

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

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Weekly Report 61–62 — September 30 - October 13, 2015

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Executive Summary

During the reporting period in Syria, reported cultural heritage incidents remained elevated due to the release of new data on archaeological looting from in-country sources as well as the release of new satellite imagery. Russian airstrikes on militarized archaeological sites held by Syrian Opposition and Islamist extremist groups have markedly elevated the risk of combat damage over a wide area of northern and western Syria.

The Jihadi-Salafi extremist group Daesh (ISIS, ISIL, IS) continued its campaign of performative deliberate destructions in Syria at the site of Palmyra, where the Arch of Triumph was destroyed with explosives, and in Iraq where Daesh deliberately destroyed/demolished the Abdullah ibn Mubarak Mosque and Shrine in Hit.

Key Points

- Satellite imagery shows ongoing looting at the site of Tell Bezzam near Hama, Syria (

Heritage Timeline

October 13, 2015

The Center for Art Law published an article titled, "The International Criminal Court Takes on Attacks on Cultural Heritage, But is it Enough?" (By Timur Tisuray). On September 26, 2015 Nigerian authorities surrendered Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi to the International Criminal Court. Al Mahdi is charged with war crimes linked to his alleged involvement in the destruction of historic and religious monuments in Mali in 2012. The trial underscores such acts of heritage and cultural destruction will not be tolerated by the international community.

<http://itsartlaw.com/2015/10/13/the-international-criminal-court-takes-on-attacks-on-cultural-heritage-but-is-it-enough/>

October 9, 2015

DGAM published an article entitled "Arch of Triumph Upon Destruction [by] ISIS." This article confirms the destruction with additional photographs and references to films that were released of the explosion. It further confirms that ISIL takes full responsibility regarding the destruction.

<http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1823>

published an article titled "Russian Airstrikes in Syria Could Be Palmyra's Only Chance to Survive." This article attempts to rally support behind Russian military action in Syria by asserting that Russia not only bombed ISIL headquarters 40 miles from Palmyra, but their air campaign could save the city from ISIL as well.

<http://sputniknews.com/middleeast/20151009/1028251339/russia-palmyra-isis-arch-heritage-syria.html>

The Global Heritage Fund announced their initiative "AMAL in Heritage," a non-profit response to emergency management of cultural heritage. The project aims to develop a mobile and web application that can be used to offer supplementary training and emergency management tools for cultural heritage professionals and communities in times of crisis, enabling them to undertake survey, salvage, and stabilization measures when international help and

released a video titled "2,000-Year-Old Arch ISIS Destroyed in Palmyra, Syria," which shows ISIL destroying the Arch of Triumph in Palmyra.

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/video-shows-2000-year-arch-isis-destroyed-palmyra/story?id=34338007>

published a blog titled "Back from the Future: ISIS and the Impact of the Present on the Past in the Present" (by Simon Oswald). <https://medium.com/eidolon/back-from-the-future-fdf55441ba64>

DestructbE produced an editorial entitled "Cultural
intdA

published an article titled "Syrian Director of Antiquities Welcomes Russian Bombing of Palmyra". The article states that DGAM Director, Maamoun Abdulkarim, supports Russia running air raids over Palmyra in order to combat ISIL. However, Russia strictly

published an article titled "ISIS guilty of 'cultural cleansing' across Syria and Iraq, Unesco chief Irina Bokova says" (by Alexander Sehmer). Bokova stresses that ISIL and other militant groups are guilty of "cultural cleansing" in the Middle East.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/unesco-chief-irina-bokova-accuses-islamist-groups-of-cultural-cleansing-isis-a6679761.html>

released an article entitled, "Bel est bien mort." This article is an obituary-esque account of the Temple Bel that was destroyed by ISIL.
<http://ifpo.hypotheses.org/7020>

October 4, 2015

published an article entitled "How Russia Bombed A UN Heritage Site in Syria" (by Ana Maria Luca and Myra Abdallah). Russian airstrikes hit the Dead Cities near the modern town of Kafranbel.
<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/565993-how-russia-bombed-a-un-heritage-site-in-syria>

October 3, 2015

published an article entitled "Timbuktu, ISIS and the Long Arm of Justice" (by Mark V. Vlasic). The article discusses the surrender

October 1, 2015

The Association of Art Museum Directors published a press release "AAMD Issues Protocols to Protect Works of Cultural Significance in Danger of Damage or Destruction" (contacts: Christine Anagnos and Elizabeth Chapman).

<https://www.aamd.org/for-the-media/press-release/aamd-issues-protocols-to-protect-works-of-cultural-significance-in>

published an article titled "The Sack of Palmyra: A Modern History of Destroying History." This collection of articles details the destruction of Syria's cultural heritage due to ongoing civil war and recent ISIL involvement. Several experts are featured, describing what has been lost thus far and the efforts that are being made to prevent future destruction and looting, with particular focus on Palmyra.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/the-sack-of-palmyra-a-modern-history-of-destroyinghistory/article26610572/>

published an online post titled "
" discussing the destruction of the Shrine and Mosque
Abdullah bin Mubarak in the town of Hit located near Anbar.
<http://hamrinnews.net/i/103474.html>

published an article titled "'They are barbarians':

On October 2, Russian warplanes struck the ISIL-held town of Qaryatain. ISIL forces first took control of the town in August 2015.⁵

On October 5, ISIL militants partially destroyed a set of second century AD triumphal arches in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra. Opposition activist Khaled Al-Homsi reported 40 air raids near Palmyra via his Twitter account. Al-Homsi is the nephew of the late Khaled al-Assad, the longtime director of the Palmyra site who was beheaded by ISIL militants in August. Al-Homsi was also the first to report on the ISIL destruction of the triumphal arch in Palmyra.⁶

On October 5, Russian airstrikes destroyed 20 ISIL tanks near Palmyra according to Syrian state television and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. However, Russia denied striking any targets in Palmyra due to concerns of civilian populations and historical sites. The Russian defense ministry released a video of its airstrikes in Homs, reportedly targeting an ISIL munitions depot.⁷

On October 5, the Palmyra branch of the Local Coordination Committees listed the damage, both human and structural, for the month of September as: "222 air raids, using rockets as well as naval mines, gas cylinders and barrel bombs, that killed 97 people and destroyed 239 houses and three ancient structures."⁸

On October 11, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that in the past 24 hours it had destroyed 10 ISIL positions, some within the governorate of Homs. The ministry stated that its targets were ISIL bunkers, a weapons depot, and an ISIL transportation convoy.⁹

However, on the same day U.S. officials reported that Russian airstrikes had struck two locations in Raqqa.²⁹

On October 2, activist groups on the ground in Raqqa reported a drone strike on an ISIL camp. No casualties were reported. Activists in Raqqa reported that ISIL had cancelled Friday prayers due to ongoing Russian airstrikes.³⁰

On October 8, the activist group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently recorded 22 airstrikes in the city of Raqqa.³¹

On October 9, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian announced via Twitter that the French military had carried out airstrikes overnight against ISIL targets in Raqqa.³²

On October 9, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that it had killed over 300 anti-Assad insurgents in “nearly 70 sorties” in the last 24 hours. According to the RIA news agency, 200 insurgents from the Islamist opposition group Liwa al-Haqq in Raqqa governorate were killed in the attack.³³

On October 13, the US-led coalition “struck two [ISIL] tactical units, a vehicle, and a building near the cities of Al Hawl and Raqqa”.³⁴

6.

