

NEAR EAST

ICOMOS et le défi de la destruction à grande échelle du patrimoine culturel au Proche-Orient

Contexte

Une effroyable guerre civile ravage la Syrie depuis 2011. Les destructions s'y multiplient et s'y accumulent. Le nombre de victimes et de réfugiés ne cesse de croître. L'insécurité favorise le pillage et la dévastation des sites archéologiques. Toutes les formes de patrimoine culturel sont atteintes : monuments, citadelles, villes historiques, objets antiques, artisanat, traditions, etc.

Le groupe extrémiste Daech-EIIL fait irruption à Mossoul et conquiert une partie de l'Irak en 2014. Des destructions volontaires et systématiques du patrimoine culturel dues à de groupes fondamentalistes liés à al Qaïda, s'étendent de Bamyân à Tombouctou, en passant désormais par la Libye, la Tunisie et le Yémen, en plus de la Syrie et de l'Irak. La diversité et l'identité culturelle des peuples de la région sont menacées.

Spécificités de l'ICOMOS

L'ICOMOS est une organisation internationale non gouvernementale à caractère professionnel disposant de 10,000 adhérents à travers le monde. La plupart des pays arabes touchés n'ont malheureusement pas de comités nationaux, mais comptent néanmoins des adhérents individuels, ce qui constitue un atout. L'un des comités scientifiques internationaux se spécialise dans la préparation aux risques (ICORP), mais l'évaluation des dommages et la reconstruction pourraient mobiliser d'autres CSI : ISCARSAH, CIPA, ICAHM, CIF, ICOFORT, ICICH, ICLAFI, CIVVIH, etc. L'activité de comités nationaux est également à prendre en considération (p.ex. Belgique, France, Royaume-Uni, USA).

Rôle de l'ICOMOS

Le positionnement de l'ICOMOS a été celui d'une ONG professionnelle dans son champ de compétence, neutre dans ses engagements, s'investissant dans le suivi, la réflexion, l'information, la formation, l'assistance et le partenariat avec les autres acteurs et en particulier avec l'UNESCO.

Mobilisation de l'ICOMOS

Un groupe de travail permanent et opérationnel a été établi, d'abord d'une manière informelle à partir de 2012 pour la Syrie,

puis de 2014 pour l'Irak, et enfin d'une manière plus officielle à l'occasion du vote à l'unanimité de la résolution sur la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel en Syrie et en Irak à l'assemblée générale de Florence en novembre 2014. Celle-ci demande au Comité exécutif « de continuer à répondre à la tragédie culturelle en Syrie et en Irak en chargeant le groupe de travail de l'ICOMOS sur la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel en Syrie et en Irak, en coopération avec l'UNESCO et d'autres partenaires internationaux et nationaux, et avec le soutien de ICORP, de coordonner les activités de l'ICOMOS ayant trait à la promotion de la coopération et des échanges, du suivi de la situation, de la sensibilisation, de la communication, de la formation, de l'assistance et de la planification appliquées à la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel en Syrie et en Irak, aussi longtemps que le conflit actuel et ses conséquences ultérieures dureront ».

Le groupe de travail comporte actuellement Kirsti Kovanen, Rohit Jigyasu, Samir Abdulac, Bijan Rouhani, Gaïa Jungblodt et Regina Durighello.

Actions menées par l'ICOMOS

1. Suivi (monitoring)

Le groupe de travail a suivi d'une manière détaillée la presse et les sites d'information, les réseaux sociaux et en particulier les sites consacrés au patrimoine culturel syrien ou irakien, qu'ils relèvent du gouvernement (DGAM), de l'opposition (APSA), de milieux scientifiques (Iraqcrisis) ou de la presse ou des réseaux sociaux. Des centaines d'articles, de communiqués, d'études et d'illustrations ont ainsi été rassemblés. L'ICORP travaille à la création d'une base de données concernant les sites endommagés. C'est la précision et la qualité du suivi des événements, des dommages et de l'activité des parties prenantes des conflits qui peut enrichir la réflexion et les éventuelles propositions.

2. Réflexions et rencontres

Des échanges internes se déroulent en permanence. La réflexion porte essentiellement sur l'appréciation de la situation actuelle, l'anticipation des risques à venir ainsi que la détermination des priorités d'aujourd'hui et de demain en termes d'actions et de stratégies.

Au cours du symposium ICOMOS de Beijing en octobre 2012 (« Réduire les risques pour le patrimoine culturel face aux catastrophes d'origine naturelle et humaine »), une présentation sur le « Suivi d'une situation de conflit, le cas du patrimoine culturel syrien » qui avait donné lieu à un fructueux échange avec des membres venus d'horizons différents.

D'autres réunions internes d'information ont eu lieu au sein de comités nationaux (Belgique, France, Etats-Unis, etc.), de l'Eurogroupe (Strasbourg) ou de CSIs (ICORP, CIVVIH, etc.).

L'ICOMOS a été très régulièrement invité à participer activement aux réunions de réflexion et de planification organisées par l'UNESCO (Paris, Amman), que ce soit sous la forme de colloques, d'ateliers, de groupes de travail ou de réunions de haut niveau d'experts.

Le groupe de travail de l'ICOMOS poursuit et développe des échanges avec ses partenaires traditionnels (ICCROM, ICOM, Bouclier Bleu), comme avec de nouveaux (APSA, PASD, ASOR, Heritage for Peace, etc.). Des liens ont été établis avec des universités (Cambridge, Durham, etc.) et des représentants de l'ICOMOS ont participé à des rencontres organisées par des organismes tiers, comme l'Institut du Monde Arabe à Paris ou l'organisation des pays islamiques à Istanbul (IRCICA).

En Syrie même, des relations de confiance ont été développées avec la DGAM et des liens établis avec l'université de Damas, l'Union des ingénieurs et architectes, l'association Adiyat, des experts individuels. Des contacts ont même été menés avec la «Task Force» du gouvernement intérimaire.

3. Information et sensibilisation

L'ICOMOS a exprimé ses préoccupations et ses prises de position par des communiqués et les comités nationaux également. Les actes du symposium de Beijing ont été publiés en 2014. *Heritage at Risk* a documenté certains sites et l'UNESCO a publié certaines interventions sous forme de PDF ou de DVD.

Le secrétaire général d'ICOMOS France a été associé à la remise d'un prix international européen de sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel à Maamoun Abdelkarim, directeur de la DGAM à Venise, en octobre 2014. Il fut en particulier chargé de prononcer l'éloge du récipiendaire.

Enfin, suite à des demandes d'interviews ou d'articles, ICOMOS est cité dans nombre de publications grand public (New York Times, Le Monde, Le Figaro Histoire, etc.), comme aux Etats-Unis, en France, en Norvège, au Qatar, au Royaume-Uni, en Syrie, en Turquie, etc.

4. Formation

Il aurait été souhaitable d'organiser une formation sur la préparation aux risques en Syrie même pendant qu'il en était encore temps. La situation sur place étant devenue trop dangereuse les contacts du groupe de travail ont permis d'organiser, par l'ICORP, en partenariat avec la DGAM, en association avec l'ICCROM et en concertation avec l'UNESCO, des sessions d'initiation à la préparation aux risques à Damas et à Idleb, par liaison internet et présentation de projections, avec traduction simultanée sur place.

Près de 170 personnes ont été bénéficiaires de cette formation : des cadres de la DGAM, des universitaires, des professionnels indépendants, des secouristes du croissant rouge, quelques étudiants, etc. Les exposés portaient sur les inventaires rapides, les évacuations d'urgence, l'accès aux sites touchés, l'évaluation des dommages, etc. Ce fut techniquement une première dans un pays en guerre. Les cours ont été réunis et traduits en arabe. Un thème complémentaire, celui de la préservation des débris doit bientôt être publié.

Un relai est pris depuis novembre 2014 par l'UNESCO à Beyrouth avec des participations individuelles de membres de l'ICOMOS. Une nouvelle initiative de formation est en cours de montage sous le nom d'AMAL, en partenariat avec le fonds GHF et avec la participation de l'ICCROM et du ARC WH.

5. Conseil et assistance

Malgré la situation sur le terrain, des contacts professionnels se poursuivent avec des responsables sur le terrain et des conseils techniques peuvent être assurés. ICOMOS a ainsi activement participé à une session de *brainstorming* à l'UNESCO en vue d'élaborer une note de recommandation (remise en janvier 2014) sur les mesures préventives à prendre pour protéger la vieille ville de Damas inscrite au patrimoine mondial des dangers d'incendie et de destruction. Des experts de l'ICOMOS étaient présents lors de la présentation à l'UNESCO du projet de restauration du Krak des Chevaliers (inscrit au PM) en mai 2014 à Paris. A la demande du World Monuments Watch, des propositions concernant certains sites syriens comme la vieille ville d'Alep ont été examinées en juillet 2013. Le groupe de travail s'est tout dernièrement préoccupé de mesures de sauvegarde (mosaïques) au Khan Mourad Pacha à Maarat al Nooman ainsi qu'au musée national de Damas, qui mérite de figurer au patrimoine architectural du 20^e siècle.

6. Elaboration de programmes d'action

Un véritable plan d'action en vue de réparer les dommages subis par le patrimoine culturel en Syrie et en Irak ne pourra vraiment être évalué et mis en place que lorsque les hostilités auront pris fin. Sa durée de réalisation risque malheureusement de s'étendre sur plusieurs décennies. Relevons néanmoins que des restaurations ont déjà été entreprises sur la mosquée des omeyyades à Damas et qu'une équipe procède aux relevés nécessaires à la restauration du Krak des Chevaliers.

Ceci n'empêche pas de participer à des programmes d'action à court et moyen terme et de se préoccuper de l'élaboration d'orientations pour le jour où les habitants voudront tous ensemble reconstruire leurs maisons dévastées dans les centres historiques. C'est pourquoi il convient de disposer d'une réflexion d'ensemble (*comprehensive*) et stratégique.

ICOMOS a participé à l'élaboration d'un programme conduit par l'ICCROM initialement et repris ensuite par l'UNESCO pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine syrien. Celui-ci comporte les volets suivants :

- Evaluation des dommages, cartographie et inventaires,
- Communication et campagnes de sensibilisation pour faire cesser les atteintes au patrimoine culturel,
- Assistance technique et renforcement des capacités des parties prenantes.

Ce programme a reçu un financement de 2,7 millions d'Euros de l'Union Européenne et du gouvernement flamand. Une unité spécifique d'animation a été mise en place à Beyrouth en septembre 2014. Un protocole de partenariat (Framework of cooperation) entre l'UNESCO et ICOMOS a été rédigé.

Un autre plan d'urgence a été élaboré par l'UNESCO en faveur de l'Irak en juillet 2014. Consulté, l'ICOMOS y avait apporté des compléments.

Le département d'état américain (DoS) avait lancé au cours de l'été 2014 un appel d'offres pour l'élaboration d'un programme d'action en faveur du patrimoine syrien, d'un montant de 600.000 dollars US et avec un délai de réalisation de 6 mois. C'est l'ASOR, une association d'archéologues, qui l'a emporté. ICOMOS est associé au niveau d'un consultant et de conseillers.

Enfin, ICOMOS a monté en partenariat avec la DGAM une proposition soumise à la fondation américaine CyArk en vue de

numériser et compléter la documentation architecturale et urbaine de la vieille ville de Damas et de pouvoir ainsi la conserver en 3D. Celle-ci a été acceptée dans le cadre de son *CyArk 500 challenge* (lettre d'acceptation du 21 octobre 2014).

Groupe de Travail – S. Abdulac
6 avril 2015

IRAQ

The Future of Mosul Heritage after the Destruction

It is clear to everyone what happened in Mosul when ISIS took over the city in June 2014, and how they started devastating actions from the first month of invasion. This report focuses on Mosul city because of the information resources available and the extent of destruction, more than in other cities such as Sinjar, Qarah Qush, etc. The report also contains information of recently destroyed heritage sites and there is not enough space to indicate other devastations, such as of museums, memorial statues and heritage cemeteries, because of the priceless historic buildings that have been lost in this city. Recent statistics indicate more than 40 buildings, according to ground information and satellite images.

