

Executive Summary

During the May 2017 reporting period, zones of military control in northern Syria and northern Iraq significantly shifted

Syria

During the reporting period, SARG and Russian aerial bombardment campaigns continued over opposition-held areas in Deir ez-Zor, Hama, Rif Dimashq, and Raqqqa Governorates. ASOR CHI documented destruction and damage to two mosques in Rif Dimashq (see [SHI 17-0082](#) and [SHI 17-0084](#) in Appendix pp. 35–36, 39–41), and one episode of damage to mosques in each of the other governorates (see [SHI 17-0083](#), [SHI 17-0091](#), and [SHI 17-0092](#) in Appendix pp. 37–38, 74–75). Local activist groups in Syria reported dozens of civilian casualties as a result of this aerial bombardment.

SARG forces continued to recapture territory from Syrian opposition forces. Following the May 20 final evacuation of opposition forces from the district of al-Waer, the Syrian regime now controls the entirety of Homs City.

ISIL continued to lose territory in former strongholds in Syria. The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) recaptured the strategic city of al-Tabqa. The territory recaptured in this operation included the Tabqa Dam. ISIL is believed to be redeploying its forces in Syria and Iraq to Syria's Deir ez-Zor Governorate where the organization controls large swathes of territory, including parts of the city of Deir ez-Zor.

As the SDF advanced toward the ISIL-held stronghold of Raqqqa, US-led Coalition airstrikes increased over neighboring towns and villages. From May 1–6, five mosques were damaged in and around Raqqqa (see [SHI 17-0077](#), [SHI 17-0078](#), [SHI 17-0079](#), [SHI 17-0080](#), and [SHI 17-0085](#) in Appendix pp. 18–29, 42–43). Most of these mosques were reportedly rendered inoperable. ASOR CHI is continuing to investigate these incidents in order to confirm levels of damage. Local activist groups in Syria have reported dozens of civilian casualties as a result of this aerial bombardment.

ASOR CHI documented three cleanup and reconstruction efforts at sites located in the Old City of Aleppo (see [SHI 17-0088](#), [SHI 17-0089](#), [SHI 17-0090](#), and [SHI 17-0093](#) in Appendix pp. 58–73, 76–79).

threats and the removal of significant cultural property from UNESCO-