On October 13, the US-led coalition conducted four strikes on two ISIL tactical units and destroyed six buildings, five fighting positions, a sniper position, two separate "command and control nodes."

militants continued as the Peshmerga attempted to retake an additional seven villages.⁸⁸

On October 2, clashes between ISIL militants and an armed group affiliated with the former Ba'ath party known as Jaish Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandiya occurred in the al-Abbasiya sub-district killing 28 people.⁸⁹

4. Salah ad Din:

On October 12, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and militias launched a major offensive to recapture Baiji. Iranian proxy militias were also involved in the offensive and alongside ISF, clashed with ISIL forces in Baiji. Ten coalition airstrikes also targeted ISIL near Baiji.⁹⁰

On October 13, the US-led coalition struck an ISIL tactical unit, one building, and a vehicle near Baiji.⁹¹

5. Al Basrah:

On October 2, demonstrations against financial corruption occurred in Al Basrah governorate.⁹²

On October 5, a car bomb exploded on a commercial street in the town of al-Zubair killing 10 people and wounding at least 25 others. ISIL militants claimed responsibility for the attack.⁹³

6. Diyala:

On October 5, a car bomb exploded on a commercial street in the Shiite-majority town of Khalis, near Rafidain Bank, killing at least 40 people and wounding 50 others. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.⁹⁴

7. Dohuk:

Between October 4-5, Turkish jets conducted airstrikes against PKK forces in the Hafatin and Matina areas as well as in parts

On October 13, the US-led coalition struck an ISIL tactical unit, destroyed a tactical vehicle, a heavy machine gun, and two fighting positions near Sinjar district. Another strike also neutralized two ISIL heavy machine gun positions near Mosul and Tal Afar.⁹⁷

9. As Sulaymaniya:

On October 8, fights broke out between protesters and riot police in Qala Diza in northern Sulaymaniya. The protesters, who had gone on strike, were made up of teachers, hospital workers, and other employees of the public sector whose salaries have not been paid by the KRG for the past three months. On October 9, the protests turned violent as demonstrators clashed with police. The fighting left two protesters dead and 18 wounded.⁹⁸

On October 11, protestors in Sayid Sadiq in eastern Sulaymaniya clashed with security forces, wounding an unconfirmed number of protestors and Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) supporters. Protesters also attacked the KDP headquarters in Sulaymaniya, as well as other KDP buildings in Kalar, Sharzur, Zarayin, Qala Diza, and Halabja. The KDP reported that in Sulaymaniya, two KDP members were killed and nine others injured in the attack on the KDP headquarters. Journalists and media outlets in these areas have also become targets for attacks by protesters and other unknown gangs.⁹⁹

10. Erbil:

On October 12, the Goran Movement, a political party in Kurdistan, said that its parliamentarians, including its parliament speaker, had been blocked by the KDP from entering Erbil at a military checkpoint.¹⁰⁰

Other Key Points:

On October 2, demonstrations against financial corruption occurred in Babil, Baghdad, Al Basrah, Dhi Qar, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Al Qadisiya, and Wasit. Additional demonstrations occurred in Diwaniya against "the appointment of a new Fadhila governor."¹⁰¹

Between October 8–9, unpaid teachers protested in the towns of Kalar, Karmiyan, and Sulaymaniya city, as well as in the cities of Koya and Halabja.¹⁰²

The most significant political and military events during the reporting period in Turkey were:

On October 2, Turkey continued its attacks on PKK fighters. Turkish forces killed over 10 militants in the town of Silvan, in Diyarbakir governorate, and arrested 40 PKK members in Istanbul.¹⁰³

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0135

Report Date: October 13, 2015

Site Name: Tell Bezzam

Date of Incident: Unknown

Location: Hanan, Hama Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Tell Bezzam is one of four tells located on a plateau around Tell Souran, along a riverside, east of the eastern rampart of Nasriyah.¹⁰⁸

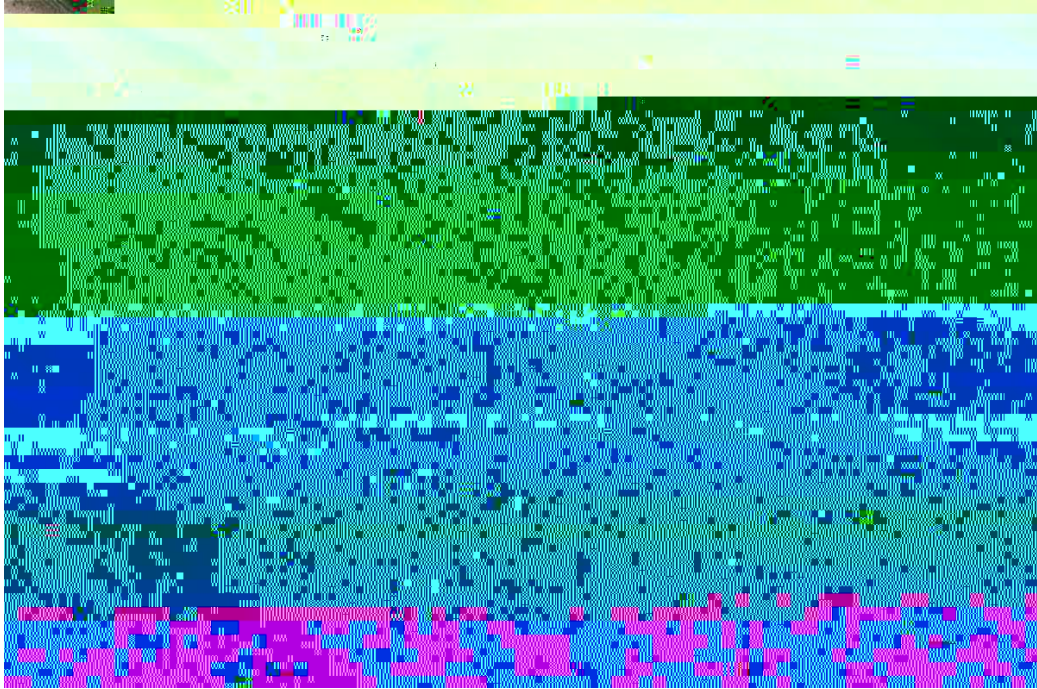
Site Date: Possibly 2nd millennium BCE based on the dating of surrounding sites.¹⁰⁹