Heritage buildings

As is known, the heritage city of Mosul lies on the west bank of the Tigris River with some sites also on the east bank. It is situated on slightly higher ground than the surrounding areas. Different heritage buildings are distributed across the city, such as mosques, shrines (of Prophets, Awliya), monasteries, churches, schools, and others. ISIS did not care for the heritage value of the city and no differentiation between religions and sects was made.

It is worth mentioning that not all destruction was for religious reasons; some of it was related to political or economic matters, for example al-Kamalyia school, Mujahid al-Deen mosque (al Kudher), Hammu al Qadu mosque and Abdal school. They did not contain any tombs, but the strategic location in the Suq or by the river was the reason for their destruction. Similarly, Ajeel Yawer mosque, Tell Afar castle, Sinjar minaret and the police centre were all destroyed for different political reasons.

As a result of these destructions, many distinctive architectural features have been lost, for example all Ottoman pencil-shaped minarets (well-known example: al Qalamya) which appeared at the end of 18th century in the shrines of the Prophets Johan, Gorges and Shith. The conical cupolas which were famous during the Zengid age have been destroyed, except the last small one at Hassan al Bakri Mosque, in addition to countless wonderful Mihrabs and Minbars.

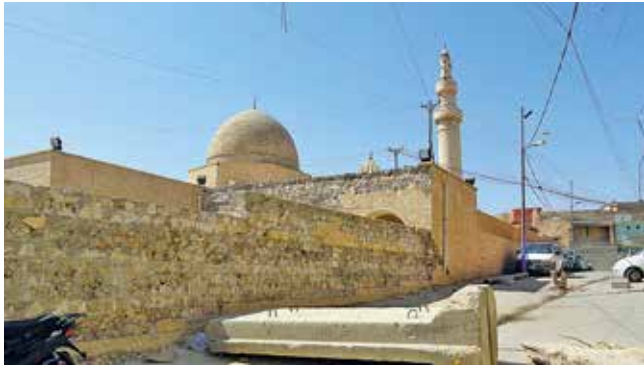
Many challenges will occur after the liberation processes when thoughts can be given to the restoration of the tangible heritage in Mosul: first, what is to happen with the piles of rubble that were removed from most of the destroyed buildings in order to reuse the sites as parks (e.g. Shrine of Prophet Gorges);



Abdal school (photo Layla Salih, 2014)



Mujahid al Deen Mosque (photo Layla Salih, 2014)



Shrine of Prophet Gorges before destruction (photo Layla Salih, 2013)



Layla Salih during the 3D documentation project 2014



New park instead of Shrine of Prophet Gorges

street markets or rebuilding new mosques in accordance with Islamic rules (Hammu al-Qadu mosque has become Al Baghdadi mosque), secondly is the question of property of buildings, each owner, such as the Sunni Endowment (Waqaf), the Antiquities Department and Mosul Municipality, having a specific plan of restoration. For example, as for the shrine for Prophet Nabi Yonis there is a good chance to do an excavation of the Assyrian

layer before rebuilding the shrine. There are many similar cases in the city. The protection and restoration of tangible heritage in Mosul require detailed planning to avoid any more losses in future.

If we decide to rebuild some of these sites, the rebuilding needs to be based on documentation, but here is the problem, because not all buildings now destroyed had been documented by SBAH or any other side. At the beginning of 2014 my team worked on a project that aimed to do a 3D documentation for 200 heritage buildings in Mosul, but unfortunately the total number was only 135. When ISIS took over the city this project had already stopped. In our documentation there are details for 13 heritage buildings, which will be very useful if we try to restore them.

UNESCO Director-General Condemns Destruction at Nimrud

UNESCO Press Release No. 2015-31

Paris, 13 April 2015 – UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova today denounced further destruction at the archeological site of Nimrud in Iraq, shown in graphic detail on a video circulating on social media channels.

“I condemn this mad, destructive act that accentuates the horror of the situation. It confirms that the terrorists are not only destroying representations of figures and bas-reliefs. With their hammers and explosives they are also obliterating the site itself, clearly determined to wipe out all traces of the history of Iraq’s people.”

The Director-General expressed her solidarity with the people and government of Iraq, and recalled UNESCO’s action to protect heritage and coordinate the efforts of the international community in the struggle against illicit traffic of cultural goods.

“The deliberate destruction of heritage is a war crime,” Ms Bokova said. “We will do everything possible to fight against this

and document it, to ensure that those responsible are identified and brought to justice.

“The propaganda and hatred that underlies these acts, and which is circulating via the internet, demands in response messages of peace and knowledge of history. UNESCO supports all those – in Iraq and elsewhere – who are mobilizing to explain the importance of this heritage and why nothing justifies its destruction. This message needs to be heard, and I invite political and religious leaders along with civil society to support the #Unite4Heritage campaign launched recently by UNESCO, and to speak out against these crimes via all possible channels.”

UNESCO denounced the attack against Nimrud on 6 March. Last weekend’s video shows the total destruction of the north-west part of the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II, along with stone sculptures from the neo-Assyrian era. Situated 32 kilometres south of Mosul, the Palace was built dated back to 879 B.C when Nimrud, then known as Kalhu, served as the capital of the Assyrian Empire.

UNESCO is working closely with the Government of Iraq, neighbouring states and the full range of its other partners, to safeguard this millennial heritage.



Nimrud, damaged relief in the Northwest Palace (photo AP/Maya Alleruzzo)



Nimrud, remains of an Assyrian winged bull deity near the gates of the ancient palace where it once stood (photo AP/Maya Alleruzzo)



Nimrud, amidst the rubble a damaged stone tablet with cuneiform writing (photo AP/Maya Alleruzzo)

SYRIA



INTRODUCTION

Syria has a rich and lively heritage which reflects the aspects of diversity that the Syrian society is distinguished for. Besides, this land has preserved invaluable relics belonging to the different civilizations that lived on this land thousands of years ago in peaceful coexistence, a characteristic of the culture of the ancient world.

Nevertheless, Syria's antiquities today are standing on the thresholds of a vague and an undecided future due to destructive violence casting its shadow over all aspects of life, in addition to its impact on our cultural heritage.

Since the beginning of the painful events, several archaeological sites and historical landmarks have suffered damage as a result of becoming battlefields. What is more, barbaric excavations and fierce digs have damaged other sites. The architectural structures of some museums have been affected down to bombings, and some of those museums have been subject to thefts, as well. Moreover, forgery of antiquities, particularly statues and mosaics, has been active lately; unique and matchless sites have recently been transformed into arenas of firearms training, and some others have been targeted on extremist ideological grounds. Furthermore, violations have affected the Syrian cultural heritage by means of destruction and distortion and have unfortunately caused damage whose effects cannot be erased from the history, cultural identity and memory of the Syrian people.

In addressing the issue of what the cultural heritage is undergoing, the DGAM has relied on the obligations imposed by its prominence as a scientific and professional institution, founded more than eighty years ago. Moreover, it has established its good reputation as a result of accumulating the efforts of generations of archaeologists and cooperating with foreign scholars who have shared their expertise and powers for decades. Hence, the DGAM has been seeking to unify visions through separating and safeguarding the cultural heritage from politics and its repercussions and through learning to come together as Syrians irrespective of our different political views to defend our own antiquities, being part of the fabric of Syrian life and a source of pride and self-definition that brings us all together as one nation for our present and future.

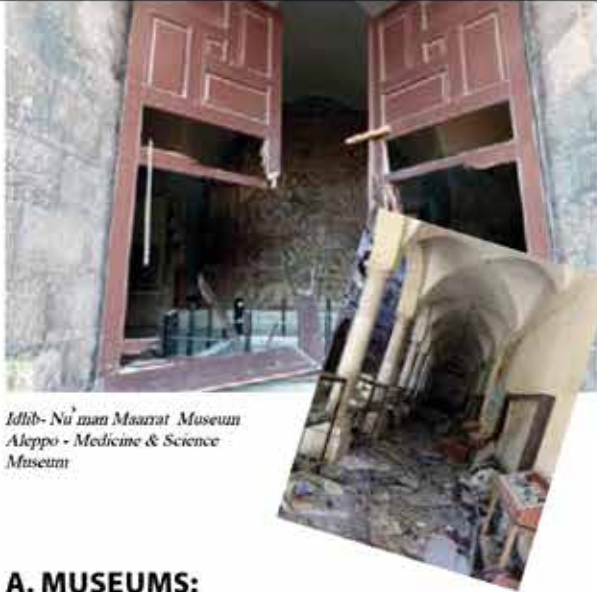
In order to spare the Syrian archaeological heritage and keep it far away from danger as much as possible, the DGAM has appealed to all parties to avoid the archaeological sites and respect their sanctity. Thanks to this vision, the DGAM is still functioning so efficiently; its cadres are still united in all governorates and its efforts have yielded successful results in many cases and regions. Besides, by means of cooperating with members of the local community in areas where institutions are absent, the DGAM has managed to reduce the impact of the damage and violations threatening the archaeological sites.

Thus, since events worsened, the DGAM has published detailed reports every six months in order to give a clearer picture that documents the damage befalling the sites and the measures taken locally and internationally in search of solutions to help ward off danger.

The following is an up-to-date version of the report, documenting the damage and violations at the different Syrian museums and archaeological sites as well as the measures taken since the beginning of the crisis until October 2015. This report was prepared by the DGAM relying on any available photos and information provided by the departments of antiquities in the different governorates or sent by members of the local community in the affected areas:



THE STATUS QUO



*Idlib- Nu'man Maarrat Museum
Aleppo - Medicine & Science
Museum*

A. MUSEUMS:

Generally speaking, museums in Syria are in good condition, given that the DGAM has succeeded in safeguarding their holdings except for some rare cases; nonetheless, clashes have caused tangible damage to some museums.

CLASHES:

Tangible damage has affected the architectural structure of some museums, such as Aleppo Museum Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor Museum. For instance, some windows and doors were smashed, and some suspended ceilings were damaged due to explosions and mortar shells in areas adjacent to the two museums.

In addition, Hama and Maarrat Nu'man Museums as



Homs - Traditional Folk Museum

well as Museums of Folklore in Homs, Aleppo and Deir-ez-Zor suffered physical damage as a result of clashes. Moreover, the walls of Palmyra Museum were affected after being hit by rockets fired from the neighboring orchards.

Thus, these affected places with cracked and damaged walls are in need of reconstruction and rehabilitation; consequently, the DGAM has taken some emergency measures to provide temporary protection to the museums following the damages befalling them.

THEFTS:

- Since the beginning of the crisis, Syrian museums have witnessed the theft of two archaeological artifacts, namely a gilt bronze statue, dating back to the Aramaean era, from Hama Museum and a



Hama museum - A gilt bronze statue had been stolen from the museum

- stone marble piece from Apamea Museum.
- Thieves stole historical pieces from Aleppo's Museum of Folklore, namely glassware, Baghdadi daggers, six spears and some garments.
- 17 pieces of pottery in addition to some clay dolls were stolen from the exhibition hall of Jaabar Castle.



Pottery stolen from Jaabar castle

- Unconfirmed information on the theft of some of the assets of Homs Museum spread around, whereas reports from the Department of Antiquities of Homs did not verify this information although these reports indicated that there was difficulty in assessing the situation precisely. However, the department confirmed that the situation was not grave.

- In Spring 2012, due to the painful events endured by the city of Raqqa as well as the absence of the concerned governmental and cultural institutions, an armed group, called «Ahrar al Sham», has moved the three boxes containing 527 artifacts to an unknown location under the pretext of protecting them.



