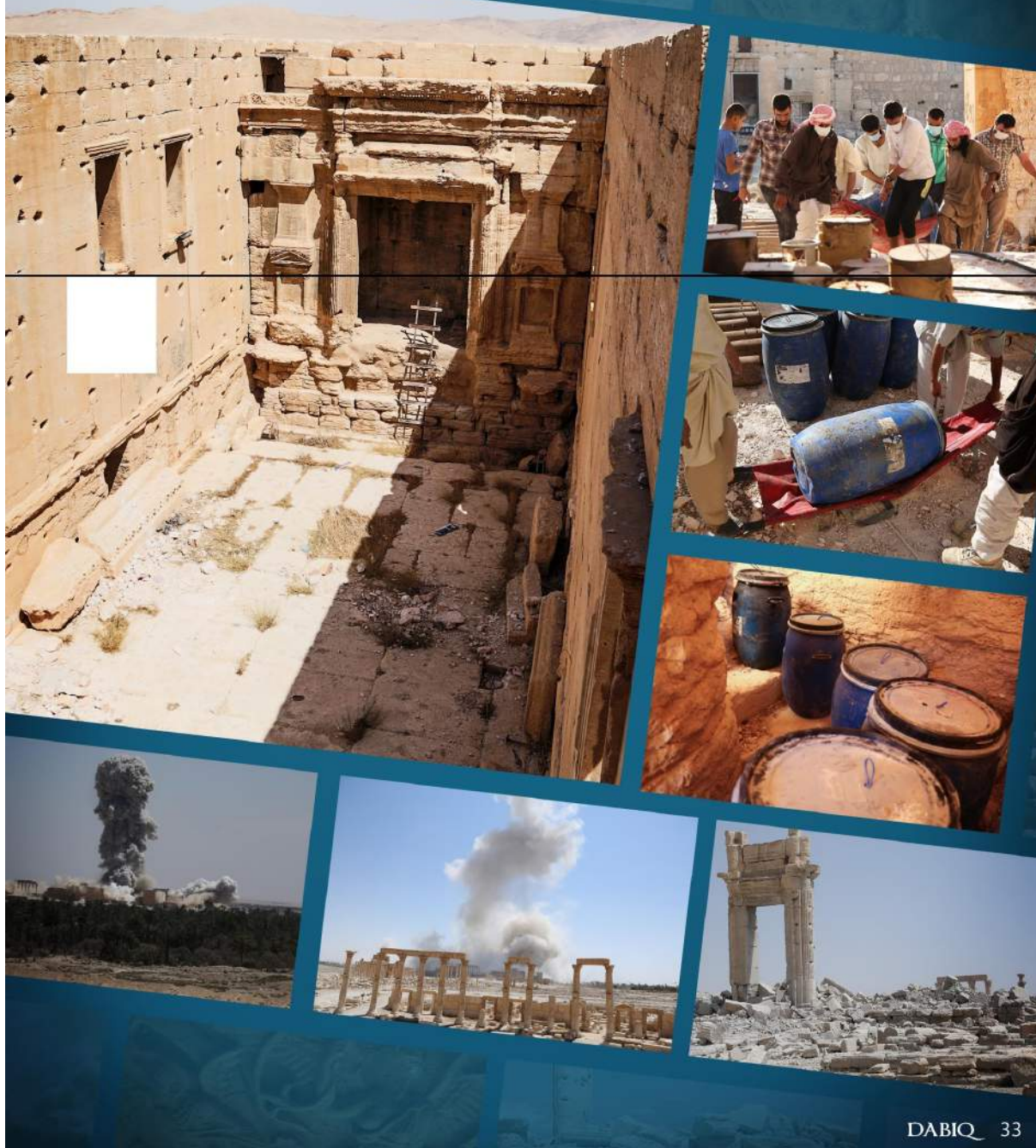


Temple of Bel, detonation (DGAM; September 11, 2015)



Temple of Bel, after destruction (DGAM; September 11, 2015)

# DESTROYING THE SHIRK TEMPLE OF BEL



DABIQ 33

Temple of Bel (Dabiq; Issue 11)





ASOR

DigitalGlobe®

Temple of Bel (Digital Globe; June 26, 2015)



Temple of Bel with visible damage (Digital Globe; September 2, 2015)

## SHI 15-0128

**Report Date:** September 3, 2015

**Site Name:** Tower Tomb Unnamed (#71)  
Tower Tomb of Julius Aurelius Bolma  
Tower Tomb of Banai Family  
Tower Tomb of Iamliku (Yamliku Moqimu)  
Tower Tomb of Atenaten (Athenatan)  
Tower Tomb of Elahbel  
Tower Tomb of Kithoth Tomasu (Qasr al-Madrus)

**Date of Incident:** Between June 26, 2015 and August 27, 2015

**Location:** UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** From Ross Burns:

Tower Tomb Unnamed: "The Unnamed Tower Tomb (no.71) is one of the best preserved tombs located in the Western Necropolis. There are no inscriptions to identify this tomb. It is 10.2 meters square and six stories are preserved above the ground. There is a rock cut hypogeum beneath. This tomb dates to the 1st century CE based on architectural style. The facade is pierced with a niche crowned with a rounded arch, it may have contained a relief. The ground plan shows a regular arrangement of the chambers according to one scheme. This was made possible by a staircase located in a corner of the tower instead of leading round on four sides."<sup>37</sup>

Tower Tomb of Julius Aurelius Bolma: "The Tower of Julius Aurelius Bolma (no.70) is located on the eastern slope of Umm Balqis. It resembles no.46 in its decoration and plan. It is smaller than the rest of the tombs (6.4 meters squared) and only has three stories. On the ground floor, there are niches for sarcophagi (unknown how many) which are missing. The inside walls are covered in some graffiti dating to the Byzantine period. Behind the door, there is an inscription. The text that describes the construction, sadly lost, was encased in the wall. The lintel is inscribed with two texts with the dates 229 and 234 CE. Julius Aurelius Bolma as well as his uncle's first two sons were buried in this tomb."<sup>38</sup>