SHI 15-0136

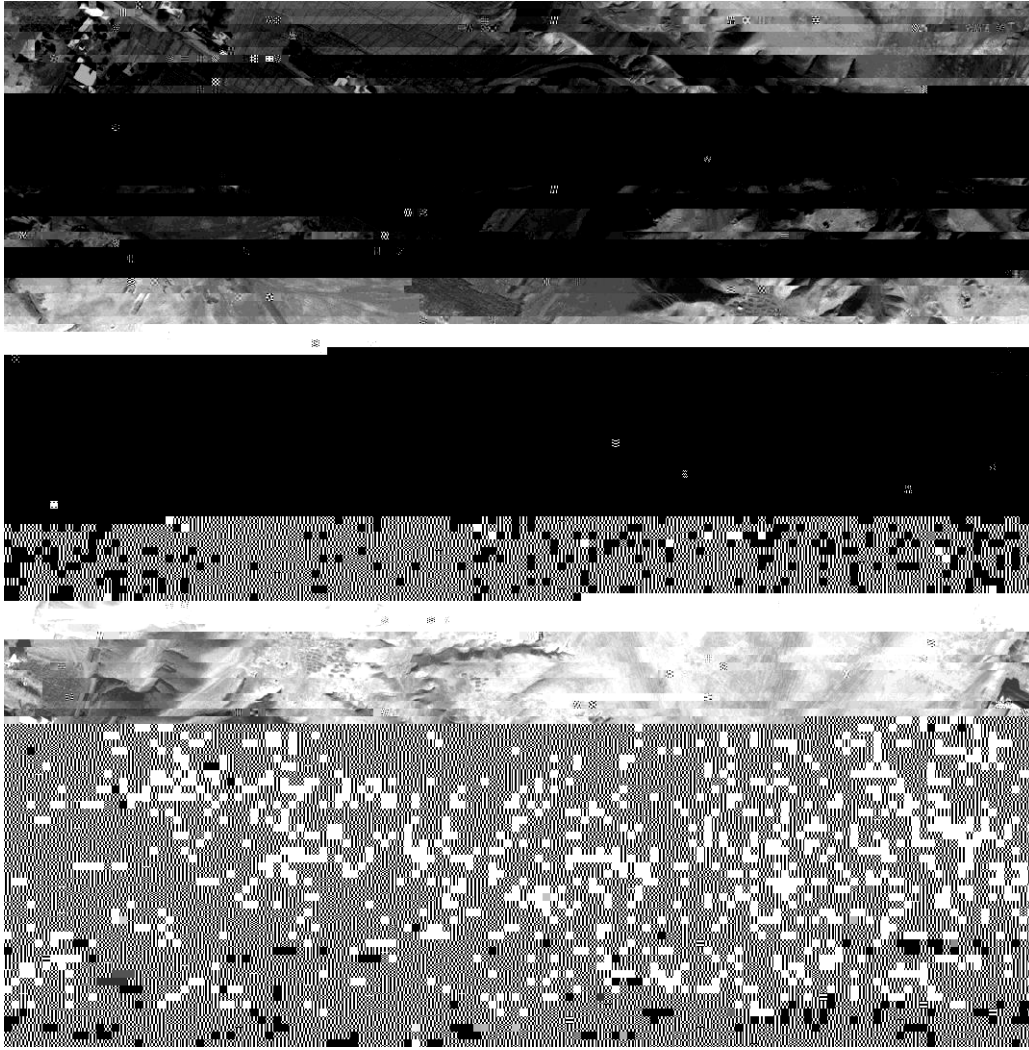
possibly outside the site boundaries. There was a

Tell al-Kasra, evidence of illicit excavation (DGAM; September 29, 2015)

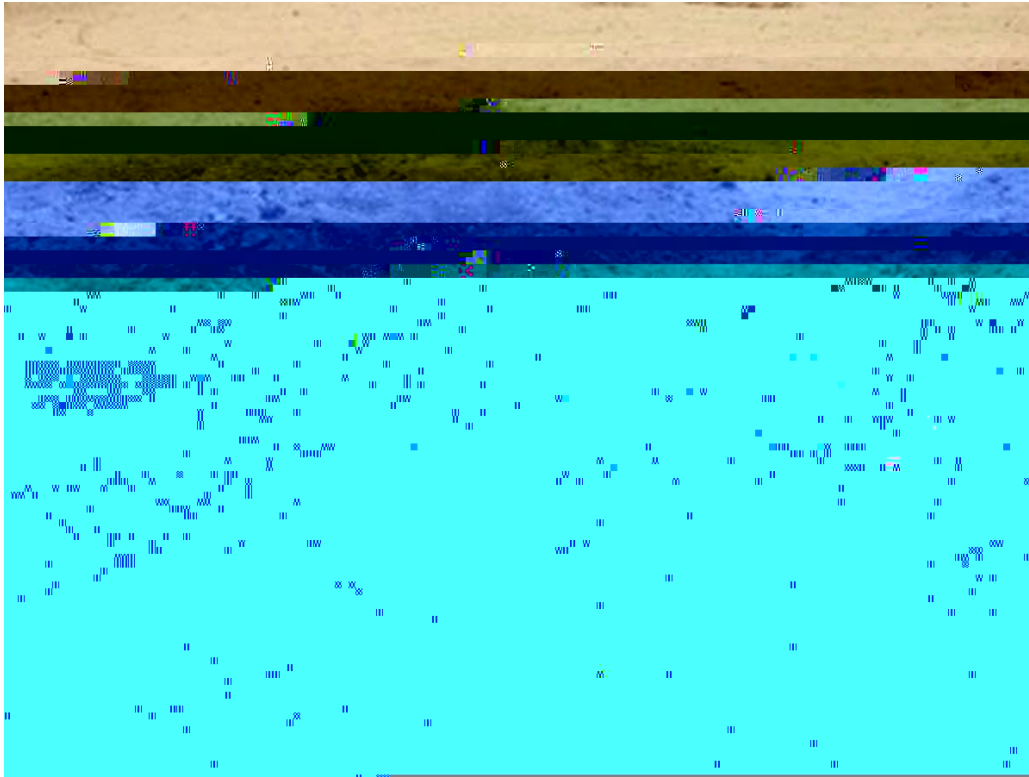
Tell al-Kasra, evidence of illicit excavation (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