Raqqa Museum



Raqqa- Tel Hamam Terkman

- In June 2013, robbers seized six boxes, containing archaeological artifacts, which were stored in Raqqa Museum's warehouses, efforts exerted by the cadres of the department have not been successful in returning those boxes so far. Three boxes containing 104 archaeological artifacts were found in Tabaqa city. Besides, the staff of the department is attempting to return the boxes to the museum after they are checked and inventoried.
- An armed group stormed the museum of Deir Atieh on Thursday, 21 Nov.2013, and stayed there until the Syrian army regained control of the place on Saturday afternoon, 23/ 11/ 2013. After inspecting the museum by its staff, it was evident that the weaponry hall was subject to theft of historical and modern pistols and rifles, and the silverware hall suffered from theft of silver jewelry which was kept in hidden places. In addition, the museum was subject to some destruction and damage at specific points due to clashes. Consequently, the DGAM closed the gates of the museum tightly so as to safeguard it and maintain the status quo while awaiting the situation to calm down in order to carry out a full and detailed inventory of the museum's holdings.
- 30 pieces of art were stolen from Maarrat Museum almost a year ago after an armed group stormed the place. The pieces included small dolls and statues made of clay and mud, broken pottery and amulets. Nevertheless, all the mosaics in the museum are safe and unscathed.

B. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

- Some archaeological sites have become battlefields due to the violent clashes raging around, which has negatively affected historical buildings and invaluable archaeological castles. Moreover, other sites have also suffered from destruction as a result of barbaric excavations and fierce digs. Besides, reports from the departments of antiquities of some governorates warn against the expansion of the destruction zone, caused by organized and armed gangs of antiquities, particularly in border areas or areas undergoing violent conflicts. This destruction affects significant and pivotal sites in the history of Syria and draws attention to a probable perpetual loss of some components of the Syrian archaeological heritage. Today, the Syrian antiquities are facing a new setback as unique sites are being converted to fields for gun training and are being targeted either for combat or ideological purposes in another destructive attempt that can be added to previous negative factors affecting the Syrian cultural heritage.

The following shows the damage resulting from clashes, construction violations, illegal excavation and other forms of violations organized according to the governorates from north to south of Syria:

ALEPPO

CLASHES:



Aleppo old city - Omayyad Mosque

- The Directorate of Antiquities of Aleppo has confirmed the destruction of the minaret of the Great Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo, one of the most important archaeological mosques in Syria. The minaret is considered one of the most amazing Islamic minarets in the old city of Aleppo inscribed under the UNESCO World Heritage List. Nevertheless, the DGAM has not been able to obtain more details or information



Aleppo old city - old Souq

in this respect down to difficulty in accessing and inspecting the place. Furthermore, an armed group disassembled the wooden minbar (a raised platform) of Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo and claimed to be transferring it to another safe place even though that happened without any prior knowledge of the archaeological authorities involved in protecting the cultural heritage in Aleppo, The Umayyad Mosque resulted in severe damage to the structure and the interiors while detailed information on the extent of the damage is hard to come by due to the security situation.

- hundreds of historic antique shops as well as goods and new wooden doors were burned down in old Aleppo souks such as Al-zerb, Al-Obbi, Al-Atme, Al-Attareen, Al-Niswan, Al-Soof, Al-Sagha.
- Pictures published by some news agencies have shown that Bimaristan Arghun, Aleppo, (also known as the Museum of Medicine and Science) suffered from some damages which was confirmed by the Directorate of Antiquities in Aleppo. Nevertheless, it seems impossible to determine the nature and extent of the damage due to difficulty in accessing the place for the time being.
- Most of the buildings in Old Aleppo were damaged as a result of the continuous clashes such as: Armenian Orthodox Church of Forty Martyrs and the Armenian Orthodox Church of Forty Martyrs at historic Jdeideh.
- The entrance to the Castle of Aleppo as well as its northern tower and part of the defensive wall at the NE side of the citadel were damaged.
- The extreme groups have detonated bombs in tunnels under old Aleppo and threaten to blow up the citadel. This caused damage to several buildings ex, CARLTON hotel, JUSTICE building, and the police headquarters (al-QALAM building), GRAND SERAY, al KHUSRUWIYE mosque, al-SULTANIA mosque, KHAN al SHOUNA and YALBOUGA hamam etc...

• ILLEGAL EXCAVATION:



Aleppo countryside- Tell Qaramel

Some archaeological sites in the areas surrounding Aleppo have been subject to damage that cannot be identified precisely due to escalating violence there. The following is information received by the DGAM as regards some archaeological sites:

- Large areas on the northern and western sides of Tell Qaramel in the countryside of Aleppo dating back to the Bronze Ages, were destroyed by means of heavy machinery after armed thieves of antiquities dug holes reaching 3 meters in depth while searching for treasures at the site.
- Chalcis site (Qinnasrin) southwest of Aleppo, located on al-Eis Mountain, which dates back to the Roman and Islamic periods, has been subjected to secret extensive digs carried out by thieves coming from the neighboring areas. This area was subjected to secret excavations in 2009, 2010 and 2011, particularly on the northern side of al-Eis Mountain which encompasses



Aleppo countryside- Deidariya cave

a number of archaeological cemeteries. Moreover, secret digs have escalated at this site due to the latest events.

- The archaeological sites in Khanaser area are being subjected to wide-ranging violations resulting from illegal excavation and digs there. Moreover, a group of armed thieves of antiquities removed and stole a mosaic from the church at the monastery archaeological site. The guard of the site was assaulted by them, as well.
 - Al-Deidariya cave in Mount Simeon suffered from acts of sabotage, which included the excavation area and archaeological sectors previously explored by the mission working there; in addition, the equipment of excavations, wooden columns and boards were looted.
 - Manbej and its surroundings (60 kilometers east of Aleppo city): the level of violation at the archaeological sites in Manbej and its surroundings is escalating seeing that antiquities in the region are being subjected to excavation and damage. Information has also indicated that there are certain groups assigned to steal antiquities through using metal detectors so as to unearth potteries, glassware and coins in order to sell them.
1. *Manbej city:* Tabbet Manbej (popularly known as the castle) was subject to digs in its entire surroundings and within homes. In addition, the northeastern quarter suffered from illegal digs inside one of the houses. Some archaeological layers were leveled in al-Sina'a area, as well.
 2. *Kherbet Alabash:* most caves there were exposed to opening and excavation.
 3. *Tell Arab Hasan:* since the beginning of the crisis, this site has been subject to intensive digs and excavations by thieves of antiquities in its entire surroundings. However, the extent of the damage has recently decreased by 90 per cent.
 4. *Tell Abu Qalqal:* it has been subject to limited digs and excavations.
 5. *Monastery of Deir Qanshara:* it has been subject to extensive violations seeing that it is located far away from residential communities and roads, which has resulted in damage to the walls of the monastery made of limestone

as well as damage to the decorative elements carved on the walls of the monastery (the lintels of the windows). In addition, digs are being carried out in the adjacent hill which houses the service facilities of the monastery.

6. *Serrin*: archaeological cemeteries dating back to the classical period in Serrin were subject to digs which resulted in damage to some of their walls. In addition, Maanu tower cemetery (known as Maghzal Serrin) was exposed to violations, considered the most serious, which might cause the collapse and destruction of its walls in a short period of time since the upper part of the tower cemetery was damaged. Moreover, the



Aleppo countryside- Shash Hamdan

constructional condition of the tower has always been bad, and it is getting worse and worse due to excavations within the cemetery and its surrounding.

7. *Shash Hamdan*: This site is one of the funerary cemeteries dating back to the Roman period which is famed for its funerary relief cemeteries



Aleppo countryside- Manbij- Tell Halula

it suffered from several violations that led to the destruction of most of its unique elements, namely:

- Sabotaging the statue of the bull carved on the northern wall.
 - Destroying the altar completely.
 - Sabotaging the two deer on the western side completely.
 - Digging in the northeastern corner.
 - Stealing the metal gate protecting the site.
8. *Tell Halula*: It belongs to the New Stone Age, thieves destroyed the mud room built at the site, which was used as a warehouse of the mission and was burgled, as well.
9. *Um al-Sarj*: the southern cemeteries were subject to excavations that damaged parts of these cemeteries.
10. *Al-Halonji Castle*: it has suffered from digs all over the site.
11. *Al-Nabgha site*: digs took place at the site. In addition, the mosaic there was subject to damage, and the zinc room built above the mosaic for protection was stolen.
12. *Al-Hoshariya*: the areas of the Danish expedition were subject to digs and damage. Furthermore, many caves used as houses or cemeteries were opened.
13. *Shaqla*: extensive digs and excavations (ruining mosaics) were carried out. Besides stone foundations were destroyed.
14. *Kherbet Nafakh*: digs and excavations are being carried out.
15. *Tell al-Zanqa*: it was subject to shallow digs and excavations within the rubble layers.
16. Tell Khamis: it was subject to secret shallow excavations within the rubble layers.
17. *Tell Shiyukh Tahtani*: it has been subject to several digging operations. In addition, some gangs attempted to level some part of the hill using a bulldozer. However, due to the intervention of the residents of the area, leveling the hill stopped, and it is in good condition now.
18. *Tell Shiyukh Foqani*: it has been subject to digs and excavations, which, however, have stopped lately.

Moreover, the cadres of the DGAM managed to reduce the impact of the current events on the archaeological heritage. In addition, by means of field visits and through communicating with the residents and popular events, the cadres also

managed to protect some sites completely and prevent any more damage to some sites previously violated.

CONSTRUCTION VIOLATIONS:

- Al-Rafada and Set al-Roum sites (north of Aleppo nearby Simeon Castle):

Some local residents in the area of Shaikh Barakat mountain opened illegal quarries at the foot of the mountain overlooking the town of Daret Azzeh. In addition, archaeological stones abundantly available in both Set al-Roum and al-Rafada villages, located between Simeon Castle and al-Qatora village (500m away), are being dismantled and sold as stone blocks for construction, which will damage these two distinctive archaeological sites which date back to the Byzantine period, and which were inscribed under the World Heritage List in 2011 within the archaeological parks, including the archaeological villages in the



Aleppo countryside- Manbij- Jabal Khalid

Limestone Massif, north of Syria.

- Manbij city and its surroundings
Construction violations on the tells (hills), located within residential communities, are spreading all over the place where residents are taking advantage of the current circumstances so as to construct rooms, walls and buildings on the archaeological hill or within its main part. Due to lack of awareness, others are using the archaeological stones in construction, cultivating the archaeological hills and growing seasonal trees

or using some of those hills for burial, which is considered the least damaging compared to other violations in terms of the magnitude and extent of the damage inflicted.

- Manbij city/the western quarter:
 1. The remains of the entrances to cave cemeteries were completely destroyed during the construction of the foundations of a building in the western quarter behind Mustafa al-Kabbar School. Two individual tombs made of limestone containing no written or decorative elements were discovered. A cemetery was discovered at a depth of six meters on the northern side of the aforesaid destroyed cemeteries; in addition, it is full of rubble now.
 2. *Tell Ahmar*: there are construction violations as well as cultivation in some parts of the hill.
 3. *Tell al-Aber*: its southern part has been subject to construction violations as well as growing trees within the national mission's areas. In contrast, the northern part is in good condition as the residents got convinced they should not cultivate or build anything at the site.
 4. *Tell Yasti* and *Tell al-Rafee*: they were subject to plowing and cultivation of barley and olive trees.
 5. *Tell Shiyukh Tahtani* and *Kherbet Nafakh*: they suffered from violations of constructing residential buildings.

It should be noted that there are a lot of construction violations in many sites we can not monitor them because of the crises.