Tower Tomb of Banai Family: "The Tower of the Banai Family (no.63) is dated to 79 CE and is located on the north slope of Umm Balqis. It measures 10.10 meters squared and retains the first floor chambers. The blocks are not squared like the more ancient towers, but they are made of stones of regular sizes. Each story was divided in five loculi. There was not a hypogeum, rather the niches are in the walls, occupied by reliefs. There are two entries to the stairs, stairs to the bottom and to the second floor. The stairway is located in the corner of the building instead of wrapping around the outside of the walls. A new development of this period is the cornice crown molding around the walls. They probably adorned the relief plaques like the Tower of Elahbel."<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Gawlikowski 1970:101-103

<sup>38</sup> Gawlikowski 1970:99

<sup>39</sup> Gawlikowski 1970:75

Tomb of Iamliku: "The Tower of Iamliku (no. 51) is in the near vicinity of the tower of Bene Baa and was built in the same year, 83 CE. It measures 11.60 meters square. The furnishings in this case surpassed all hitherto existing decoration. The door to the ground floor was not only framed but was given a pediment as well. A dentil course running around the top of the tower was not its termination. There is every reason to believe that there was at least one more floor. The relief niche in the facade was an eye catcher; today it is partly damaged. Supporting figures of Nike standing on bearded consoles carry a small tetrastyle naiskos. The decorative furnishing of the interior concentrates on the ground floor. The walls are veneered with architectural segmentation Pilasters topped with Corinthian capitals carry an entablature. The ceiling is designed as a colored Cassette ceiling. There were several reliefs and portrait reliefs sealing the loculi. The frieze on the sides had been sketched but was never fully executed."<sup>40</sup>

Tomb of Atenaten: "The tower of Atenaten (no.7) is the oldest of the tower tombs and dates to AD98. Two foundation inscriptions are located above the entrance. It is located to the extreme west of the Valley of the Tombs. It is 12 meters and has a base that measures 8 by 20 meters in size. The stones themselves are roughly cut, and joined with mortar. Both base and walls of the tower are slightly inclined inwards. In the northern wall there is a door at ground level which does not have a lintel, and has four seats arranged in tiers. There are two Loculi."<sup>41</sup>

Tomb of Elahbel: "The tower of Elahbel and his brothers (no. 13) in the Western Necropolis is arranged according to a fixed pattern. It is the largest tower in Palmyra measuring 12.35 meters square. The outside of the tower shows nearly regular masonry, consisting of large and smoothed blocks. The door had a frame and probably a pediment, which is lost; traces of its fastening are still visible. An inscription plaque in the facade mentions the date 103 CE. The niche with round arch contained a kline supporting a relief of one of the tomb founders and perhaps other individuals as well. The ground floor chamber presents architectural decoration and numerous portraits. The floor plan also includes small chambers for sarcophagi. Several banquet reliefs decorating the sarcophagi have also been preserved. An analysis of the material shows that the building was still being used in the 3rd century AD."<sup>42</sup>

Tomb of Kithoth: "The Tower of Kithoth (no. 44) is one of the best preserved tombs in the valley with a base of 11 meters square with five stories. It is located on the south side of the Gub el-Husayniyet. It dates to 40 CE. There are traces of a funerary banquet scene in relief in a niche with semicircular arch. This tomb is located in the Western Necropolis. The blocks used in the masonry were much larger than before, but still irregular. It has the best preserved example of a relief niche. The niche is located on the eastern side, facing the path coming from the city. The entrances are in the north and south sides. Spanning the niche was a round arch decorated with a vine tendril. The founder of the tomb was shown reclining on a kline together with his wife and two sons. The relief was painted. The ground plan shows that in this case the ground floor and the second floor were entered separately. The three lower floors had a regular ground plan, whereas those above them followed a deviating chamber plan. A special feature in this tomb is the small chambers instead of narrow loculi shafts, burials were walled up in these chambers as in sarcophagi."<sup>43</sup>

**Site Date:** All tombs date to the Roman period, between 50 and 300 CE.

---

<sup>40</sup> Henning 2013:163

<sup>41</sup> Gawlikowski 1970:53-54

<sup>42</sup> Henning 2013:163-4

<sup>43</sup> Henning 2013:162

**Incident Summary:** Seven tower tombs were intentionally destroyed or damaged by ISIL militants.

**Incident Source and Description:** ASOR-CHI reported on seven tower tombs located just outside the ancient city of Palmyra that have been severely damaged or destroyed since the end of June. DigitalGlobe satellite imagery acquired by ASOR CHI shows this damage took place in two phases, the first took place between June 26, 2015 and August 27, 2015, and the second was between August 27, 2015 and September 2, 2015.

- The Tower Tomb Unnamed (#71) was destroyed between August 27, 2015 and September 2, 2015.
- The Tower Tomb of Julius Aurelius Bolma was destroyed between August 27, 2015 and September 2, 2015.
- The Tower Tomb of Banai Family was badly damaged between June 26, 2015 and August 27, 2015.
- The Tower Tomb of Iamliku was destroyed between June 26, 2015 and August 27, 2015. The neighboring tomb shows severe damage, but it was not well preserved to begin with, and only a meter or so of the tomb was standing before the destruction.
- The Tower Tomb of Atenaten was destroyed between June 26, 2015 and August 27, 2015.
- The Tower Tomb of Elahbel was destroyed between August 27, 2015 and September 2, 2015.
- The Tower Tomb of Kithoth Tomasu was destroyed between August 27, 2015 and September 2, 2015.

Collectively, the damage to these tombs is not confined to a single area within the Valley of the Tombs, but instead it is distributed throughout various locations, leaving some towers destroyed and others still standing. The targeted tombs are some of the most well-preserved and largest tombs, and it is likely they were intentionally destroyed because of their size and quality of preservation.

**Pattern:** Intentional destruction by ISIL militants.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of all periods of cultural heritage at Palmyra, given the high visibility and ongoing significance of the city and UNESCO World Heritage Site, while also closely monitoring areas occupied by militant jihadi-salafists like ISIL.