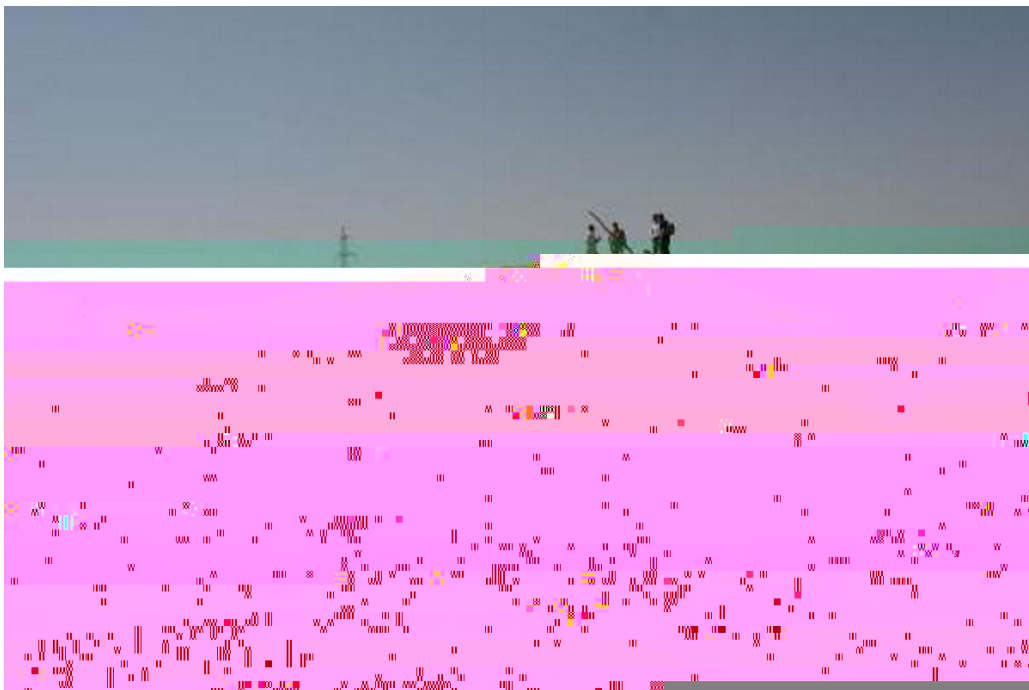
Tell al-Kasra, evidence of illicit excavation (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



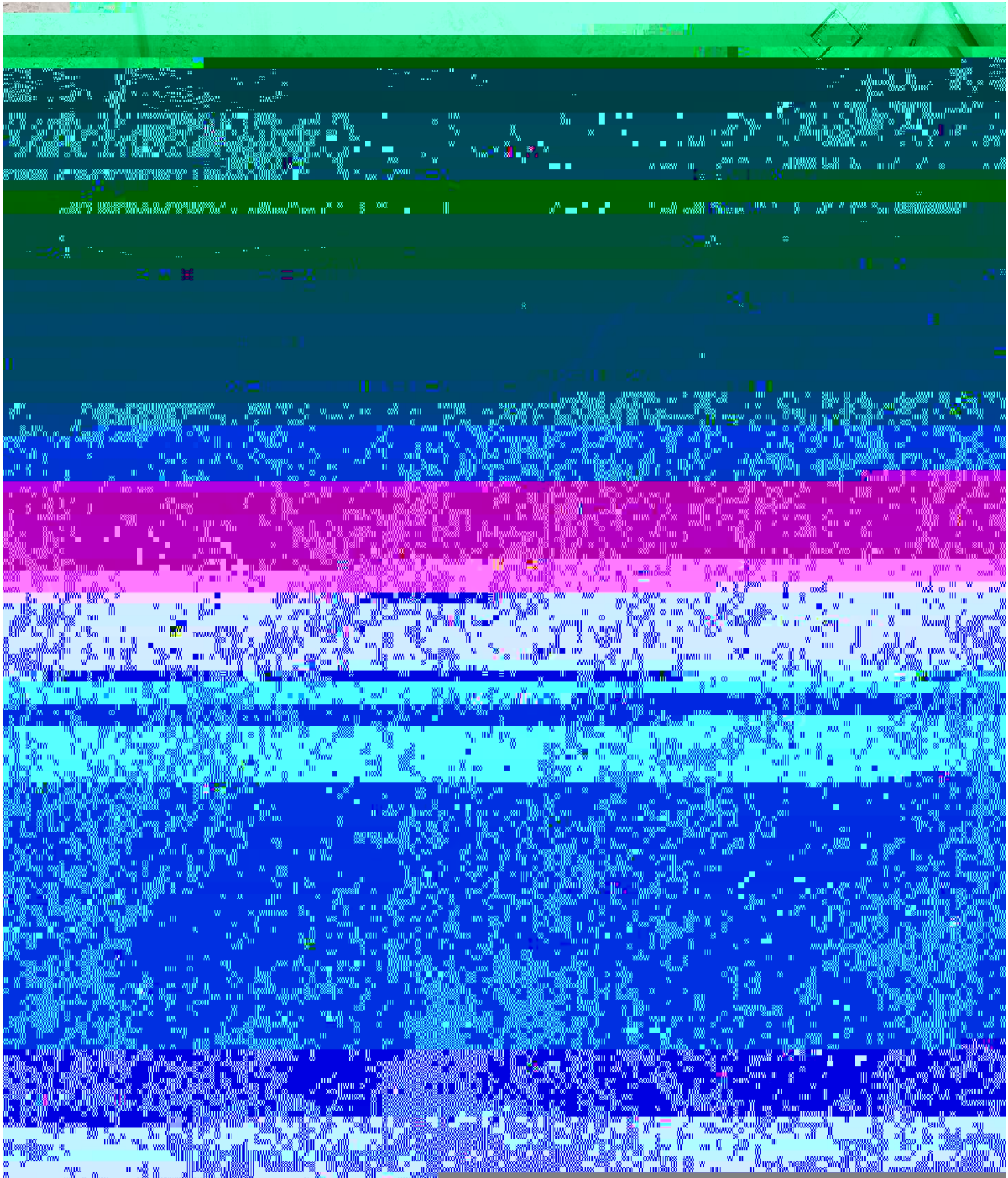
Tell al-Kasra, most recent satellite imagery (DigitalGlobe; November 7, 2011)