OTHER FORMS OF VIOLATIONS:

- Today, the Syrian antiquities are facing a new setback as unique sites are being converted to fields for gun training and are being targeted either for combat or ideological purposes in another destructive attempt that can be added to previous negative factors affecting the Syrian cultural heritage:
- Simeon Castle:
According to testimonies by antiquities experts in Aleppo and the northern countryside, Simeon Castle has been subjected to deliberate distortion and damage since an armed group took shelter there, brought their weapons and heavy artillery and transformed the whole place into an arena of combat and gun training. Moreover, shooting and other forms of training

caused damage to the interior façades of the monastery and the church all together with its column capitals bearing curling acanthus leaves with winds. In addition, the site was exposed to damage due to illegal digs and excavations carried out by that group within the religious complex dedicated to Saint Simeon Stylites.

Simeon Castle is considered as the jewel of the churches of the Dead Cities; therefore, the church and its natural surroundings were designated as World Heritage Site in 2011 down to its uniqueness and exceptionality in the whole world, which is the result of its distinctive architectural and decorative features, as well as its special religious sacredness.

- al-Qatora site (one kilometer away from Simeon Castle, north of Aleppo):

The stone statues located on the façades of the valley slopes in al-Qatora village, Sheikh Barakat mountain region, are being subjected to deliberate damage as they are directly targeted by gun fire making them training and sniping points, which will leave a destructive mark on exceptional archaeological structures that have spanned two thousand years since the second century AD at this site.



Aleppo countryside- al Qatora

IDLIB

An armed group stormed into the two churches and monastery of al-Jadida village located in Jisr al-Shughur area (Idlib countryside), destroyed all the crosses and icons and stole 11 archaeological icons registered at the Department of Antiquities of Idlib.

- Harem castle: It has witnessed clashes; however, we do not have enough information on the damage caused.
- Ebla site:

The archaeological site of Ebla witnessed fierce and intensive digs at the onset of the crisis whose intensity decreased thanks to the efforts of the DGAM's cadres and archaeologists, which put an end to damage.

Some antiquities thieves carried out illegal excavations at the site in July 2013 after these operations had come to a halt for several months using heavy machinery in sweeping away the ground of a cave to reach its bottom, which resulted in a collapse claiming the lives of two members of the group and injuring others.

Thus, during the first week of November 2013, the cadres of the Department of Antiquities of Idlib in cooperation with the local community conducted a tour at Ebla site to investigate about the damage caused by natural conditions at the site as well as that resulting from illegal excavation and digs.

Generally speaking, residents in the area in addition to members of the local community are exerting relentless efforts and attempts to safeguard the site and reduce the impact of the damage affecting it due to digs carried out by thieves of antiquities– which has reflected positively on the situation at the site.

Consequently, the situation calmed down, and digs reached its minimum towards the end of 2013.

Violations resulting from fierce acts of excavation caused a lot of damage to the modern facilities of the site in Ebla, which caused a lot of damage to the modern facilities of the site such as the cafeteria at the entrance to the northern hill and the newly constructed building southwest the site, which was supposed to be a center to receive visitors, in addition to the service room and its facilities.

As for the damages at the historic site and its relics,

they, for the most part, were caused by weather conditions in winter which affected some walls, annually restored by the archaeological mission working at the site.

As well, the site suffered from damages caused by some people who focused their attention on the following sectors:

- The Acropolis: Random holes spread all over the courtyards of the Royal Palace (G) especially around the archive room. Thieves attempted to enter by means of digging holes below some walls in order to reach older levels not explored yet. Moreover, they partly destroyed the basalt staircase in the administrative suite of the palace with the purpose of penetrating the layers; a number of wells were searched again despite being previously excavated by the expedition there. More historic levels were sabotaged in parts of the Palace (E). Besides, some insignificant diggings took place at the top of the Acropolis.
- The Northern Palace (P) and the Great Temple of Ishtar were subjected to digging operations in some halls, but that posed no real threat. Also, some wells were searched again despite being previously excavated.
- The Southern Palace (FF), located in the slope



Ebla- Damages in the Royal palace

of the Acropolis, suffered from vandalism and minor diggings which did not affect the building and can be repaired later.

- The perpetrators excavated several sectors in the Temple of the Rock (HH) which was a significant temple in Ebla during the ancient Bronze Age (the middle of the 3rd millennium BC). Only one hole was dug there, and one well was searched.

- The Royal Palace (Q) in addition to the fences, gates and other sectors of the historic hill were not subjected to any damage.

6. The dead cities:

Some archaeological villages within the Northern Limestone Massif in Syria (known as the Dead Cities or Forgotten Cities) are being subject to different violations, particularly within the five parks of Idlib, such as:

- People there are residing in some of the



Idlib- Gebel az-Zawia-Serjella

archaeological villages such as Gebel az-Zawyia.

- Other areas are witnessing some attempts to use the archaeological rocks in construction.
- Slums and construction violations are spreading in some areas and villages.
- Several sites are suffering from illegal digs and excavation.
- Latest information has indicated that the condition of the sites of Gebel az-Zawyia, inscribed on the World Heritage List, such as al-Bara, Serjilla and others, is stable due to cooperation between the DGAM's cadres and the local residents of most of these sites, who have taken on the responsibility of protecting the sites against any damage that might be caused by thieves of antiquities and vandals.

It is worth mentioning that the number of the archaeological parks inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2011 has amounted to eight, five of which are located in this region within Idlib Governorate (namely, two parks in Gebel az-Zawyia; one park in Gebel al-Aala; one park in Gebel Barisha and one park in Gebel al-Woastani), and three others in Aleppo.

Violations affecting the sites of Gebel al-Aala, Gebel al-Woastani and Gebel Barisha in Idlib:

1. *Kafr Aqab site* of Gebel al-Woastani: it has been subjected to destruction and damage by antiquities thieves. Moreover, information has confirmed that Kafr Oqab is the most damaged and most affected site in the region in that large and deep pits spread all over the place. Some of these pits contain virgin cemeteries which have been looted and destroyed; in addition, the southern tower has been knocked down and the nave of the church has suffered from secret digs and damage.
2. *Banassra site* of Gebel al-Woastani: a large number of pits have spread all over the site; a 2 x 2m and a depth of 90cm pit has been seen in the Martirio (martyrdom) Chamber in the northern church and a similar one in the southern church. Besides, damage to the southern church has caused all the stone columns to topple down and some parts of mosaic floors to appear. In addition, a large sarcophagus east of the church has been destroyed.
3. *Qalb Lozeh* of Gebel al-Aala: the church is completely intact apart from breaking four stones of the apse. In addition, a carved stone in an embossed and distorted human shape has been found at the west end of the church.
4. *Qarqabiza site* of Gebel al-Aala: a number of archaeological walls have been damaged; moreover, the eastern wall of a house east of



Idlib- Gebel al-Aala-Qalb Lozeh church

the church has been destroyed and several digs have been spotted.

5. *Kfeire site* of Gebel al-Aala: excavation pits have spread all over the place; the most dangerous of which has been in the Martirio Chamber of the church. Furthermore, a small burial ground has

been discovered in the bottom as a result of breaking the stone slabs.

Idlib Department of Antiquities has declared that the nature and places of excavations suggest that the thieves have contacted antiquities and excavation experts seeing that the digs are taking place in an orderly fashion focused, in general, on specific places inside the churches and underneath and around sarcophagi searching for treasures and archaeological finds. Furthermore, information obtained from the local community has confirmed that a lot of antique dealers and smugglers, Syrians and non-Syrians, Turkish in particular, are in the region.

Gebel az-Zawiya Park/al-Bara, which includes (al-Bara, Wadi Martahun, Magelya, Batirsa, Bshilla, Baoudeh, Sergella, DeLozeh, Shanshrah, and Rabeea), suffered from violations and vandalism in some parts:

- Al-Bara site:

A report received from the office of the Archaeological Parks in Idlib has indicated that some construction violations have taken place next to or at al-Bara archaeological site. Furthermore, it has been realized that a large number of sites surrounding al-Bara are inhabited by some local residents in the region during this crisis. Thus, the DGAM is communicating with those people in order to safeguard these relics against any damage that might be inflicted on them by means of breaking stones, setting fires



Idlib- Gebel az-Zawia-Bara

and violating them (by some thieves). According to information received from the Department of Antiquities of Idlib, most of the residents of the region are cooperating and showing a relatively good response as regards reducing the impact of

the damage on these sites.

- Three stone sarcophagi inside the pyramid tomb were broken as well as a gate lintel and the door of an olive oil mill. Moreover, four historic crowns were stolen.

Some local people are living in around 15 caves and refurbishing some others in addition to rock engraved Byzantine tombs.

- Some front parts at the site were tarnished due to clashes. These are the front parts of Abi Sufyan Castel, the pyramidal burial chamber (known as Sawmaa), the eastern façade of one of the five churches, the pyramidal burial chamber (known as Mazuqa) north and south, and the eastern façade of the Monastery.



Idleb- Gebel az-Zawia-Bara

- **Sergella site:**

- Sign boards were broken as well as the sarcophagus at the entrance of Sergella site.

- Some villagers from Kafr Roma dwell in about 10 historic houses in Sergella.

- The doors, windows, and switches of the entrance to the site were broken. Moreover, the office, the electricity room and the tickets office were broken into.



Idleb- Gebel az-Zawia-Serjella

- **Wadi Martahun, Magelya, Batirsa, Bshilla, Baoudeh, and DeLozeh sites:**

Some people have lived and refurbished 7 caves; in addition, secret excavation took place in scattered spots.

- Gebel al-Zawya/al-Maara Park, which includes (*Jerade and Ruwiha*), suffered from secret excavation, and recent building violations reached Jerada site; some façades in Jerade site were tarnished.

Furthermore, the headquarters and homes of foreign expeditions were burgled in Idlib.

HASAKA



Hasaka-Tell Beydar

The Hasaka Directorate of Antiquities pointed out in a report that the archeological sites north of the governorate have so far been in good condition as no illegal excavations took place, especially the important sites where Syrian and foreign missions have been conducting explorations for years. Those sites are (Tell Mozan, Tell Leilan, Tell Beydar, and Tell Arbeed), and they include some of the most significant ancient kingdoms in the region. The directorate also asserted that Hamokar archaeological site is fine; however, nearby hills suffered from secret excavations. As for (Tell Berry, Tell Brak, and Tell Halaf), they have not been subjected to attacks or sabotage. The report showed that the absence of vandalism acts at these important sites is the result of the cooperation of the local community in the area.

- The residence of the British archaeological mission working at the hill of Tell Brak was subjected to attacks by an armed group; as a result, wooden logs and equipment therein were stolen, and some pottery pieces were thrown away there.
- In addition, some illegal digs were conducted by using heavy machinery at the hill.
- There are no specific details or information as regards the archaeological sites south of the governorate seeing that archaeologists and guards cannot access the area. However, some residents of the southern region have reported noticing illegal excavation at some archaeological sites like Tell Ajaja.
- Tell al-Ashara: Construction violations are still taking place within the archaeological site in addition to leveling the hill:
 1. 8-meter-deep sweeping away of the third-millennium-BC fences on the southeastern

side of the hill located at the entrance to al-Ashara Bridge.

2. constructing shops and sky-high buildings on both sides of the road leading to al-Ashara Bridge, where the western side of the hill was fiercely shoveled away. In addition, several archaeological layers and levels dating back to the Akkadian and Assyrian periods appeared.
3. Illegal Buildings and Locals bulldozed the several Tells such as: Tell Abu Rassen in Ras Tell Harmal, Tell Fakhariya - Washukanni at al Ayn area,
4. Tunnels digging in Tell Safok_ al Shadady area, illegal excavations by using bulldozer appeared at Tell al Fadghmy in Shadady area.