**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

ASOR: <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/special-report-update-on-the-situation-in-palmyra/>

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1798>

APSA: <http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/palmyra-destruction-of-multiple-tower-tombs-in-tadmor-by-isis/>

The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/04/isis-destroys-ancient-tombs-palmyra>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34150905>

Arabic.rt: <http://arabic.rt.com/news/793075> /بسوريا تدمر في الاثرية شهرة مقابر يفجر داعش ب أ-

CTV News: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/islamic-state-militants-destroy-ancient-tombs-in-palmyra-says-syrian-official-1.2547826>

USA Today: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/09/04/islamic-state-militants-destroy-tombs-palmyra/71697462/>

US News and World Report: <http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/09/04/official-islamic-militants-destroy-ancient-tombs-in-syria>

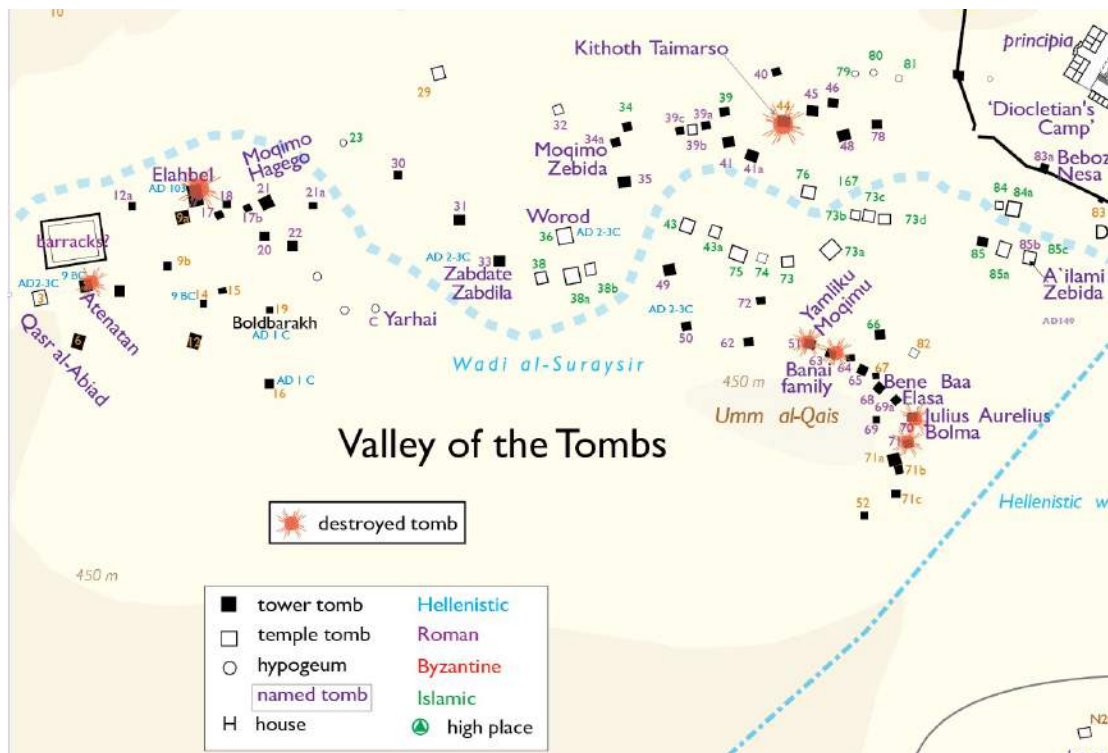
Wall Street Journal: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-destroys-ancient-tombs-in-palmyra-1441364218>

### Scholarly:

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

Michal Gawlikowski (1970). *Monuments Funeraires de Palmyrie* [=Travaux du Centre d'Archeologie Mediterraneenne de l'Academie Polonaise des Sciences 9] Warsaw: PWN-Editions Scientifiques de Pologne.

Henning, Anges (2013) "The Tower Tombs of Palmyra: Chronology, Architecture and Decoration." In *Studia Palmyrenskie* 12. pg. 158-176



Valley of the Tombs map (provided by Ross Burns)



The Tower Tombs on the Northern Slopes of Umm al-Belqis (provided by Ross Burns; Unknown date)



The Tower Tomb of Iamliku (DGAM; Sept 4, 2015)





The Tower Tomb of Imliku and surrounding tombs (DigitalGlobe; June 26, 2015)



Visible damage to the Tomb of Iamliku and the Tomb of the Banai Family (Digital Globe; August 27, 2015)



Visible damage to Julius Aurelius Bolma and Tower Tomb #71 (Digital Globe; September 2, 2015)



The Tower Tomb of Atenaten (DGAM; September 4, 2015)



Tower Tomb of Atenaten (DigitalGlobe; June 26, 2015)



The Tower Tomb of Atenaten with visible damage (DigitalGlobe; September 2, 2015)



The Tower Tomb of Elahbel (DGAM; September 4, 2015)



The Tower Tomb of Elahbel (Digital Globe; June 26, 2015)



The Tower Tomb of Elahbel (Digital Globe; August 27, 2015)



The Tower Tomb of Elahbel with visible damage (Digital Globe; September 2, 2015)



The Tower Tomb of Kithoth (DGAM; September 4, 2015)





The Tower Tomb of Kithoth (Digital Globe; June 26, 2015)



The Tower Tomb of Kithoth with visible damage (Digital Globe; September 2, 2015)

**SHI 15-0133****Report Date:** September 15, 2015**Site Name:** Tell Houach**Date of Incident:** Ongoing since 2012**Location:** Hama Governorate, Syria**Site Description:** A small tell site near Apamea**Site Date:** Middle Bronze, Iron Age, Hellenistic and Byzantine periods**Incident Summary:** Tell Houach has been occupied and possibly militarized as well as slightly looted according to satellite imagery.**Incident Source and Description:** Tell Houach has been damaged by the Syrian Conflict. Dating back to April 3, 2012, satellite imagery shows roads and possible embankments appearing on the western and southern sides of the tell as well as small looting pits along the southern edge. By April 16, 2012 there were embankments built on the top, the north and the south edges. Imagery from December 15, 2012 shows a large mounded embankment on the western edges, looting pits along the northwestern edge and a possible pit in the center of the western half of the mound.

Satellite imagery from November 28, 2013 and April 26, 2014 showed no new embankments, or looting pits, and showed new growth over the embankments and pits.

August 24, 2015 imagery shows a return to the site, with additional looters pits appearing along the interior of the embankment wall to the north and southwest. Pits also appeared along the southern edge of the mound.