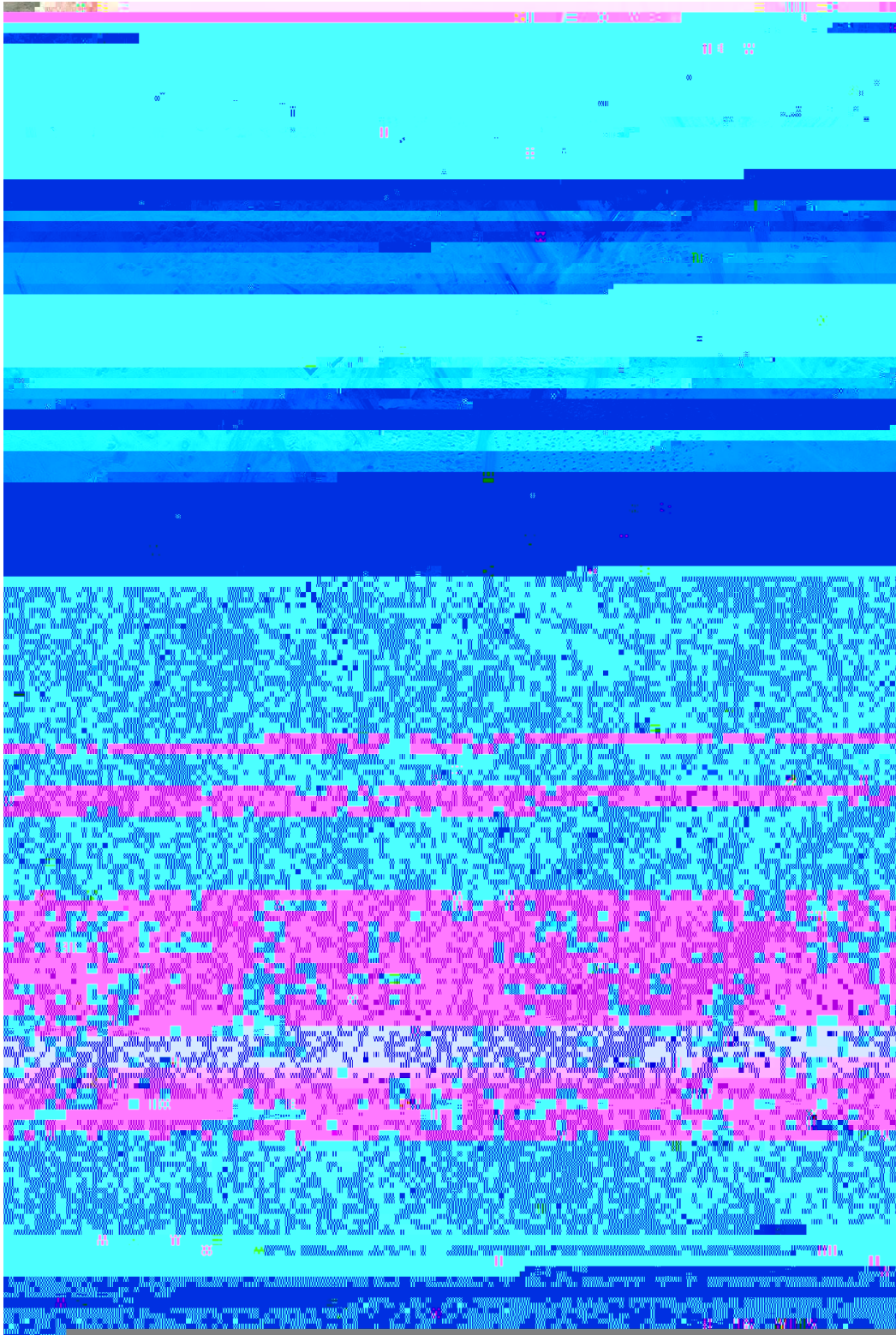
Tall as-Sin, excavation pits from heavy equipment (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



Tall as-Sin, roads from heavy equipment traffic (DGAM; September 29, 2015)



Tall as-Sin in the upper right corner with excavation pits visible (DigitalGlobe; September 16, 2015)

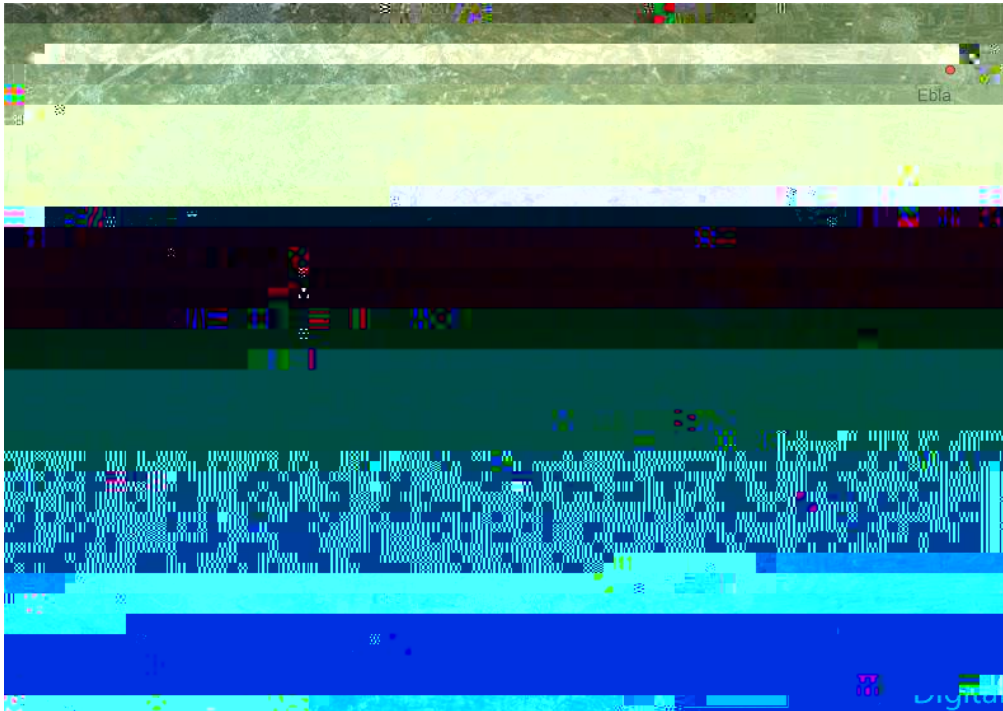


Tall as-Sin in the upper right corner with visible excavation pits (DigitalGlobe; November 11, 2014)

SHI 15-0137

Report Date: October 10, 2015

Site Name:



Location of three Idlib heritage sites allegedly hit by Russian airstrikes (DigitalGlobe; October 10, 2015)



Shinshara, damage on the western side of site (DGAM; October 7, 2015)