DEIR Ez ZOR

- Tell es-Sin: Secret excavation is still being conducted at the site as follows:
 1. outside the fence and within the area of the cemeteries on the northern side of the site.
 2. sweeping away the ground by means of heavy machinery (an excavator) within the fences on the northwestern side of the site resulting in a 15m-long-and-4m-deep hole, which led to the damage of the archaeological layers there.
 3. sweeping away the ground in the northwestern tower of the fence (located on the northern side of the fence towards the cliff overlooking the Euphrates valley).
 4. Also, more than 280 holes and deep trenches have spread within the Byzantine cemetery located north of the fence of the hill which has resulted in the uncovering of several tombs as well as the theft of their contents. In addition, wide spaces of the site have become a landfill of waste and residues resulting from demolishing houses, and the southern part of the hill has been used as a market by oilmen, as well.
- Tell Buseira: Construction violations are still taking place within the site as follows:
 1. Shoveling away the ground on the eastern side of the hill overlooking the mouth of Khabour River where it flows into the Euphrates River,

and where a building block of six shops was constructed.

2. Damaging and destroying Maqam Sheikh Issa at the top of the archaeological hill.
3. Shoveling away the ground in the northern part of the hill very fiercely in order to construct a large building block. What is more, 70 holes, whose depth ranges from 1 to 4 meters, resulted from illegal excavation at several parts of Buseira site.



Deir ez Zor-Buseira

- Dura Europos site (Salhiya):
 1. Almost 300 people are excavating intensively in several sectors within the site. Furthermore, fierce excavation has escalated at the site since September 2013 as someone found a gold bracelet within the site. Red rocks within the sector of the Temple of Bel were stolen and transferred outside the site.
 2. So far, Dura Europos site has been suffering from systematic acts of looting, vandalism and destruction violating its sanctity by means of fierce and secret excavations using heavy machinery. Attempts by members of the local community to put an end to those acts, however, have failed. Those violations have also led to the destruction of Dura Europos site at a very high percentage estimated at 80% of the site as perpetrators are digging holes that can reach 3 meters deep. Moreover, according to reports received from Deir ez-Zor in April 2013, the number of holes resulting from illegal excavations in search of archaeological finds at Dura Europos site has amounted to 300 different-sized holes all over the site, particularly Bait Lysias, the markets, the public baths and the synagogue as well as the archaeological buildings within the site. What is more, unconfirmed information received by the department referred to the discovery of a white stone statue of a two-winged lady carrying a child.

- Tell al-Hariri (Mari): An armed gang of antiquities is staying within the residence of the mission and Mari site visitor center with the participation of some locals in the area, particularly from al-Sayal village. In addition, information has confirmed that the gang has obtained treasure detectors and



Deir ez Zor-Dura Europos

that they intend to utilize them in an attempt to steal some antiquities from the site, which calls for attention against worse violations that can be added to the previous ones affecting the site. It is worth mentioning that the archaeological site of Mari has suffered from excavations similar to those Dura Europos site has witnessed, which have affected significant buildings and several places in Mari. Besides, digs at Mari archaeological site were carried out with complete focus on the Royal Palace, the southern gate, the public baths, Temple of Ishtar, Temple of Dagan and the Temple of the Goddess of Spring. In addition, the number of holes at Mari site totaled 50 till the end of April 2013; also the residence of the mission as well as the visitors center were burgled. Some violations took place at al-Sayal site, as well.

- Tell Taboos: it has been subjected to excavations and thefts by thieves of antiquities who sell the discovered finds to tradesmen coming from Aleppo and Raqqa. In addition, the remaining buildings were damaged and destroyed.

- **Halbia site:** The intensity of excavation has decreased for the past two months following large-scale attacks which the site suffered from previously. Besides, thieves have recently been prevented from accessing the site thanks to the endeavors of the residents of the area after the staff of the Department of Antiquities of Deir ez-Zor coordinated with the social elites and the heads of the tribes in the region. Moreover, they agreed to protect the site against vandals. Previously, Halbia site witnessed blatant excavations using heavy machinery in the area of the north tower cemeteries adjacent to al-Harbi Bridge, on the eastern side along the Euphrates River and next to the basilica located in the middle of the site to the west along the basalt plateau. The thieves stole the protective doors of the entrances to the gates of the towers and the entrances to Halbia archaeological site, Deir ez-Zor. The ticket office was also burgled. Furthermore, the excavation tools



Deir ez-Zor- Tall Taboos

of the archaeological mission working at the site were stolen as well as one of the Directorate of Tourism caravans servicing at the site. In addition, Maqam Sheikh Shipley, located outside the fence within the southern side of the site, was blasted and leveled to the ground using heavy machinery.

- **Tell Sheikh Hamad site:** it has been subject to blatant and illegal excavations. In addition, the accommodations of the mission working at the site have been burgled. Also dignitaries in the village have intervened to put an end to the digs and the resulting damage.
- **Rahba Castle** has undergone limited damage in specific positions.

The Directorate of Antiquities in Raqqa indicated in a report that Jaabar Castel is safe but closed for the time being due to the presence of gunmen in the area and the neighboring villages.

Some archaeological sites in Raqqa have been suffering from illegal excavation, on which the

DGAM has not been able to obtain any detailed information since the guards cannot access the place down to the violent clashes. Thus, the DGAM has relied on information received from some members of the local community in the region regarding the situation at these sites:



Deir ez-Zor- Halabia

1. *Tell Sabi Abyad* has suffered from digs within the excavation areas of the Dutch mission previously working at the site. No detailed information is available on the nature of the damage at the site due to difficulty in accessing it.
2. *Maadan desert* in the countryside of Raqqa has been subjected to illegal digs.

RAQQA

3. A lot of destructive violations to the archaeological layers at *Tell al-Bay'ah* and other neighboring tells (hills) were recorded.
4. The DGAM has received photos showing violations and damage affecting the archaeological sites within and beyond the Governorate of Raqqa. Damage caused by digs excavations differ in intensity, range and depth seeing that some archaeological sites have been subject to violent excavation and digs, while damage has been limited at some other sites, namely *Tell al-Mafsh*, the old mosque/ *al-Mansoor mosque*, *Maqam Wabsa*, *Tell Hammam Turkmen*, *Tell Shaheen* and *Sheikh Hasan site*).
5. The storehouse of *Hergla* archaeological building, belongs to Excavation Directorate has been stolen by almost 100 armed men specialized in antiquities theft, who break into the storehouse and burgle it. The contents comprising of hundreds of artifacts, such as different kinds of potteries, plaster ware, pieces

of mosaics and broken pottery for research, which represented the results of archaeological excavation at different sites in Raqqa over the years. Thus, the employees of the Department of Antiquities of Raqqa took a number of measures to safeguard Hergla building having been subjected to several break-in and robbery attempts. Hence, the doors and windows of the warehouses were closed using sand mixed with bricks in the beginning of summer 2013. Due to continued threats and attacks, the staff there, after coordinating with the central administration of the DGAM in Damascus, emptied the contents of the warehouse of the building and transferred them to a house made of concrete in Hergla village. Unfortunately, these efforts were unsuccessful in protecting the artifacts and preventing any attempt to steal them at gunpoint and in front of all of the villagers.



Raqqa- Potteries stolen from Hergla warehouse

- Limited illegal excavations were carried out in Resafe, however threats of theft and vandalism were happened to the archaeological mission Storage, breaking doors and stolen the restoration equipment. In addition, armed gang destroyed a part of the Western ancient city's wall in order to created a hole for the vehicles passage.



Raqqa- Tell Hammam Turkmen

HAMA

- *Apamea* site is considered one of the most affected sites as a result of the ongoing secret excavations at the site, which are centered around the eastern, northeastern and western regions of the city. Moreover, a comparison between two photos taken by satellite, the first of which was taken before the beginning of the crisis in Syria and the second on April 4th, 2012, shows the amount of looting and destruction *Apamea* site was subject to due to secret excavation.
- Construction rocks were stolen from *al-Andreen* archaeological site. Besides, an armed group attacked the residence of the German mission working at the site, took out the contents of its rooms and made it their own headquarters.
- Both *Shayzar* and *Madheek castles* have undergone minor and limited damage at specific points.

HOMS



Homs - Ancient Souq

- *Um al-Zennar Church* in addition to other churches and some old souks in Homs suffered major damage due to clashes. It is worth mentioning that the City of Old Homs is one of the most affected cities together with Aleppo.
- Clashes caused damage to some parts of the interior of *Krak des Chevaliers*. The cadres of the department, however, could not examine the castle from the inside or take any photos due to difficulty in accessing the castle during the current situation.
- *Khalid ibn al-Walid Mosque* in Homs has been subject to damage down to clashes in the region.



Homs- Khalid Ibn al -Walid mosaque

- **Palmyra:**

Digs are spreading within the southeastern cemeteries area previously excavated in an attempt to open some of them. Furthermore, it is not possible, for the time being, to estimate the extent of the damage caused by these digs prior to carrying out detailed inspection as well as removing the dust covering those graves.

In 2015, the targeted assaults on the Syrian heritage have continued by the armed small and large groups of archaeology hunters, so have the illegal excavations and trafficking in areas out of the state control, especially through the Turkish borders.

The most grieving incident has been the fact that the terrorist militants of ISIS have invaded the city of Palmyra. So far, they have recently destroyed tombs and valuable statues; moreover, they have mined historical monuments in the Ancient city; while ISIS represent one aspect of border-crossing terrorism threatening the Syrian heritage.

Several monuments had been blown up such as: the Arch of Triumph, Temple of Baal Shamin, the sanctuary of the Temple of Bel, and 6 tower tombs, in addition to Suffi shrines.



Palmyra- Bel Temple

DAMASCUS & COUNTRYSIDES



Damascus old city- al-Adeliya school

An explosive device planted in Kallase street, in old Damascus, caused partial damage to the façade of *Grand Adeliya School (Arabic Language Academy)* smashing the glass of the windows of the upper floor.

- Four citizens faced martyrdom and 26 others

were injured down to a mortar shell attack on the external yard in front of the western entrance to *Umayyad Mosque* in Old Damascus. Moreover, another shell hit the wall of the façade of the *Umayyad Mosque* (from within) which overlooks the central yard (*sahn*) and which is coated with a mosaic panel. The shell caused partial damage at some points. Old Damascus has recently been subjected to random shelling since launching mortar shells has escalated targeting these places rich in archaeological and historical landmarks and buildings that are unmatched all over the world.

- A mortar shell fell on the top part of the



Damascus old city- Umayyad Mosque mosaic

northern wall of the Throne Hall in the *Citadel of Damascus* causing minor damage to the glass shielding the skylights of the hall and to its metal dome in addition to the parapet of



Damascus old city- The Citadel

roof and the rainscreen system at the point affected by the shell. Besides, the citadel was subjected to another mortar shell which affected the western façade of the tower of the eastern entrance to the citadel dedicated to receiving visitors, and which left an 80x80-cm hole in the wall. Also, it led to breaking all the glass covers of the building and the adjacent buildings, such as the Throne Hall or the Ayoubi Hall housing a gallery. The standards, used in finishing the buildings, the heart of the museum visit in the citadel, protected the holdings of the museum from any damage since tempered glass was used in constructing these buildings which prevented the glass from shattering with sharp edges on the visitors.

- Information has indicated that the contents of some churches and monasteries in *Maaloula* have been stolen. Nonetheless, the DGAM has not been able to validate this information yet, neither confirm nor ignore. In addition, many historical houses in the city have been subject to damage.
- *Al-Suhl* site, Yabroud, has been subjected to illegal digs by some antiquities thieves in the surrounding area, who are collaborating with Syrian and Lebanese antiques dealers.
- Damages, looting and vandalism have been reported at *Malloula* the Monastery of Saint Takla, the church of Saint John the Baptist, the monastery of Saint Sergius and Bacchus and the Saint Leontius Church and the in the old town.