**Pattern:** Military Activity: Occupation/Militarization; Construction; Illegal Excavation.**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports via in-country sources and is continuing to monitor the looting, trafficking, and sale of antiquities from Syria and Iraq. ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the recent reports of damage at the site**Sources:**Scholarly:Courtois, J.-C. 1973. "Prospection archéologique dans la Moyenne Vallée de l'Oronte (El Ghab et Er Roudj-Syrie du Nord-Ouest." *Syria* 50:53-99.Fourtin, M. 2007. "Reprise de la Prospection de la Moyenne Vallée de l'Oronte (Syrie) par une Mission Syro-Canadienne: 2004-2006." *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 2:19-41.

Fourtin, M. 2007. "La Vallée de l'Oronte: une entité géographique unique au Proche-Orient." *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies*.2:7-18.

Fourtin, M. 2007. "La Vallée du Ghab: Nouvelle Prospection Archéologique." In *Urban and Natural Landscapes of an Ancient Syrian Capital: Settlement and Environment at Tell Mishrifeh/Qatna and in Central-Western Syria*, edited by D. Morandi Bonacossi, 253-68. Udine: Forum Editrice



Tell Houach showing embankments and looting pits (DigitalGlobe; December 15, 2012)



Tell Houach showing embankments, looting pits, and overgrowth (DigitalGlobe; April 24, 2015)



Tell Houach showing embankments and new looting pits (DigitalGlobe; August 24, 2015)

**SHI 15-0134**

**Report Date:** September 10, 2015

**Site Name:** Apamea

**Date of Incident:** ongoing, since 2011

**Location:** Apamea, 55 km north of Hama, Hama Governorate, Syria

**Site Description:** According to Ross Burns,

“The mound of Qalaat Mudiq (‘fortress of the defile’) lies west of the classical walled city and is still occupied by some of the town’s inhabitants. The mound, an artificial accumulation on a natural rocky outcrop, has indications of settlement going back at least to the Bronze Age. The site was chosen as the location for one of the four cities founded by Seleucus I Nicator at the end of the fourth century BC. Originally named Pharnake, the name was changed to Apameia to honour Seleucus’ Persian wife, Apama [...] In 64 BC, Apamea was taken by the Romans under Pompey and its citadel was razed. Under Roman rule, it was again favoured as a military base. The theatre, baths, temples, and villas, constructed during the town’s peak period of prosperity, the boom years of the second century AD, were perhaps initiated when Trajan ordered the rebuilding of the city after a severe earthquake in 115. The colonnaded main street was completed in its present form under Marcus Aurelius (161–80) and served both as an axis and a market, lined with stalls and shaded arcades.

The old citadel was probably incorporated when the new city's enclosure walls were extended to the west. It became one of the main centres of Seleucid Syria and a forward military base. Its rich pastures made it a natural breeding centre for the horses of the Seleucid cavalry and it lay astride the kingdom’s main north-south communications, slightly to the rear of the buffer zone with the Ptolemaic lands to the south. By the second century BC, however, it well behind Antioch in economic and political importance. In 64 BC, Apamea was taken by the Romans under Pompey and its citadel was razed. Under Roman rule, it was again favoured as a military base. The theatre, baths, temples and villas, constructed during the town’s period of peak prosperity and boom years of the second century AD, were perhaps initiated when Trajan ordered the rebuilding of the city after a severe earthquake in 115 AD. The colonnaded main street was completed in its present form under Marcus Aurelius (161-80) and served both as an axis and a market, lined with stalls and shaded arcades. In the third century, the city was made the winter base for the elite II Parthica legion.

Apamea remained a centre of considerable importance into the Byzantine period. It was made the capital of Syria Secunda province in the early 5th century and was the seat of a bishop. The Persians sacked and burnt the city in 573 during a troubled century which also saw a succession of major earthquakes. The Persians again held it from 612 to 628 and the Byzantine ‘liberation’ came only a decade before it fell to the Arabs, changing hands without resistance.

The town came under Crusader control (attached to the Principality of Antioch) in 1106 when it was taken by Tancred. In July 1149 it fell to Nur al-Din. In 1157, an earthquake caused major damage. The castle was refortified by the Ayyubids and some remains of this phase are found on the citadel mound. The 16th century mosque and caravanserai indicate

the role of the town later played as a staging post on the pilgrimage route from Istanbul to Mecca.”<sup>44</sup>

**Site Date:** Various, mainly Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Medieval, and Ottoman

**Incident Summary:** New satellite imagery evidence of continued illegal excavations at Apamea and structural damage at Qa’let el-Mudiq.

**Incident Source and Description:** On September 22, 2014 APSA posted two videos **filmed by Thabet Ismael** that highlight the clandestine operations underway at Apamea. The second video in particular shows the official army checkpoint, earth dikes, and the installation of heavy weapons in the archaeological area.

The APSA report attributes the damage to two primary causes: the conversion of the site into a military camp and the intentional looting of the site. The former has meant the presence of tanks and the digging of trenches, while the latter has resulted in pits up to two meters deep. The number of pits far exceeds the excavated areas from the Belgian archaeological mission (aerial photographs from April 2013 showed over 5,000 looter holes), highlighting the massive scale of the illicit digging.

According to APSA, the looting was allegedly spurred on by remarks from the head of a detachment of the military, which encouraged looters to find and sell ancient treasures (“...les trésors antiques sont à votre portée, fouillez et rapportez tout ce que vous pouvez trouver et vendez-le! C’est plus rentable que de manifester...”). APSA alleges there is a cooperative agreement between the Syrian authorities and the looters, where the former’s presence is not to protect the site, but rather to collect its share of the profits. See **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0034**.

On January 4, 2015 the Syrian army has repeatedly shelled the town. The APSA photos provide some documentation of the damage but are not accompanied by any description. See **ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 14-0108**.

On August 24, 2015 ASOR CHI acquired DigitalGlobe satellite imagery that shows extensive looting has occurred since the last available satellite images. This new imagery shows looting pits on the western, northeastern, and northern parts of the site, as well as an extension of previous pits within the site itself. At Qa’lat el-Mudiq itself, satellite imagery shows that bastions on the northern side of the citadel have been damaged. The exact dates of these incidents are unknown, but seem to have occurred regularly throughout the conflict.