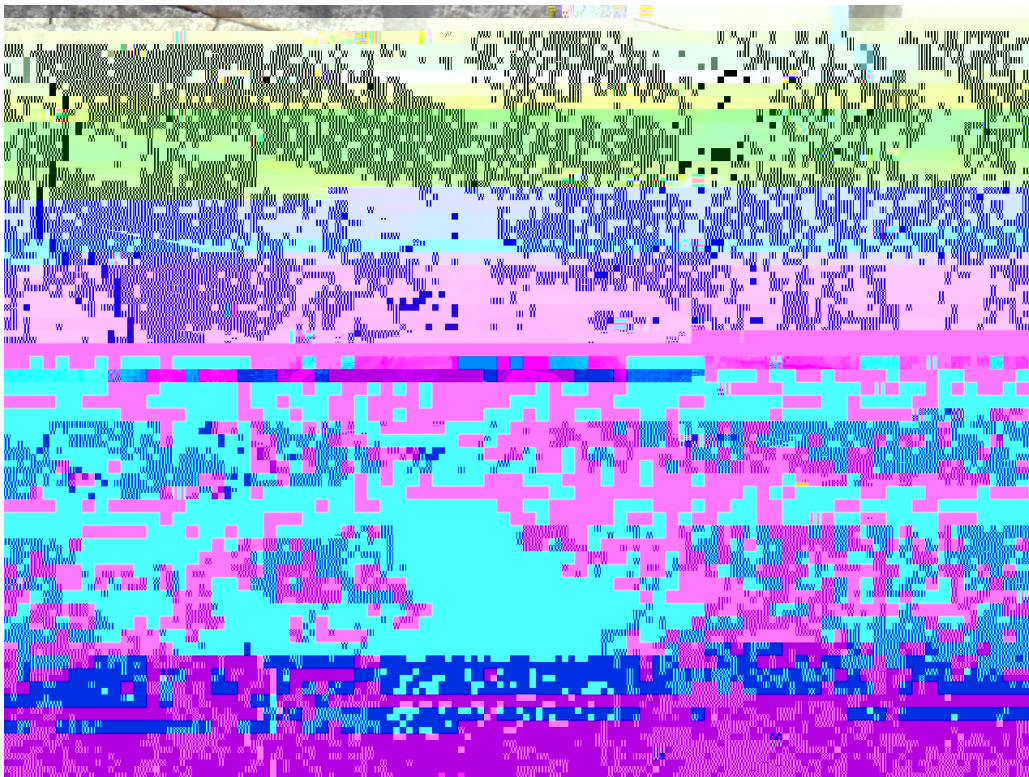
Damage from Regime Bombardment in 2013

Damage caused by previous attacks by Syrian regime bombing in 2013.

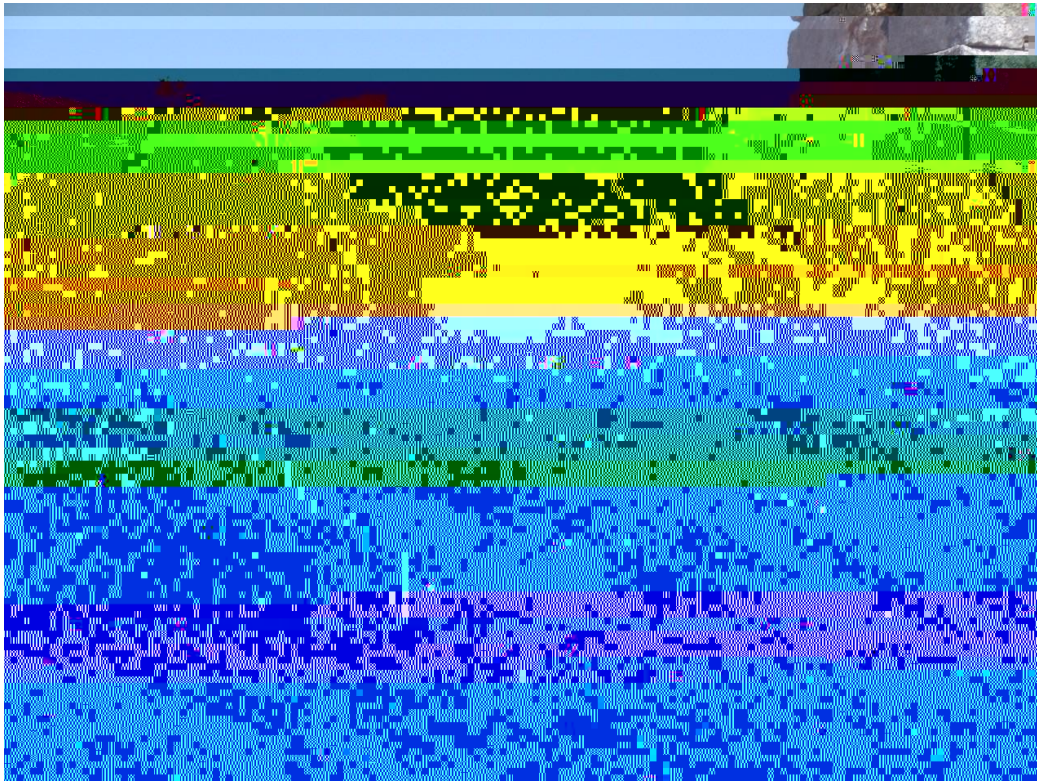
Photos showing the extent of damage to archaeological buildings from



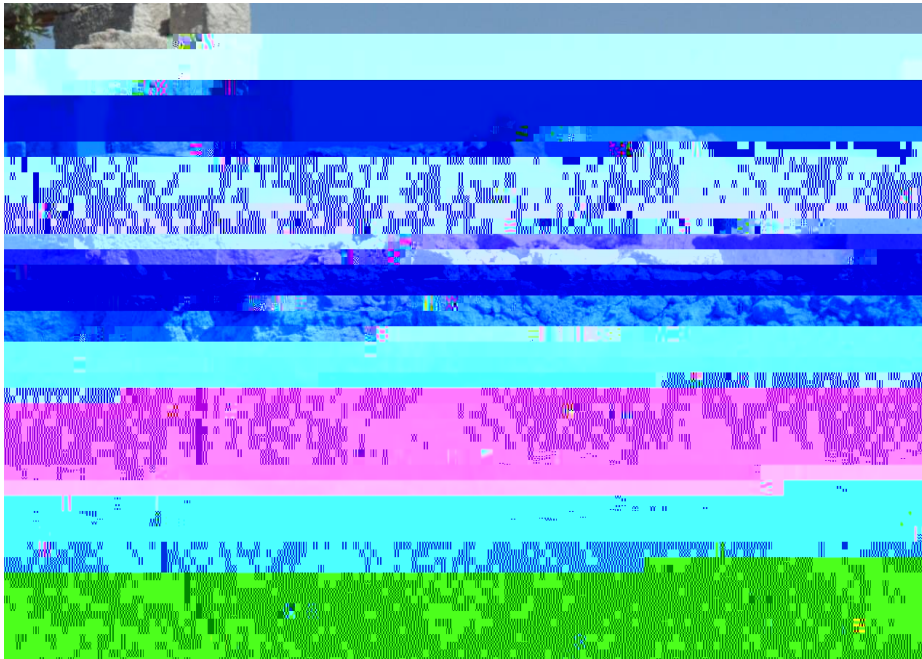
Severe damage to the walls.