DARAA

CLASHES:

- *Al-Omari Mosque*, Daraa, was subjected to damage as a result of shells affecting its sahn (i.e. courtyard), minaret and surroundings, according to a report by the Daraa Department of Antiquities clarifying the difficulty in documenting and inspecting the damage directly due to the current situation.
- Historic *Hrak Mosque in Izraa* suffered from damages in its western wall, northern wall and part of its roof. As well, the minarets of both the old mosque in the city of *Sheik Meskeen* and the old mosque in the town of *Mahajja* were damaged. Those two latter mosques are registered as traditional non-historic buildings.
- *Mabrak el-Naqa* building and *Nymph Temple* (also publicly known as King's Daughter's Bed)



Daraa- al Omari mosque minaret



Daraa- al Hrak mosque

in Bosra were damaged. Furthermore, the only remaining lintel above the columns was damaged as well as some old houses in Bosra.

- Bosra was occupied by armed groups on March 2015, the DGAM communicated with the local community in order to cooperate and support in neutralizing the ancient city from the ongoing events and its effects, especially at the Roman theater that contains a small museum for classical antiquities.
- Some old houses in the town of Nawa were subjected to destruction because of clashes.

ILLEGAL EXCAVATION:

The trend of illegal digs has become very common in the city of Daraa with hundreds of hired men and armed gangs of antiquities taking part in *Wadi Yarmuk*, *al-Asha'ari Tell* and the digs inside of *al-Omari Mosque*, destroying the tiles of the flooring, and at the archaeological sites along Wadi al-Yarmouk and at Tell al-Ash'ari, which might cause irreparable damage if these digs continue at this pace.

The Department of Antiquities of Daraa has documented the damage affecting the archaeological sites during the month of October as a result of illegal digs and excavation which are still being carried out at some of these sites. The report of the department has identified the damage as follows:

- *Tell esh-Shehab site*: some old houses were removed.
- *Kherbet Nahj*: digs carried out by means of heavy machinery resulted in a hole ranging between 4 to 5 meters in depth and 1 meter in width.
- *Kharab al-Shahm*: it was subjected to digs towards the bottom of al-Yarmouk Valley.
- *Al-Yadoudeh*: digging and filling holes are taking place in the old houses.
- *Al-Mzereb*: digs at the entrance to the castle on the northern side.
- *Kherbet al-Baala*: illegal digs and excavations.
- *Al-Ajami and Tell al-Asha'ari*: secret digs are still being conducted.
- *Bait Aara* (the old town): there are seven holes resulting from manual digging, each of which ranges between 3 to 4 meters in width and a half meter in depth. Moreover, there are around 20 other different-sized holes surrounding both Zayateen and al-Ouyun Bridges.
- *Koya, al-Shajra* town and *Kherbet Kom al-Jouz*: random digs resulted in different-sized holes.
- *Al-Qasair*: there are digs west of the old town overlooking the valley.
- *Heet*: there are random illegal digs next to the mosaic discovered in that region. It was apparent as well that some little pieces were

QUNEITRA



Quneitra, Beer Ajam

removed from one side of the panel in an area of 40cm. In addition, there are digs in Wadi Heet al-Jusoor (al-Areeb Bridge - al-

the cultural and archaeological institutions there function normally.

The DGAM through this report seeks to provide an accurate account of the archaeological and historic sites which were subjected to damages during the current crisis. Nevertheless, we would like to assert that other sites might have suffered from damages that were not documented by the antiquities departments of the governorates due to violent clashes in their surroundings.

C. CONSTRUCTION VIOLATIONS:

Unlike practices such as secret excavations, vandalism and looting which receive high resistance and are fought against by the local people of the areas surrounding the archaeological sites, the local community does not show the same degree of cooperation with regard to recent construction violations that are prevalent as some people are taking advantage of the state of chaos and due to difficulties in controlling these violations taking place around the archaeological sites.



D. ANTIQUITIES FORGERY PHENOMENON:

By way of examining samples from some confiscations, it is evident that artifacts *Fake mosaic smuggled from Apamia* forgery has been active during the crisis as antiquities thieves tend to forge pieces of art and sell them as genuine ones such as mosaic panels and Palmyra statues. Antiques forgery has been around for years and it is punishable by the law.

Towards the end of November 2013, A team of DGAM's experts in ancient mosaics conducted a study on a number of photos of mosaics believed to be stolen and smuggled from Apamea site; the study showed that most of them were fake despite the good quality and sophistication put into their making.

The DGAM received those photos from some

LATTAKIA - TARTUS - SWEIDA

Dora Bridge), within and along the tunnels (the Upper tunnel - al-Minshar tunnel - the Lower tunnel).



Tartus- Hosn Sulaiman

Damage is only limited to some construction violations and illegal digs at a number of sites such as Beer Ajam and others.

There is no damage according to reports from these governorates since they have not witnessed any painful events as the other governorates have; hence,

MEASURES TAKEN



Damascus National Museum

residents of the region. The mosaics represent themes inspired by Greek mythology and popular images in Syria and the western regions of the Roman Empire in North Africa and Europe, Turkey in particular.

Nevertheless, the team's technical, mythological and scientific assessment of the mosaics suggested that they were most probably fake.

Following that review of the situation of the Syrian archaeological heritage which is subject to change on a daily basis, the following is a brief summary concerning the measures taken in order to reduce the risk and damage as much as possible:

LOCALLY:

1. The museums were emptied of their holdings,



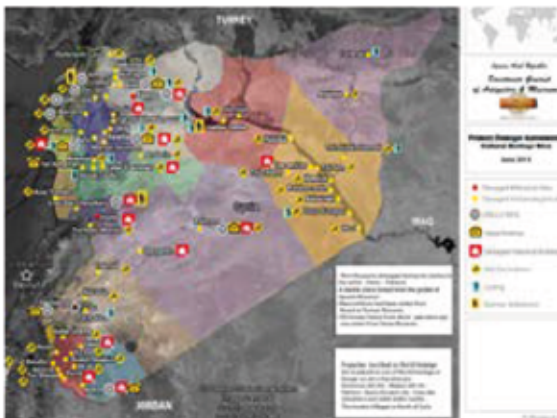
Damascus old city - National companion posters

and all archaeological artifacts were amassed in safe and secure places. In addition, burglar alarms were installed in some museums and fortresses, and the number of guards and patrols was increased.

2. The DGAM has taken a series of steps to involve all Syrians in defending the archaeological heritage representing their history, their common memory and all that brings them together throughout history. Therefore, it has launched a national campaign to raise people's awareness on the value of their antiquities and their role in protecting them irrespective of any political or intellectual difference dividing them today. The campaign has targeted 23 million Syrians with no exception to engage them all in safeguarding ancient Syrian antiquities and cultural heritage, which they are proud of.
3. The staff and cadres of the DGAM in all governorates are putting forth tremendous efforts and cooperating with members of local communities, mediators and social and religious and intellectual elites to protect hundreds of archaeological sites and safeguard them from the repercussions of the current events. Moreover, success rates vary from one place to another based on people's support which makes hope the dominant factor more often than not. For example, the joint efforts helped in the protection of Maarrat Nu'man Museum. Besides, the Department of Antiquities of Raqqa is still contacting and receiving information from the central administration in Damascus despite the painful events in the city. Moreover, in August, 2013, the DGAM with the assistance of the residents of both Brahliya and Kafr al-Awamid villages transferred a mosaic unearthed in Barada Valley to the National Museum. This mosaic, in addition, occupies a significant place as it is the first to be discovered in the countryside of Damascus.
4. Under the Patronage of Ministry of Culture The DGAM held a workshop on «fighting against illicit trafficking of cultural property: capacity-building and awareness-raising», 12 and 13 May 2013, to enrich the topic of illegally smuggled artifacts with the participation of representatives of all ministries and authorities

involved in the protection of Syrian cultural property in addition to NGOs, members of the local community, researchers, artists and writers within the field.

5. The DGAM has returned more than 4000 archaeological artifacts during the past year through confiscations carried out by the concerned bodies (the police, the customs, the governorate, the municipalities and other public bodies) in Damascus, Tartus, Palmyra, Homs, Hama, Deir ez-Zor, etc. Furthermore, the concerned authorities returned a treasure containing 1600 silver-plated bronze coins, discovered in the region of al-Shaer mountain between Palmyra and Homs, in addition to tens of artifacts which were about to be smuggled since June 2013.
6. The DGAM has launched its website both in Arabic and English (www.dgam.gov.sy), which is updated on a daily basis using information and news on the damage affecting the Syrian archaeological heritage during the crisis.
7. The DGAM has documented the holdings of all Syrian museums electronically; in addition, a team of DGAM experts is working on the documentation process and comparing between the current situation and the previous state of the Syrian archaeological heritage. Moreover, the team is digitally archiving the DGAM's information on the status of the sites prior to the crisis and on their current situation and the damage affecting them through using images and videos shown on the internet, provided by the departments



A map shows Initials Damage Assessment in Syrian Archeological sites

of antiquities in the governorates or sent by members of the local community from the affected areas.

8. A team of experts from The Directorate of Information Technology and the Department of Archaeological Sites has completed a digital map of the affected cultural heritage



Interactive map for Damaged archaeological sites

in Syria using the geographic information system (GIS) in order to document the damage and violations befalling all of the archaeological sites and historical buildings during the crisis. This project also includes the identification of the damaged sites on the map as well as their categorization according to the governorates where they belong. It has added some tables that contain a brief introduction on the significance of the site in addition to the damage affecting it based on the information and photos made available to the DGAM. This evaluation and initial documentation of the damage will help in managing the archaeological heritage in the future and in setting priorities as regards its protection and restoration.

9. The DGAM has devised an interactive digital map of the archaeological sites inscribed on the National Heritage List, in addition to all historical buildings, museums and all DGAM's administrative buildings. The map, based on a systematic and organized scheme using Google Earth system, makes it possible to set up a digital geographic database (spatial and descriptive) containing information and coordinates of more than ten thousand archaeological sites, which are all registered as archaeological sites in an attempt to prepare

more accurate and detailed digital maps at the level of each governorate, where the archaeological sites are projected onto these maps using their real coordinates, and information regarding the sites is documented. These maps help in locating the archaeological site in relation to its surroundings. Moreover, the project has great significance in the field of research, publishing and decision-making.

10. The Directorate of Excavations at the DGAM has finished archiving 800 files, including all the documents on excavations in Homs, following a scientific methodology based on categorizing these operations into three types, namely seasonal, emergency and archaeological surveys. This has come as preparation for the completion of a full digital archive of all the files and documents of the directorate, that are associated with excavations at the Syrian archaeological sites, which will ensure their protection and easy accessibility without returning to the paper files in addition to carrying out accurate statistics of the excavated and surveyed archaeological sites according to historical periods.
11. The Directorate of Buildings has digitally archived all the decisions on the registration of the archaeological sites in Syria which contain around 950 laws and decisions, the oldest of which dates back to the twenties of the past century. It also includes scripts, maps and photographs belonging to all of the Syrian governorates.
12. After almost three years of hard work, the national team of the DGAM and the Ministry of Culture has completed a new draft law on the protection of the Syrian archaeological heritage which complies with the standards set out in

international conventions, keeps abreast of the development of global thinking in this domain and is compatible with Syria's uniqueness and diverse cultural and educational heritage. The draft law was discussed with the ministries concerned (namely the Local Administration, Tourism, Justice, Endowments) in the hope to be approved very soon.

The new draft law provides a higher level of legal protection for the sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and also provides the necessary ground to apply an institutional and administrative reform to the authorities in charge of safeguarding the heritage which will enable them to function in a better way. In addition, it ensures the active participation of local communities in protecting, managing and investing in heritage, and it enables Syria to make better use of the international conventions it ratified.

13. The preparation for this draft law has coincided with the preparation for another draft law on introducing a public body for the Syrian archaeological heritage with wider powers and additional tasks in order to be able to better protect and manage Syria's heritage.