**Pattern:** Illegal Excavation; Military Activity: occupation.

**Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:** ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports via in country sources and is continuing to monitor the looting, trafficking, and sale of antiquities from Syria and Iraq. ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the recent reports of damage at the site.

---

<sup>44</sup> Burns, Ross. 2010. *The Monuments of Syria. A Guide*. (I.B. Tauris), p. 60-61

## Sources:

### Online Reporting:

APSA: <http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/hama/sites/963-apamee-victime-2.html>

APSA: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/hama/sites/1072-qala-at-el-mudiq-cidatelle-2.html>

### Scholarly:

Balty, J. (1997). Apamea. In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*. Oxford University Press.

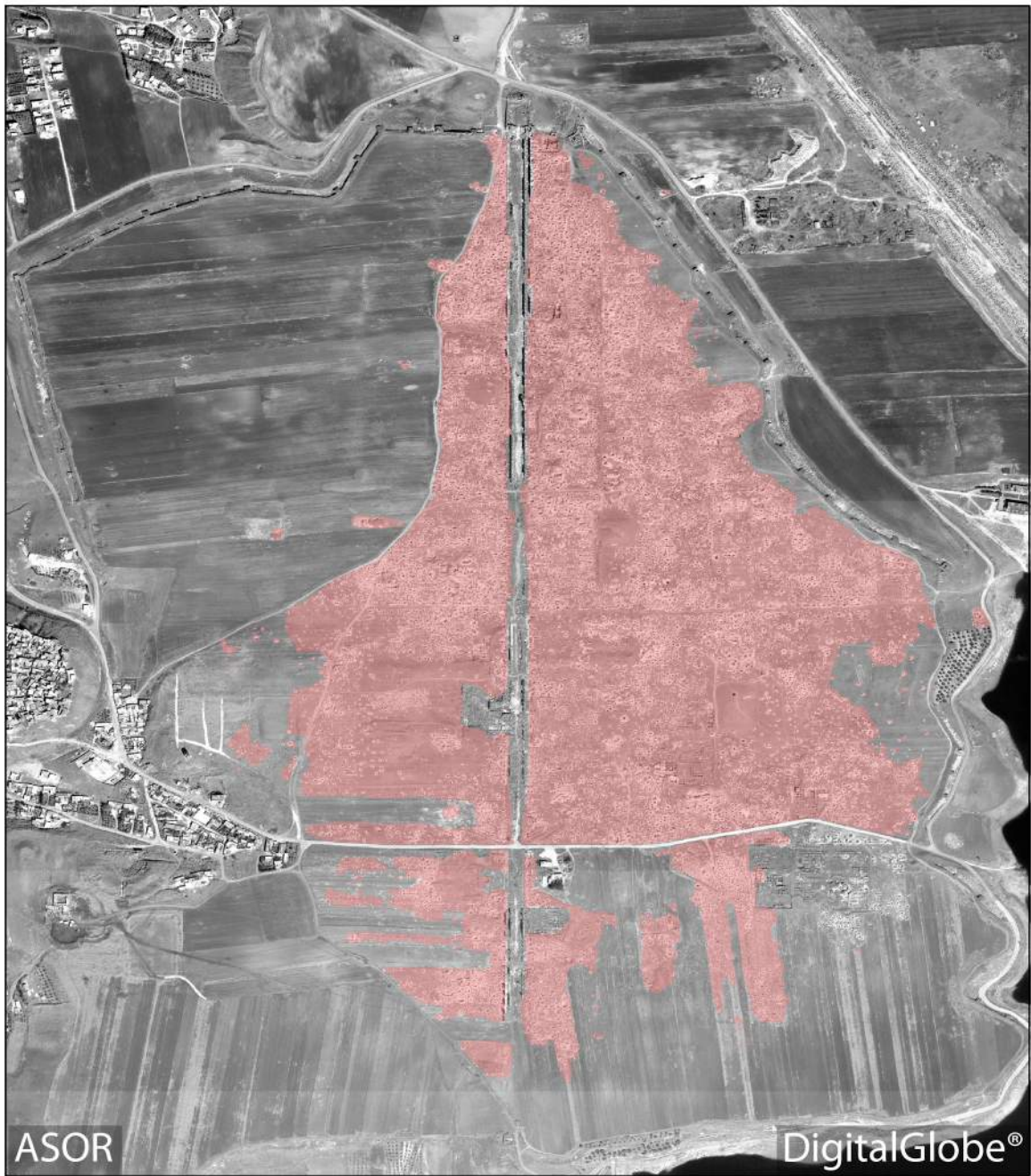
Balty, J. (1969). *Colloque Apamée de Syrie*. Leiden: Centre Belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie.

Balty, J. (1972). *Colloque Apamée de Syrie*. Leiden: Centre Belge de Recherches Archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie.

Balty, J. (1981). *Guide d'Apamée*. Bruxelles: Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie.

Balty, J. (1984). *Aspects de l'Architecture Domestique d'Apamée*. Bruxelles: Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie.

UNESCO: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1297/>



Apamea looting - April 3, 2012 (DigitalGlobe annotated by ASOR CHI; April 3, 2012)