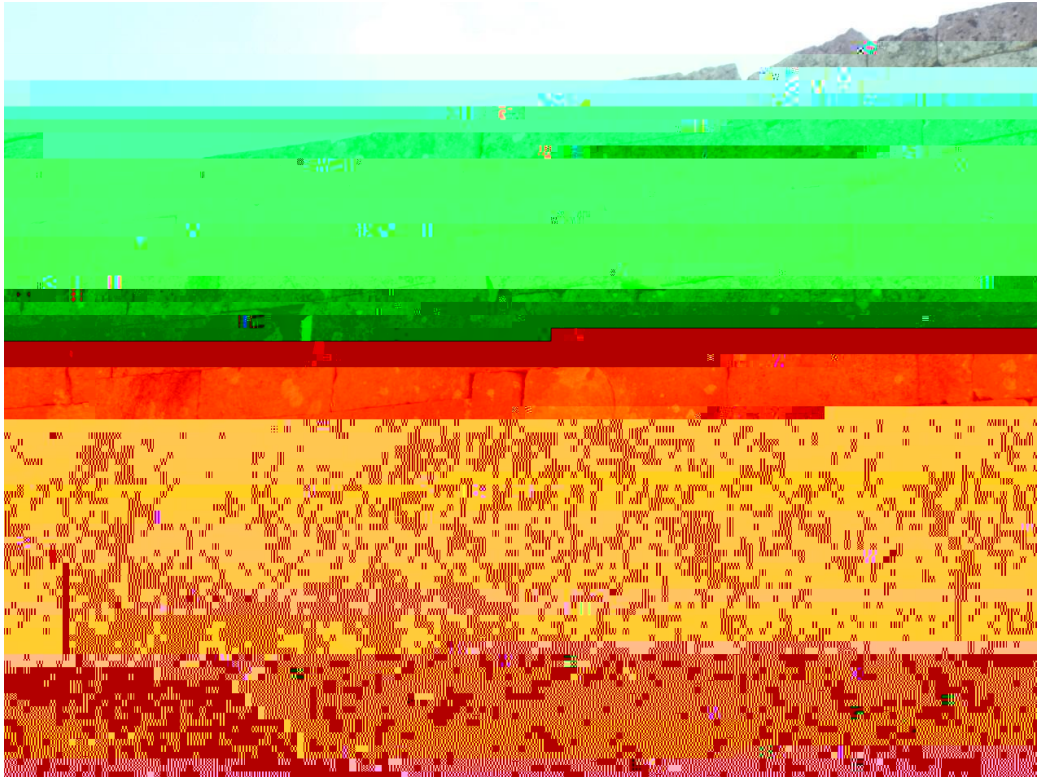
Severe damage to the walls and the need for emergency intervention and consolidation work.



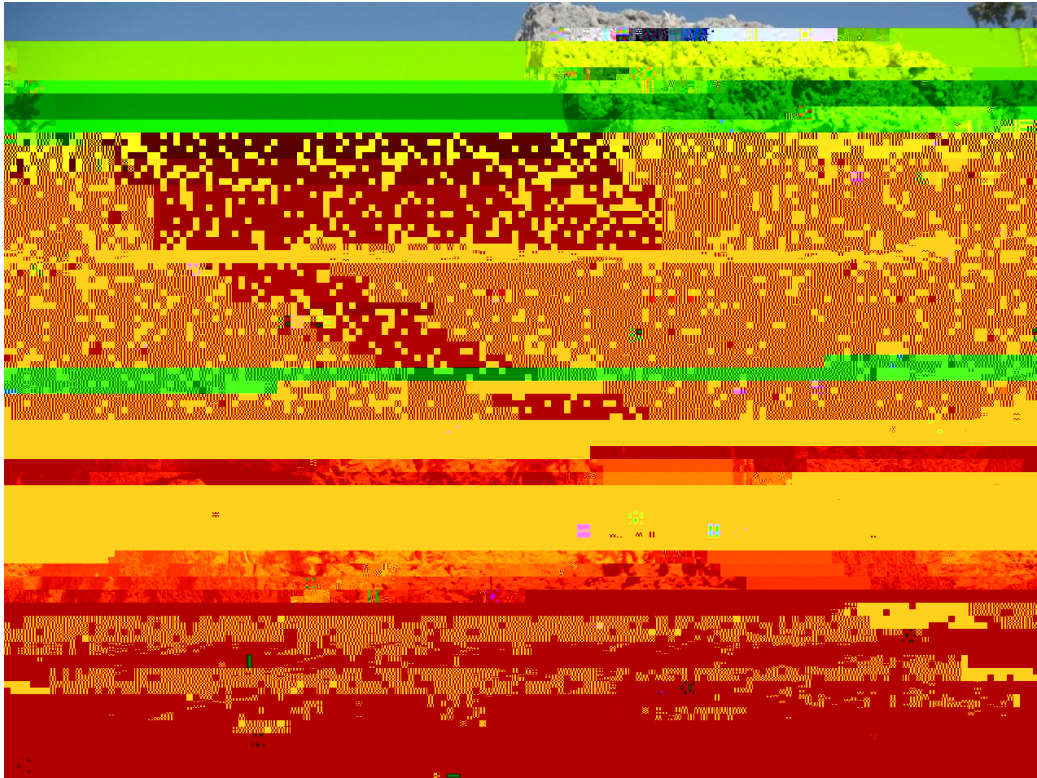
Collapse of an entire archaeological building.



Collapse of an entire archaeological building.



Severe damage to a wall caused by airstrikes.



Severe damage to a wall caused by airstrikes.



Severe and extensive damage to the archaeological park.



Severe and extensive damage to the archaeological park.

SHI 15-0138

Report Date: October 6, 2015

Site Name: Arch of Triumph, UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra

Date of Incident: October 4, 2015

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

Site Description: The Arch of Triumph, built by Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (145–211 CE, Emperor from 193–211 CE), included three entrances, two 30 degree rotated gates and topped by an arch with geometrical and plant ornamentation. The decoration is rich, in the Syrian style, with

DGAM (October 5, 2015): <http://dgam.gov.sy/index.php?p=314&id=1817>

APSA (October 8, 2015) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhX1Rw2rIbs&feature=youtu.be>

APSA (October 5, 2015):

<https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/photos/ms.c.eJwzNDGzMDQyABKm5uam5oZ6hIABS2MjExMjY3O4gDIhRFcwAKiwglA1mQNzw~-.bps.a.1468628663244240.1073741914.324869057620212/1468628693244237/?type=3&theater>

BBC: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34440759>

Aljazeera America: <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/10/5/isis-destroys-ancient-arch-in-palmyra.html>

New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/world/middleeast/isis-syria-arch-triumph-palmyra.html>

The Los Angeles Times: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-getty-19th-century-prints-palmyra-20151001->



Arch of Triumph, video still of damage (DGAM; October 9, 2015)



Arch of Triumph, video still of damage (DGAM; October 9, 2015)



Arch of Triumph, video still of damage (DGAM; October 9, 2015)



Arch of Triumph, video still of damage (DGAM; October 9, 2015)

Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 15-0096

Report Date: September 30, 2015

Site Name: Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque

Date of Incident: September 28, 2015

Location: Hit in the Western District of Al Anbar, Al Anbar Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: The Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque was constructed over the grave of Abdullah ibn Mubarak, who was a Sunni Muslim and was buried during Ramadan in 797

Site Date: Modern

Incident Summary: The Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque was intentionally destroyed by ISIL supporters.