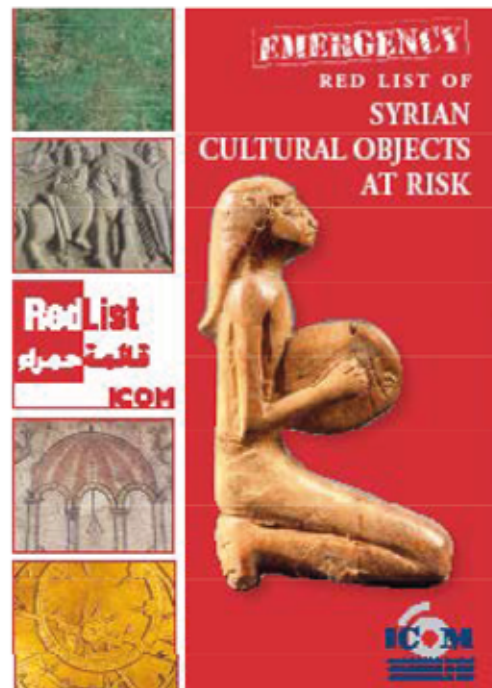
INTERNATIONALLY:

1. The DGAM is currently coordinating with the international INTERPOL and World Customs Organization sending reports on what is lost or found in neighboring countries or even published such as photos believed to be of Syrian archaeological finds which thieves of antiquities have got hold of by means of illegal excavation at remote sites.

As a result, cooperation with the INTERPOL, WCO and the Lebanese archaeological institution has been successful in fighting trafficking in Syrian antiquities. For example, 18 Syrian mosaic panels were confiscated at the Lebanese borders, and 73 Syrian artifacts smuggled to Lebanon to be sold by antique dealers were confiscated, as well.

2. The DGAM is cooperating with the international organizations in exchanging visions and information. The beginning of such cooperation was manifested by two e-learning courses organized by ICOMOS on «Protecting Cultural Heritage in Times of Conflict», followed by an international workshop held in Amman «to address the issue of illicit trafficking» which was initiated by UNESCO/Amman Office with the participation of representatives of archaeological authorities in the neighboring countries and international organizations that proposed a number of recommendations, one of which was completing the Emergency Red List on Syrian cultural objects.
3. On 3rd July 2013, the DGAM called upon international organizations, members and heads of foreign archaeological missions, archaeologists and world intellectuals to act at once and search for efficient mechanisms that ensure putting pressure on all parties participating in destroying, looting and smuggling Syria's antiquities to stop this lamentable loss. The DGAM also asked the UNESCO to put pressure on neighboring countries to reinforce their security measures, control the borders in face of antiquities smugglers to fight trafficking in our archaeological property and combat illegal excavation to avoid the same tragedy witnessed by other Syrian archaeological sites.
4. The archaeological authorities are still working on signing the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention and UNIDROIT Convention.

5. UNESCO placed the six World Heritage sites of the Syrian Arab Republic on the List of World Heritage in Danger at the 37th annual meeting of the World Heritage Committee, held between 16 - 24 June in Cambodia, to draw attention to the risks befalling these sites that enjoy outstanding universal value. This inscription of the sites was the result of communication between the DGAM and UNESCO as regards determining the process to address the imminent danger threatening



the Syrian cultural heritage. Consequently, Syria is committed to rebuilding and restoring these sites in the future in accordance with international standards. For its part, UNESCO urges financiers and experts to support Syrian archaeologists in carrying out their future tasks in safeguarding and protecting Syrian antiquities.

6. In cooperation with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) in Syria, UNESCO has published The Emergency Red List of Syrian Cultural Objects at Risk. Moreover, 33 archaeological artifacts, which belong to different sites and historical periods in Syria and shed light on the

types of the Syrian cultural heritage, are listed so as to assist police officers and customs in their work, as well as other professionals concerned with the protection of cultural property at the international level, seeing that it helps in identifying Syrian objects and in illustrating the categories of Syrian cultural items that are severely subjected to illicit trafficking.

7. With the participation of the heads of international organizations concerned with the protection of cultural heritage in the world and Mr Lakhdar Brahimi, envoy to Syria, a high-level meeting was held at the UNESCO's headquarters in Paris on Thursday, 29/ 08 /2013, to discuss ways to safeguard the Syrian archaeological heritage. The Director-General, Antiquities and Museums, gave a presentation supported by information, photos and maps documenting the extent and nature of the damage affecting the antiquities as well as the measures taken in order to avoid damage and protect the Syrian archaeological heritage. In addition, the presentation highlighted the vision adopted by the DGAM in dealing with the archaeological issue. Finally, they agreed on an action plan that was discussed the next day with a committee of experts. The action plan included running training courses in the field of coordinating activities aiming at safeguarding heritage in times of war; launching international campaigns to fight illicit trafficking in stolen cultural property and defending the Syrian antiquities in international forums in a way that ensures integration between international and national efforts exerted by the DGAM.



8. New York-based World Monuments Fund (WMF) included the City of Aleppo, Krak

des Chevaliers and the fortress of Qal'at al Mudique, within its Watch List released on October 8th, 2013, after the DGAM had nominated these three sites to be included in the list. This inclusion will help attract financiers of cultural heritage-related projects all over the world to support and fund projects to rehabilitate these sites and restore those subjected to damage during the crisis.

The WMF launched a campaign to collect 5000 signatures on a petition addressed to the DGAM in Ministry of Culture in support of the protection of antiquities to attract more world attention towards this cause. The campaign succeeded in collecting the target signatures in only two days after its launch. People who signed the petition are



Focal points meeting in Bahrain - Manama

mainly those interested in the Syrian antiquities and who are willing to do their best to prevent further damage and help in the rehabilitation efforts.

9. Experts from the DGAM participated in the 2nd regional meeting of relevant authorities in the Arab Countries in the field of international heritage held in Manama. They gave a presentation on the status of the Syrian archaeological heritage, inscribed on the World Heritage List and the sites registered on the Tentative List, and on the importance of the cooperation of the neighboring countries in putting an end to the smuggling of Syrian cultural objects and in helping the Syrian authorities return them. In addition, an action plan to be adopted by the Regional Centre in 2014 that would focus on preserving the cultural heritage in countries facing internal



- conflicts was discussed.
10. UNESCO has dedicated a webpage in English on its official website to discuss the situation of the Syrian antiquities and the status quo of the Syrian cultural heritage in addition to the national and local activities and measures taken to reduce the damage affecting the historical landmarks and archaeological sites in Syria. UNESCO's information and photos are based on the news posted on the DGAM's website. Moreover, this webpage provides information on the international efforts made to support the national endeavors by means of drawing the international community's attention to the dangers of trafficking in Syrian antiquities, mobilizing all energies with UNESCO's partners and other international organizations and urging Syria's neighboring countries to cooperate under the framework of 1970 Convention on the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property, particularly in the field of border control.

11. The DGAM is cooperating scientifically with most of the foreign archaeological missions working in Syria through the exchange of information, expertise and damage documentation.
12. Archaeologists from the Department of Antiquities of Old Damascus are cooperating with experts from UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS in the exchange of visions and ideas to develop a plan for the protection of Old Damascus following the escalating risks threatening its landmarks due to random mortar shelling affecting the city lately.

CONCLUSION:

Destroying invaluable human treasures and damaging significant and pivotal sites in the history of Syria mean damage to the spirit and identity of the nation and a crime by all measures affecting



Stolen artifacts returned from Lebanon

all Syrians and constituting a flagrant violation against which we should not remain silent since it warns against a probable perpetual loss of some components of the Syrian archaeological heritage. Thus, Syria's antiquities are in dire need today of the awareness and solidarity of all Syrians in order to protect them first and foremost, seeing that Syrian people are going to be the biggest losers if they give up on them. In addition, they are awaiting for some international action that supports the local efforts made to rescue a civilization worthy of life and respect, which has given a lot to the whole world.

Acknowledgements

Within the burden of this conflict, we appreciate the efforts and sacrifices made by all staff members of DGAM – Ministry of Culture, in order to safeguard the museums objects and defend the Syrian cultural heritage.

Moreover, we extend our appreciation to our state institutions, especially to the formations of the Syrian Arab Army, for their support and backup to DGAM in the transfer process of museum objects restored from the 000'6 to safe places, and archaeology hunters during the smuggling process. We also thank the local communities in all Syrian regions, who offered support to DGAM.

Finally, we thank those international institutions, which stood by us in the mission of defending our precious heritage.



Homs old city



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War and Destruction in the Old City of Aleppo

The site of Old Aleppo was registered as a World Heritage site in 1986. It measures 364 ha. This international recognition increased public and private awareness of its social, economic, and cultural importance. In the last three decades of the 20th century, the population within the historical districts decreased by about one third and was reduced to about 100,000 inhabitants.

Rehabilitation projects before the war

The Committee for the Protection of the Old City of Aleppo was commissioned to advise and suggest actions directed towards heritage preservation. An interim new building code designed to control and direct restoration and new construction was subsequently adopted. A new concept of urban management had to be introduced to cope with the current situation and a comprehensive overall strategy for the rehabilitation of the Old City was therefore prepared. The complex nature of urban rehabilitation, its interdisciplinary approach, and its extensive finances prompted the City of Aleppo to seek assistance. The German Government and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development were asked to participate.

Project objectives meant taking immediate steps to address the urgent needs of the Old City residents. These included: emergency home repair for lower income families, maintenance and rehabilitation of dilapidated public infrastructure. It was expected that public investments would encourage the residents to actively participate in the rehabilitation process. The project included several phases:

Phase 0 (1992–1994) Preparation and surveys: Charting the terrain

Detailed surveys were conducted to evaluate the existing conditions in the Old City and to identify priority intervention areas.

Phase I (1994–1997) Planning and pilot projects: Developing the rehabilitation instruments

General comprehensive planning was used to incorporate all aspects of urban management (land use, housing, traffic, infrastructure, social services, monument preservation, and public participation). The general plans were then elaborated on the local level in the action areas. Early programmes were initiated in the form of micro-credit loans to assist lower income families in the urgent restoration of their homes. Participatory measures were initiated in the action areas to identify needs, prioritise interventions and monitor results.

Phase II (1997–2000) Establishing institutions and procedures

The planning system was refined as a result of feedback from field implementation (infrastructure, social services, traffic, urban facades). Contact to other urban stakeholders enabled the elaboration of an urban economy outlook for the Old City. The micro-credit system was widened to incorporate complex house restoration and architectural preservation. The intensive and com-

prehensive work programme necessitated the establishment of a more permanent institutional structure: the Directorate of the Old City.

Phase III (2001–2004) Developing sustainable management and financing tools: second implementation and consolidation phase

New funding schemes were tested to encourage environmentally friendly enterprises. Housing programmes were elaborated to include funding from other donors. Infrastructure maintenance was programmed to ensure efficient management. Traffic was regulated with an eye to the general urban development of the city at large.

From the outset, the project took an integrative and complex planning approach. However, comprehensive planning was not limited to analysis and theoretical work; it also involved preliminary implementation. The comprehensive planning started as a ‘top-down’ process and implementation followed a ‘bottom-up’ approach. An impressive quantity of housing and infrastructure was already rehabilitated by the end of the 2000s. This urban rehabilitation project was one of the most successful in the Arab region.

The ‘Urban Historic Archive and Documentation Center for Aleppo’ (UHADCA) was established as a sub-section of the Old City Directorate (DOC) to be in charge of safeguarding and documenting historic and original records, as well as setting up a documentation centre for any data available on the urban and architectural history of Aleppo. With support from the former German Development Service (DED) and the association of the ‘Friends of the Old City of Aleppo’, the archive project was started in July 2008 as a cooperation project of the DOC and former GTZ (now GIZ) within the framework of the *Urban Development Programme (UDP)*. The UHADCA was established on the premises of the Shibani complex, a former Franciscan convent located in the heart of the Old City, and hosted several offices and facilities for social and cultural activities.

The archive did not only collect original physical data, but aimed at digitising and duplicating the collected documents. Therefore, one of the essential elements was the setting-up of a modern digital database, in collaboration with the Shoman Foundation, Amman. The larger amount of data between 2008–2011 was digital material, provided by different sources.

