



Russian and SARG airstrikes continued in Rif Dimashq Governorate with a heavy concentration of aerial bombardment striking the Syrian opposition-held areas of Eastern Ghouta and Wadi Barada. The ongoing aerial bombardment in Wadi Barada disabled a major water source that supplies Damascus and surrounding areas. By the end of the reporting period, SARG forces had recaptured the Wadi Barada Valley, and hundreds of opposition fighters and their families were evacuated from the area. Damage was reported to four heritage sites in Rif Dimashq Governorate as a result of the ongoing aerial bombardment.

In Idlib Governorate, US-led Coalition airstrikes struck several sites affiliated with al-Qaeda linked opposition groups in the area. Syrian opposition forces, including Islamist groups, continue to clash in Idlib Governorate.

US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continued to advance towards the ISIL-stronghold of Raqqa, capturing the Jabar Citadel and advancing to the northern outskirts of the Tabqa Dam.

ISIL militants reportedly carried out three separate executions in Palmyra following the recapture of the area by the group in December 2016. The executions took place at the Roman Theater, previously the site of executions in 2015, outside the Palmyra Museum, and inside the recently abandoned Russian military base located inside the UNESCO world heritage site. Those killed by the group reportedly included Palmyrene citizens, SARG, and FSA fighters. New satellite imagery showed that intentional destruction, most probably by ISIL, had taken place at the Tetrapylon and the Roman Theater at Palmyra. ISIL militants previously destroyed several structures within the world heritage site, using footage of the destruction in propaganda videos.

Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), backed by US-led Coalition airstrikes, continued operations against ISIL in Mosul, capturing the city's east bank, including the ancient site of Nineveh, the shrine of the Prophet Nebi Yunus, and Mosul University. Reporting from the eastern bank showed extensive damage to Mosul University — some of the buildings were allegedly used by ISIL for weapons manufacturing and other military functions.

In the Nineveh Plains, Peshmerga forces recaptured the village of Tel Kaif from ISIL. Video reporting and photographs from the area show intentional destruction and the reuse of Christian heritage sites including churches, libraries, and a cemetery.

Reported Turkish artillery shells land near al-Iman Mosque in al-Bab, Aleppo Governorate.

ISIL carried out executions in the Palmyra Roman Theater and destroyed the facade in Palmyra, Homs Governorate.

Iraqi forces capture Nebi Yunus Mosque Complex in Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, exposing the extent of ISIL damage.

ISIL militants reuse Mart Shmone Church in Tel Kaif, Ninawa Governorate as a military base and training camp.

to the Tetrapylon and the Roman Theater, likely the result of destruction by ISIL; however, ASOR CHI has thus far been unable to verify the exact cause. Both sites were previously left unharmed by

This mosque was still under construction when ISIL took Mosul, and as such was treated as a large storage/factory space rather than a mosque.

On January 16, 2017 Iraqi forces recaptured the Nebi Yunus Mosque Complex ( in pp. 85–95). ISIL intentionally destroyed the site in July 2014. Nebi Yunus, a complex that was important to all Mosul, was intentionally destroyed by ISIL in July 2014. Reports also indicated that ISIL militants dug several tunnels under the site to search for artifacts.

In early January 2017, new satellite imagery and photographs became available detailing the extent of damage to Mosul University ( in pp. 151–176). Mosul University was previously looted and vandalized by ISIL after the group captured the city. Later, US-led Coalition airstrikes targeted several campus buildings under the suspicion that the buildings were being used by ISIL for military purposes, including housing ISIL militants and building weapons. Digital Globe imagery from January 13, 2017 shows damage to the Mosul University Central Library. ISIL militants “set fire to the main library, which contained many rare books, manuscripts, and maps.” There are multiple holes in the roof from airstrikes, as well as likely fire damage from the military activity. The University Gate leading towards the library was damaged, with the southern edge collapsed. The Main Hall of the university, also known as the student center, shows possible damage due to the nearby airstrikes at the Library. Many buildings have been damaged by explosives and fire, likely as a result of airstrikes and subsequent clashes in the area between Iraqi forces and ISIL militants.

During the operation to liberate Mosul, a cache of artifacts was uncovered by Iraqi forces inside the home of an ISIL commander ( in pp. 145–150). Iraqi National Security forces released photographs of clay pots, large vases, and a hand mill, among other smaller pieces. These pieces have been dated to the Neo-Assyrian Empire, and were likely dug up from sites near Mosul, and possibly from under Nebi Yunus as well. Also found inside the home along with the artifacts were documents recording each object and the anticipated sale price of each artifact. This documentation is more evidence of how the antiquities trade supports ISIL.

On January 19, 2017, the Iraqi Army recaptured Tel Kaif (Tel Keppe) and Fadhiliya north of Mosul. Tel Kaif is a predominantly Christian village that was taken by ISIL in August 2014. Churches in Tel Kaif contain Chaldean manuscripts dating back to the 16th century. The liberation by Iraqi forces has allowed journalists into the area who documented some of the damage to cultural heritage sites. Two churches, Mar Yousif and Mart Shmone, were intentionally damaged by ISIL, with Christian symbols being removed from walls and the buildings being repurposed ( and in pp. 99–113). Mart Shmone was converted into a mosque named al-Imam Malik Mosque. After liberation, crosses were re-erected over the top of both churches. The Sacred Heart Church, also in Tal Kaif was converted into a military headquarters that ISIL used to train new recruits, including children ( in pp. 131–144). The video footage and other

photographs released by various media outlets show bullet holes in the church walls, possibly a result of target practice, as well as clear intentional destruction to religious icons and what appears to be fire damage to the interior of the church and courtyard. The library attached to the Sacred Heart Church has been destroyed by fire, and burned books are present in some of the photographs. Lastly, photographs and video footage show damage to the main cemetery of Tel Kaif ( in pp. 96–98). Most of this damage seems to be due to military activity, with large craters from airstrikes apparent.