Incident Source and Description: On September 28, 2015 news outlets distributed photographs from ISIL militant social media accounts depicting the destruction of the Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque in Hit near the city of Al Anbar.

Pattern: Intentional performance of destruction

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to find further information of these reports via in-country sources and is continuing to monitor the condition of the Abdullah ibn Mubarak Shrine and Mosque

Sources:

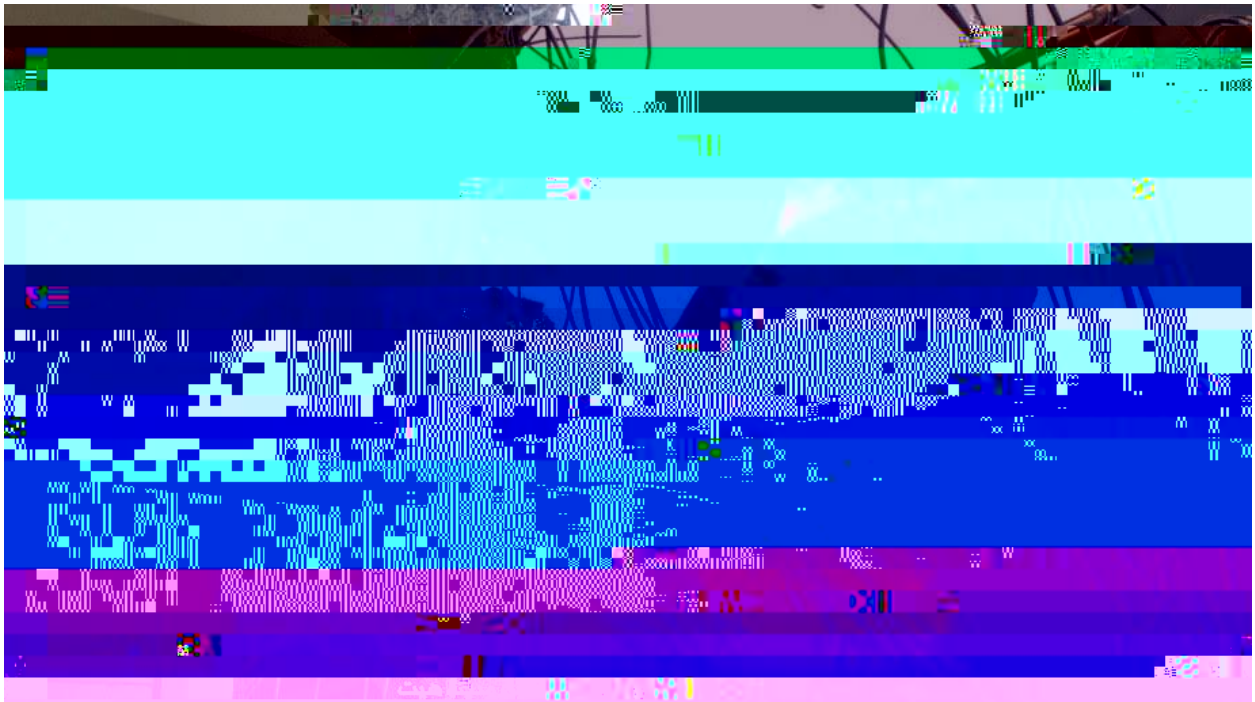
Online Reporting

BAS News:

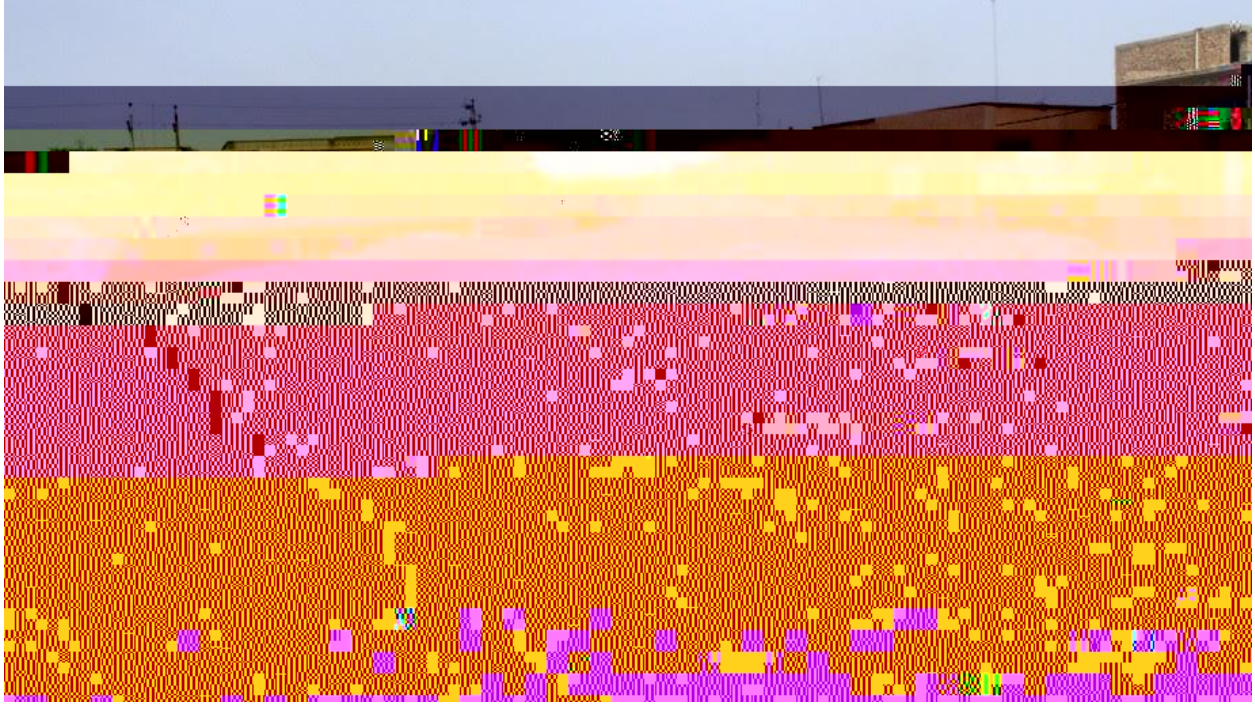
<http://www.basnews.com/ar/news/2015/09/28/> - - - - - /9/28/2015 Tar-SA



Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque after destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)



Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque during destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)



Abdullah ibn Mubarak shrine and mosque during destruction (BAS News; September 28, 2015)