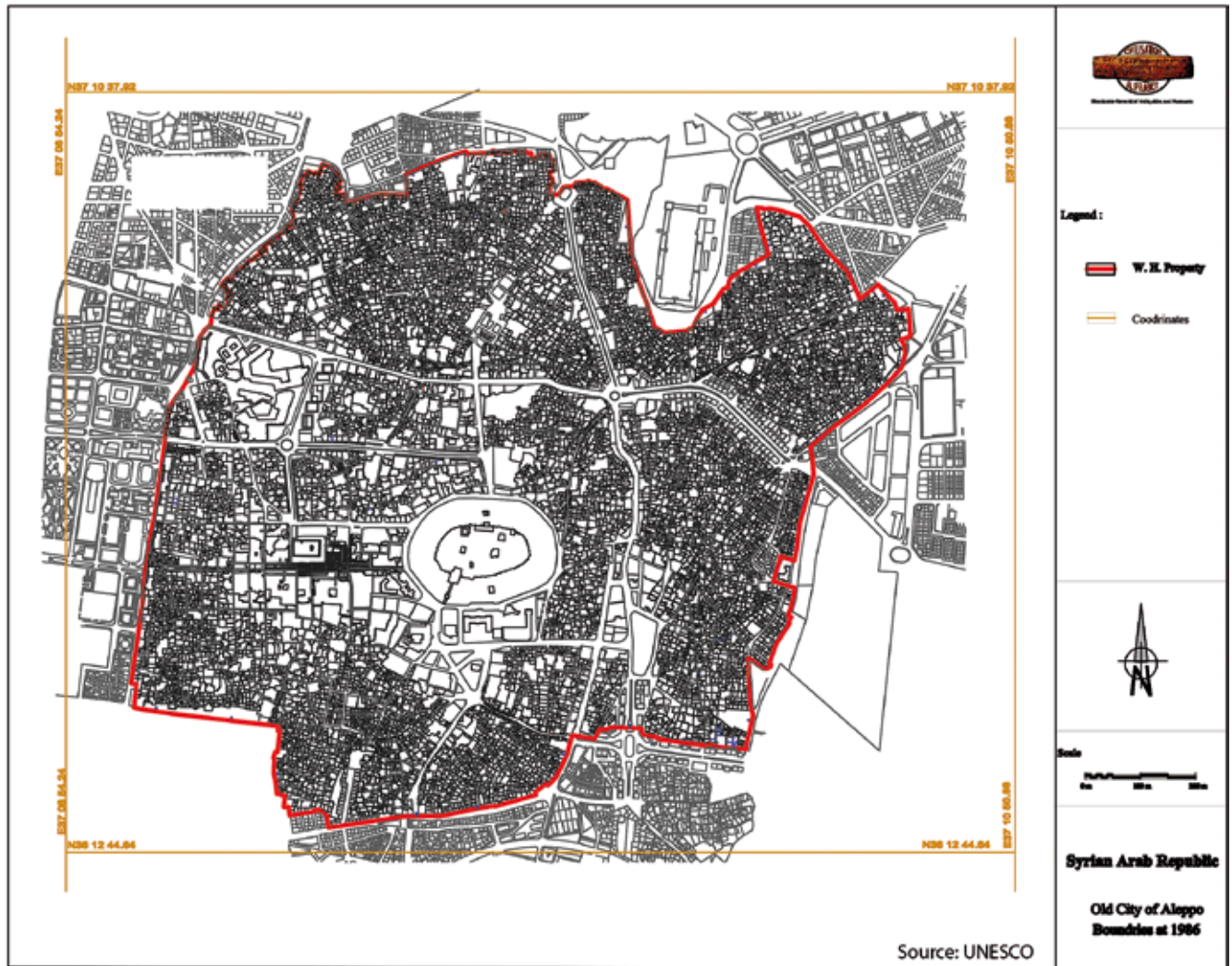
The UHADCA concentrated on the following data:

- Plans and historical photos of Aleppo of any age;
- Cadastral plans of the City of Aleppo;
- Master plans from the French period and afterwards;
- Architectural analysis and documentation.

Through the outbreak of the current conflict in 2011, the city’s UHADCA has been in extreme danger. Unfortunately, the hard copies of the collected documents are allegedly lost, which would make a comprehensive recovery of the archive’s documents impossible. Fortunately, digital copies of the whole inventory are still available.

Fighting inside the Old City

Armed rebellion started in Aleppo’s popular suburbs and in neighbouring rural areas in late 2011. A major rebel offensive was later launched towards the centre of the city in July 2012. Af-



Old Aleppo, map of the World Heritage site (© DGAM and UNESCO)

ter minor fluctuations, the situation seems stabilised now, with a government-held area to the West (about 1,000,000 persons) and an opposition-held area to the East (about 300,000 persons). The historic city has unfortunately become a stable front line between warring parties. Every possible kind of weapon has been used: small firearms, Molotov cocktails, improvised explosive devices (IED), rockets, mortar, “hellcannons”, artillery, classical bombs, barrel bombs, bunker busters bombs, booby-trapped cars, tunnels loaded with explosives, and so on. Even how some monuments were destroyed is not clear, the narratives being too different.

The Old City is terribly damaged and its residents have fled in great numbers. The famous vaulted souks were burned and looted from the beginning. The Omayyad Mosque has changed hands four times at least. The Museum of Arts and Popular Traditions has been looted. The citadel has always stayed in loyalist army hands, but it has constantly remained a major objective for rebel groups, for strategic as well as for symbolic reasons. It has often been shelled and its entrance tower still bears the marks of a heavy attack. One of its lateral towers collapsed in 2015 as well as a side wall in 2016. In 2014, several tunnel explosions destroyed most historic buildings located near the entrance of the citadel: al-Otrush Mosque, Madrasa Khusruiyeh, Madrasa Sultaniyeh, Khan al-Shouna, Hammam Yalbugha, as well as late Ottoman buildings like the former serail and the Carlton Ho-

tel (a former hospital). Craters indicate the location of the main explosions. The last one, right close to the entrance, dates back to 2015. All sorts of buildings have been damaged in the historic districts: mosques, churches, madrasas, khans, bimaristans, houses, etc.

According to the UNITAR aerial survey of 2014, 22 Aleppo monuments are totally destroyed, 48 severely damaged, 33 moderately damaged and 32 possibly damaged. These figures have certainly increased since. A DGAM report mentions 121 damaged buildings in February 2016.

A “free municipality” tried to save manuscripts, and protect mihrabs and minbars together with activists. The DGAM digitised 1,500 plans of historic monuments in February 2014. Representatives of the DGAM and of the Opposition Task Force met at UNESCO Headquarters in September 2014 to study how local frozen combat areas (“cultural protected zones”) promoted then by UN envoy Stefan de Mitsura, could be implemented in Aleppo. The Omayyad Mosque and the National Museum appeared as candidates. As this plan was not endorsed, most contents of the museum had to be evacuated to Damascus in 2015. The museum was shelled twice in 2016. UNESCO convened a meeting on Aleppo in June 2015 and several institutions in Germany were very active. At least two meetings were organised in 2016: one in Berlin and another one at Cottbus University.



Old Aleppo, the Omayyad Mosque and ancient city in the early 1960s (© DGAM)



Old Aleppo, the Omayyad Mosque in 2016 (© DGAM)



Old Aleppo, entrance to the Citadel in 1964 (photo S. Abdulac)



Old Aleppo, Beyt Ajikbash (Museum of Popular Traditions) before the civil war (© ASOR)



Old Aleppo, Beyt Ajikbash (Museum of Popular Traditions) in 2016 (© DGAM)

It appears that a complete assessment of remaining structures and infrastructures will be necessary of course, but the infrastructure network may have to be largely redone, particularly where tunnel explosions occurred. Some archaeological remains may be discovered. Not only reconstruction, restoration and rehabilitation are to be taken into account, but also a balanced revitalisation process should be set up, including housing, commerce and crafts, with the participation of stakeholders, taking into account the experience of other countries with post-trauma experience.

All collected surviving archives will be most precious. Post-trauma guidance and general guidelines may have to be provided by ICOMOS before possibly developing detailed planning proposals in the future. Urban speculation will have to be kept at bay and strong institutions and regulations will be needed to advocate concern for cultural heritage. Urban reconstruction strategies should also rely on a coordinated multidisciplinary approach, within a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and heritage policy and with the participation of the inhabitants. Different scenarios may have to be compared.

The actions of public and private stakeholders should particularly be coordinated. Positive dynamics should be triggered and encouraged. In any case, good knowledge of local communities and of previous local achievements or concerns is needed together with an adequate architectural documentation. Involved reconstruction processes may unfortunately still need decades of involvement and efforts.

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Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in
Syria and Iraq

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For the Safeguarding and Preservation of the Cultural Sites in Syria – Memorandum of the German National Committee of ICOMOS

Since the beginning of the civil war more than five years ago, the rich cultural heritage of Syria, including its six cultural sites on the World Heritage List of UNESCO, has been constantly threatened by destruction or has already been destroyed in parts. The great losses do not only affect the Syrian people, but all nations of the world, whose values are deliberately being attacked.

Implementing the Bonn Declaration on World Heritage

After its constitution was adopted on November 16, 1945 in London and based on the awareness that wars begin in the minds of men, UNESCO was commissioned to construct peace in the minds and in the moral solidarity of men. It is meant to help develop the democratic principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect of all men and prevent the propagation of prejudice and of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races. The education for justice, liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern.

With the aim to reinforce these goals the General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 27 years later in Paris. The idea was to preserve cultural or natural heritage of outstanding relevance as part of the World Heritage of all humankind and to keep alive, deepen and broaden knowledge about this.

With the Bonn Declaration on World Heritage the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO on June 29, 2015 unanimously condemned the destruction and looting of World Heritage sites as a tactic of war and recommended that the UN Security Council include heritage protection in the mandates of peacekeeping missions. Destructions as in Syria or in Iraq are ostracised as war crimes that should be prosecuted by every state. To this end, everything is to be done to combat the illegal trade of cultural properties.

Stopping the illegal trade of cultural properties

The cultural loss caused by looting of museums and archaeological excavation sites is immeasurable. Besides the trade of weap-

ons and drugs the illegal trade of cultural properties is one of the world's most profitable illegal markets. International terrorism is increasingly profiting from this trade of illegally exported cultural properties.

Strengthening international cooperation

There have always been close cultural ties between Europe and the Near East. Starting from Africa via the Near East the European continent was settled. Important impulses for the history of humankind, such as the transition to a production-based economy, the development of cuneiform writing, the formation of states, and the three book religions originate from there.

Cultural exchange is the driving force of continuous change; in accordance with that, understanding beyond borders is the first step towards an exchange and contributes to the continuity and development of culture worldwide. Cultural monuments are important milestones in the course of human history; in their diversity lies great potential for the future and they promote tolerance towards the other. Handing down monuments to future generations is a humanist *conditio sine qua non*.

In this context, World Heritage sites are proof that there is an understanding of a joint narrative of the history of humankind. The recognition of a site as World Heritage underlines the international community's appreciation of the achievements of a culture as contribution to a universal history.

The destruction of World Heritage sites is targeted at destabilisation. The related universal values of humankind cannot, however, be destroyed, if we are aware of them and remain to be so. Through international cooperation also in safeguarding, documentation, preservation, research and rebuilding we can save these sites for the future and invigorate the idea of international solidarity.

Expanding networks for the conservation of cultural heritage

In view of war, violence, destruction and death people in Syria, Iraq and other conflict areas of this world are facing existential challenges. For the safeguarding and conservation of the cultural heritage professional knowledge needs to be provided on an international scale; necessary communication and information as well as networks have to be strengthened; possibilities of working in these conflict regions have to be fathomed; priorities for work need to be defined in international consultation and training on site should be supported.

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