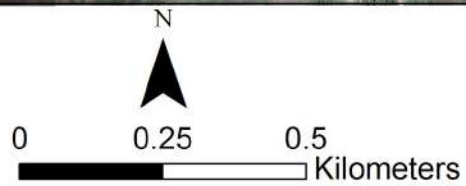
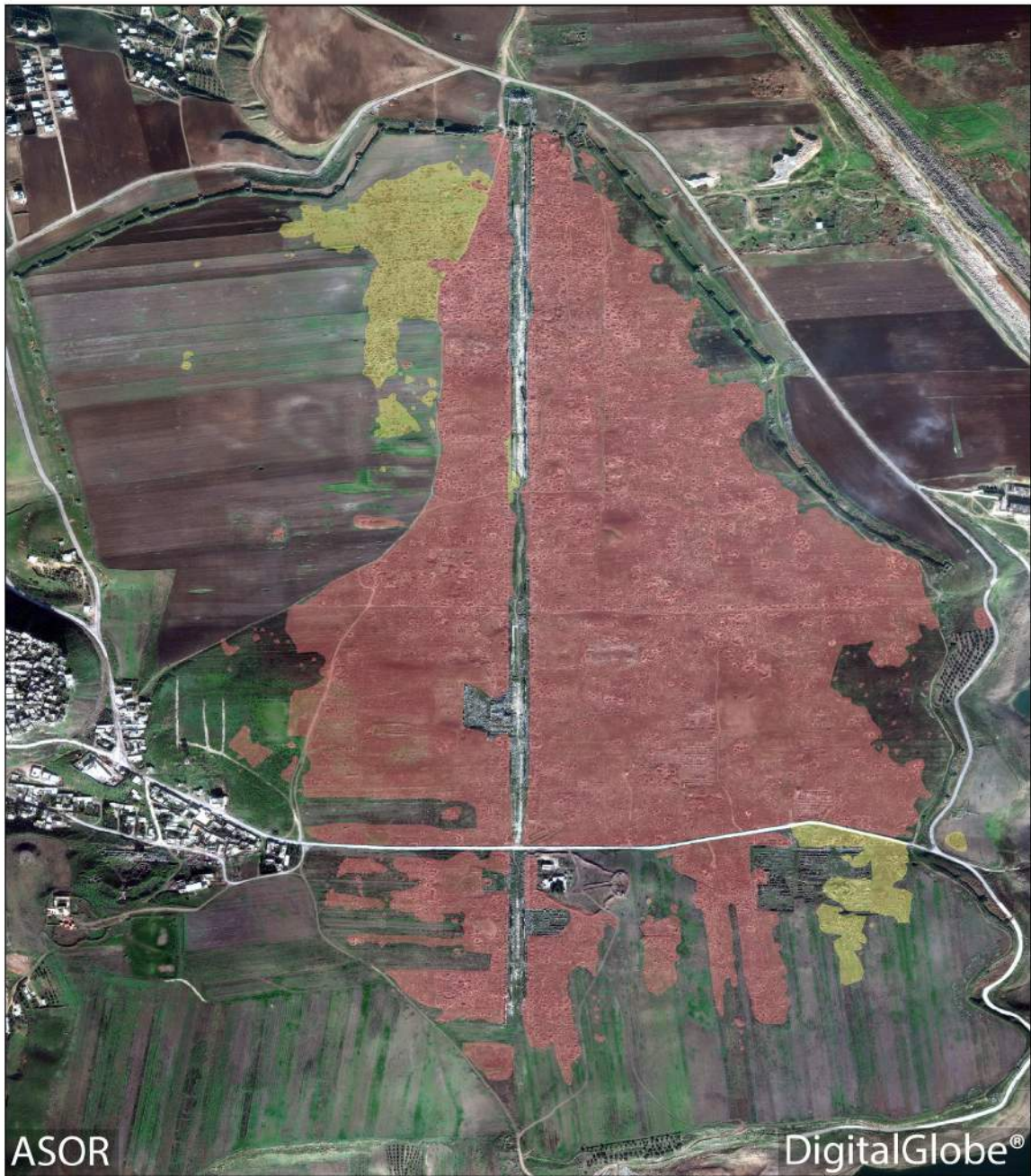




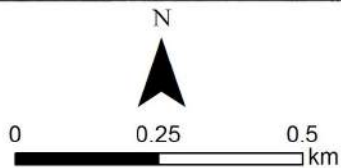
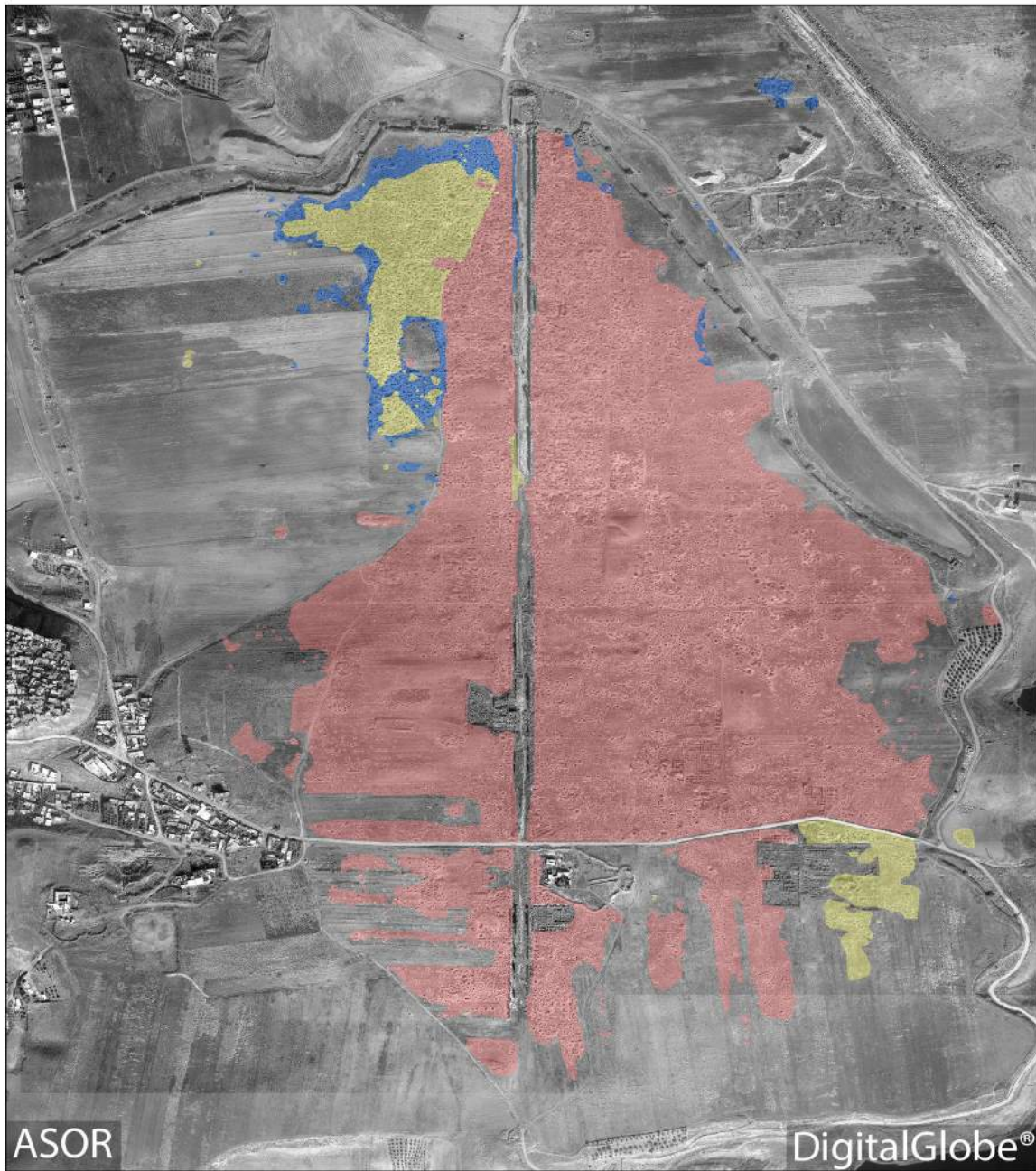
Apamea looting (DigitalGlobe; April 3, 2012)



