

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

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December 2017 Monthly Report

Michael D. Danti, Marina Gabriel, Susan Penacho, William Reynolds, Allison Cuneo, Kyra Kaercher, Darren Ashby, Gwendolyn Kristy, Jamie O'Connell, Nour Halabi

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

Key Points

Newly released photographs show the condition of the Raqqa Museum and its collection in Raqqa, Raqqa Governorate. [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0098 UPDATE](#)

DigitalGlobe satellite imagery reveals damage to exposed architecture at Mari, Tell Hariri, Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Syria. [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0224](#)

Newly released photographs show damage to the British Cemetery in Mosul, Ninawa Governorate. [ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 17-0083](#)

Newly released photographs show the condition of Hatra, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq. [ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 17-0085](#)

Newly released photographs show the stabilization of Qasr al-Birka in Benghazi, Cyrenaica, Libya. [ASOR CHI Incident Report LHI 17-0038 UPDATE](#)

Illegal excavation is occurring at the Western Necropolis in Cyrene, Shahat, Cyrenaica, Libya. [ASOR CHI Incident Report LHI 17-0045](#)

Report

Syria

During the reporting period, reported Russian airstrikes damaged two mosques, one in Aleppo Governorate and one in Idlib Governorate ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0226](#) and [ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0227](#), on pp. 49–50, 51–54). A reported SARG or Russian airstrike damaged a mosque in Aleppo Governorate ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0225](#), on pp. 47–48). SARG artillery reportedly damaged a mosque in the Rif Dimashq Governorate ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0232](#), on pp. 76–77).

In Daraa Governorate a group cleaned up debris and removed explosives at Bosra al-Sham ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0230](#), on pp. 67–71). During the reporting period, an improvised explosive device (IED) of unknown origin exploded in the village of Taldou in Homs Governorate, damaging the al-Kabir Mosque ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0233](#), on pp. 78–79). The extent of the damage is unknown. As clean-up progresses, and airstrikes decrease, more of these incidents are expected to occur. ASOR CHI is committed to monitoring such incidents.

Since the end of fighting in Raqqa, photographs and videos have been released showing the condition of various buildings and sites in the city and region ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0098 UPDATE](#), [SHI 17-0114 UPDATE](#), [SHI 17-0228](#), and [SHI 17-0231](#), on pp. 9–30, 31–35, 55–64, and 72–75). The Raqqa Museum was heavily damaged during the fighting, and the building is in disrepair. The interior of the building shows signs of vandalism and the collection has been ransacked and largely destroyed. The Authority of Tourism and Protection of Antiquities - Jazira Canton (ATPA) posted photographs of confiscated artifacts that were taken from the Museum, which are now being stored elsewhere. The ATPA also visited the site of Heraqla and published photographs of the DGAM's storage facility there. DigitalGlobe satellite imagery confirms the damage to the storehouses began prior to 2011 and, as of this past month, there has been limited rehabilitation. The warehouses were reportedly looted in 2013. ASOR CHI is committed to monitoring reports of looted and recovered objects in areas subject to illicit excavation and looted museum collections.

The main theater of action during the month of December was in Deir ez-Zor Governorate, against the remaining ISIS fighters. Reported SARG airstrikes damaged three mosques (

SHI 17-0235, on pp. 36–37, 38–40, 83–87). DigitalGlobe satellite imagery revealed damage to Mari and a mosque, both carried out by unknown perpetrators (ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0224 and ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 17-0229, on pp. 41–46, 65–66). With the main fighting in the city of Deir ez-Zor ceasing during the reporting period, newly released photographs showed

two people were arrested for trafficking antiquities, possibly from Cyrene ([ASOR CHI Incident Report LHI 17-0044](#), on pp. 145–146). The head of a Roman-era statue was recovered along with modern artworks. Cyrene became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982. ASOR CHI is committed to helping preserve and protect the site.