Apamea looting (DigitalGlobe; December 15, 2012)



Apamea looting episodes - April 3, 2012; December 15, 2012 (DigitalGlobe annotated by ASOR CHI; December 15, 2012)



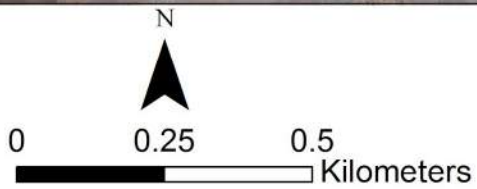
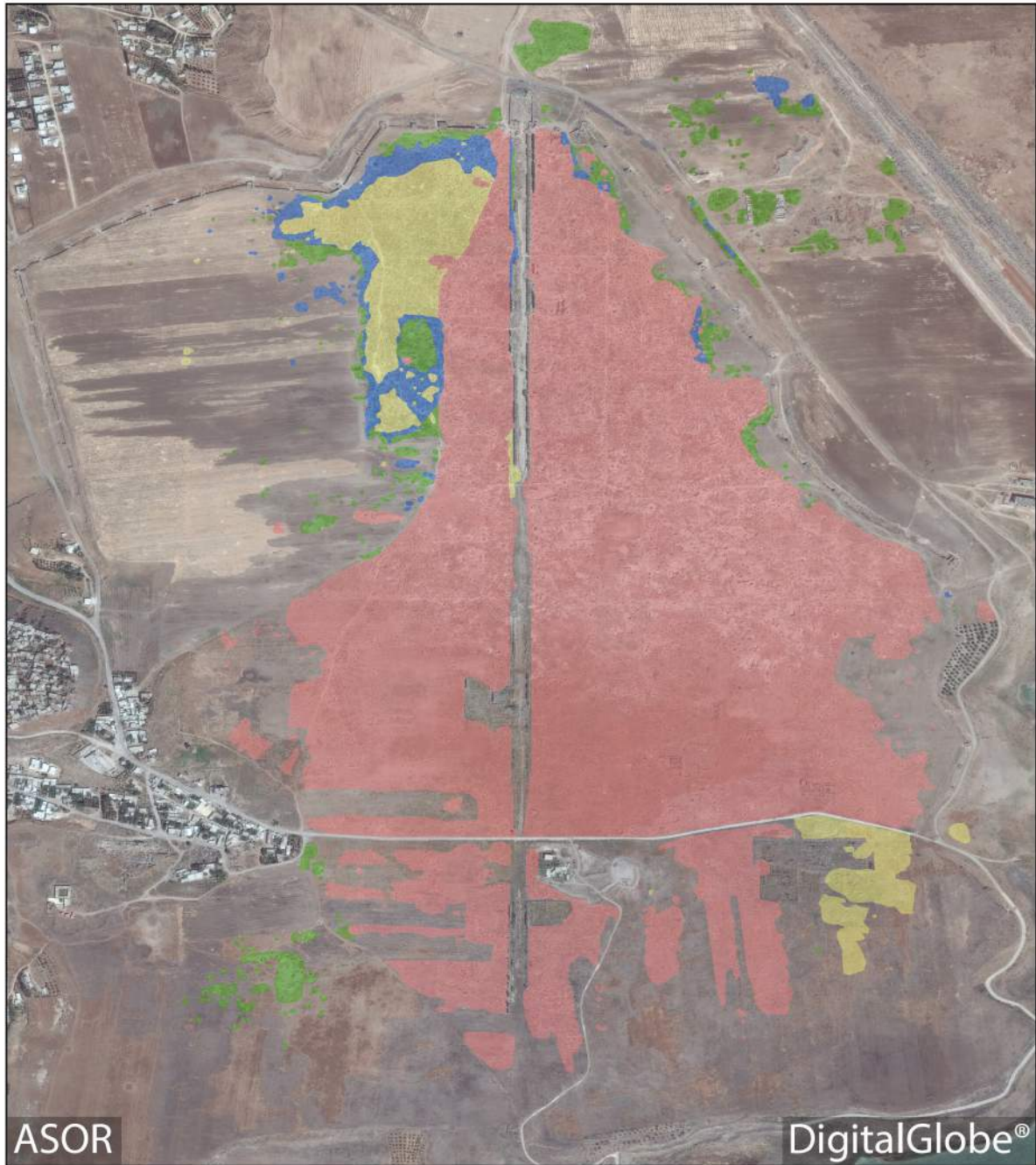
Apamea looting episodes - April 3, 2012; December 15, 2012; November 28, 2013 (DigitalGlobe; November 28, 2013)



Apamea looting (Digital Globe; November 28, 2013)



Apamea looting (Digital Globe; August 24, 2015)



Apamea looting episodes - April 3, 2012; December 15, 2012; November 28, 2013; August 24, 2015 (DigitalGlobe annotated by ASOR CHI; August 24, 2015)

**Report 6**  
**May 15, 2015 – June 20, 2015**

**Archaeological Sites Report**  
**For the Manbej and Jarablus Regions**  
**Aleppo Governorate, Syria**

**The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative<sup>45</sup>**



It has been previously reported that, because of increasing military pressure on ISIS, some of the group's public service departments have been closed temporarily, including the Manbij Archaeology Administration (MAA), and the majority of the personnel have been reassigned to various fronts. The responsibility of granting licenses for the looting of archaeological sites and gathering *Zakat* (Tithe) have now been taken over by the local *emirs*. We believe there are three reasons for the merger of the granting of licenses to loot and the collection of *Zakat* under the direct control of the local *emirs*. The first is the ever-pressing need by ISIS for manpower to fight on the fronts, which has become critical in recent weeks and months. The second is ISIS' need to save money due to the reduction in income generation because of the drop in the sales of oil and loss of access or closing down of smuggling routes in some areas. Finally, there appears to be a glut in the looted antiquities market at the Syrian end with many pieces being circulated over and over again without being sold. The introduction of fakes has also had an impact making it harder for dealers and middlemen to sell. It is being reported that a number of middlemen and looters have given up temporarily, taking up alternative employment in Turkey. The net impact of these three factors has driven ISIS to attempt to raise revenue through the imposition of major taxes.

---

<sup>45</sup> This report is based on research conducted by the "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.

## Manbej Area

### **City of Manbej**

Since the beginning of 2015, no digging or looting has been observed within and around the city of Manbij. Rumours of secret excavation work have been reported within people's homes, but there is no evidence confirming the validity of this information. This contrasts with the heavy episodes of looting in late 2014 undertaken by ISIS using bulldozers around the areas of Sundos Hall, the Industrial Zone, and the Reserve Bakery.



### **Al-Najem Castle**

ISIS visits the castle occasionally, and during these visits they explored it. Some citizens fear ISIS will make the castle a center to train fighters, because of its strategic location on the Euphrates and the availability of an isolated area, shielding it from targeting by coalition aircraft similar to Ja'abar Castle (also on the Euphrates).



Al-Najem Castle – inner courtyard



Al-Najem Castle – inner courtyard



Al-Najem Castle – outside walls





Al-Najem Castle – front side stairs



Al-Najem Castle – inside ruins

## **Jebel Arudah**

Damage has been limited to the destruction of the shrine of "Sheikh Arudh" by ISIS, and two holes near the shrine dug by looters. Natural weather erosion has heavily impacted the walls of the other temples and buildings. The mud brick walls are now in danger of collapsing if not restored soon.



Jebel Arouda – general view



Jebel Arouda – ruins



Jebel Arouda – ruins

**Emar- Meskene**

The site of Meskene is currently being used as a large facility for refining crude oil. The refineries were originally located near the village of Hittin but following repeated complaints from the local citizenry, ISIS transferred them here to the site of Meskene. The refineries are spread randomly over a wide area, and the cutting of new roads for the heavy trucks carrying oil to and from the refineries has caused much damage to the site. A lot of damage has also been caused by pit digging and moving earth to build the refineries.

There is some looting amongst the site ruins and some damage to walls of the mosque. Finally one of our sources told us that ISIS is looking currently into hiring contractors to convert other parts of the site into a quarry.



Emar- Oil refinery process, refinery marked



Emar- Oil refinery process, refineries marked



Emar- Oil refinery process



Emar- Stones quarrying



Emar- Stones quarrying



Emar- Stones quarrying



Emar- Stones quarrying

### **Tell Arab Hassan Al-Kabir**

Tell Arab Hassan Al-Kabir is one of the larger tells on the Al-Sajour River, in the Jarablus area. The site has been exposed to extensive looting by thieves digging up the surface of the hill, with large and small holes spreading around the entire perimeter of the hill so that every meter there is a hole, resulting in mixing and destruction of the layers. The site has also been subjected to digging by ISIS in two specific areas using bulldozers, selecting these locations based on prior information gathered from metal detectors. However, the rest of the holes were manually dug using shovels and pick axes. The deepest holes do not exceed four meters. When I visited the tell, there was a person digging, and I was able to film him. When we left the site the person was still digging at the bottom of the tell.



Man digging at Arab Hassan



Arab Hassan looting pits





Arab Hassan looting pits



Looting damage from bulldozers at Arab Hassan



Looting damage from bulldozers at Arab Hassan



Looting damage from bulldozers at Arab Hassan

**Arab Hassan Caves**

This site includes tombs from the classical period located at the bottom of a hill. These have been dug using large bulldozers, which led to the destruction and exposure of some tomb structures. During the first four months of this year no violations have been recorded.

**Al-Halwane Castle**

The site has been subjected to heavy looting the past year particularly in and around the area excavated by the Danish archaeological mission. The site continues to be looted sporadically.

**Al-Sayadah Mountain**

This site is located on a high hilltop. It includes tombs and the remnants of stone foundations. The site appears to have been looted repeatedly by locals who believe that the site contains treasure (local myth), but none has ever been found.

**Khurbet Al-Shayab**

The site mainly dates back to the Byzantine period and does not appear to have been exposed to any looting operations since the beginning of the conflict.

**Shash Hamdan**

This site suffered serious looting since the beginning of the conflict in Syria by thieves and has been significantly damaged.



Shash Hamdan – looting inside the tomb



Shash Hamdan – looting inside the tomb



Shash Hamdan – looting inside the tomb



Shash Hamdan – looting inside the tomb

### **Al-Mumbakah**

Originally flooded when the dam project was completed, but due to a drop in the water levels in recent years, many of the sites along the river have become exposed including Mumbakah. The site has been subjected since to heavy looting.

### **Jarabulus area**

#### **Tell Al-Fursan**

This is a virgin tell, not previously excavated by any archaeological missions. The tell has been subjected to light looting along its lower slopes and all along its base much of it superficial and surface wash. The slopes and the top of the tell are still untouched as of this date.

#### **Tell Al-Kundera:**

Almost no looting has occurred at this site. There is one large deep pit on the northwest side of the tell, but it is old.

#### **Aghbar Tell**

The base of the tell and its surroundings have been subjected to light looting operations, and it is in fair condition to date.

**Al-Naqoutah**

There are two images showing the effects of digging operations using bulldozers. This seems to have occurred at the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015.



Al-Naqoutah



Al-Naqoutah

### **North Suweda Tombs**

The caves contain tombs, dating back to the Roman period, located on the edge of the road to "Al-Ghandourah." These caves have suffered from heavy looting operations. Some of the cave walls have been smashed by looters in search of treasures they believe may be hidden in secret compartments behind the walls (The secret chambers containing treasures are part of the local mythology which locals believe in).

