



Damage to Syria's Heritage

04 April 2014

This newsletter provides a summary of the most recent reports on the damage to Syria's heritage. It should be stressed that much of this data cannot be verified, but it is hoped that it will assist in the documentation of the damage occurring, and help raise awareness.

Updates on Damage



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Acknowledgement to Syrian guard who died trying to protect the World Heritage site of Bosra

- Although not recent, this has only recently come to our attention, and should be acknowledged.

"In Syria, Yahya Ibrahim guarded Bosra's ancient ruins, one of the world's best-preserved Roman amphitheaters. In January, armed militants broke into his office and demanded he not go to work. They shot and killed him when he refused.

"He went to work and insisted to do his duty regardless of any political situation and in spite of their threats," said the Director-General of Antiquities and Museums.

The full article, *How to Save Mummies From the Egyptian Revolution*, is published by Vice News, and available [here](#).



(Photo: Crac des Chaveliers after the fighting. Copyright: [BBC](#))

New reports available of the damage sustained to the World Heritage Castle Crac des Chevaliers

- The Minister of Culture, the Government of Homs and the Department of Antiquities have been and inspected the castle. A joint team from Damascus and Homs will start considering plans for restoration next month, to begin in the summer, intending to make it even nicer than before so it can receive visitors again next summer. The Governor of Homs stated that the restoration and rehabilitation will also include the area surrounding the castle. "A team of Syrian archeologists will visit the citadel next month to evaluate damages and draw plans to start works of restoration according to international standards" the Minister said during a tour in

infrastructure for works of restoration.

Details of the visit are available in an article by Baladna Online [here](#), and an article by SANA, available [here](#).

- According to the DGAM, Damage was recorded in the following locations:
Extensive damage to the stairs in front of the interior halls; partial damage to the Knight's Hall; there has been a fire behind the church; there has been damage in the hall of the library by the Commander's Tower, and part of the staircase which leads to the roof of the library auditorium; Damage to the front of the Tower of the King's Daughter (? - my translation is uncertain); partial destruction of the wall between the tower of the King's Daughter and the church roof; the entrance to the stairs in front of another Tower, which has also been exposed to further damage; damage to one of the walls of the warehouse next to the main offices of the castle overlooking the square; part of the structure supporting the roof of the Library Tower and Knight's tower has been demolished; the Ottoman offices and the department offices have been severely damaged; some of the stones in the walls have been damaged in several places; there has been minor damage to the outside of the castle.
This report is available on the DGAM website [here](#), in Arabic, with accompanying pictures.
They have posted additional pictures [here](#).
- A large set of photos of the damage have been provided by the Association to Protect Syrian Archaeology. They can be seen on their Facebook page [here](#) (No account should be necessary to view the images). There are also some clear 'Before' and 'After' pictures which give a good indication of the scale of the damage on the Burgerbe blog, available [here](#).
- Alisar Iram has collated most of the available pictures on her blog, available [here](#).



(Photo: Palmyra 2005. Copyright: [Eustache Diemert / karo. Wikimedia Commons](#))

Locals try to protect Palmyra World Heritage Site

- The previous newsletter provided a link to a detailed AFP interview with residents and a member of the Antiquities department from Palmyra, which provided extensive details of damage, available [here](#).
AFP also aired a news video of the report, *War, the latest visitor to Syria's fabled Palmyra*, which can be viewed [here](#).
- A reporter who recently visited Palmyra also published details of the damage to the site.
"This observer took notes as he was shown the hole in the southern wall of the Temple (1x2m approx.) as well as another in the eastern wall of the wood warehouse adjacent to the guesthouse, to its southern side (1.5x1.5m approx.). In addition, several columns of the southern portico of the Temple were hit, and two of them collapsed. The southern wall of the Temple was hit by hundreds of bullets and many shells in several places; the western wall was hit on the inside and outside; the northern wall was struck by two limited hits and the eastern wall of the Temple endured two large holes.

The column in the northeastern corner of the portico of the fence of the Temple was hit and one can see traces of burning the lintel of the eastern portico of the Temple. More burning was done to the northern wall and eastern wall as well as to the southern window of the Temple. Also shown by a guide from the Palmyra Museum and allowed to photograph, were the damaged and illegal excavations in the SE and SW tombs area, damage and illegal excavations of the Camp of Diocletian, damage to the walls of the Palmyra Museum, and antiquities thefts in the Oasis, Theater and Guest house. The latter was occupied by Daish and/or Jablat al Nusra for ten

wiring. Several forty foot high columns adjacent the Guest House were also targeted in the summer of 2013 and parts of them were knocked off their foundations. Many shell cuts and bullet scars cover large areas of the ancient ruins."

Details of the looting at the site, also covered in the article, are available in the Looting section. The full article by Lamb, *Palmyrenes: Risking their lives to preserve our Global Cultural Heritage*, is available [here](#).

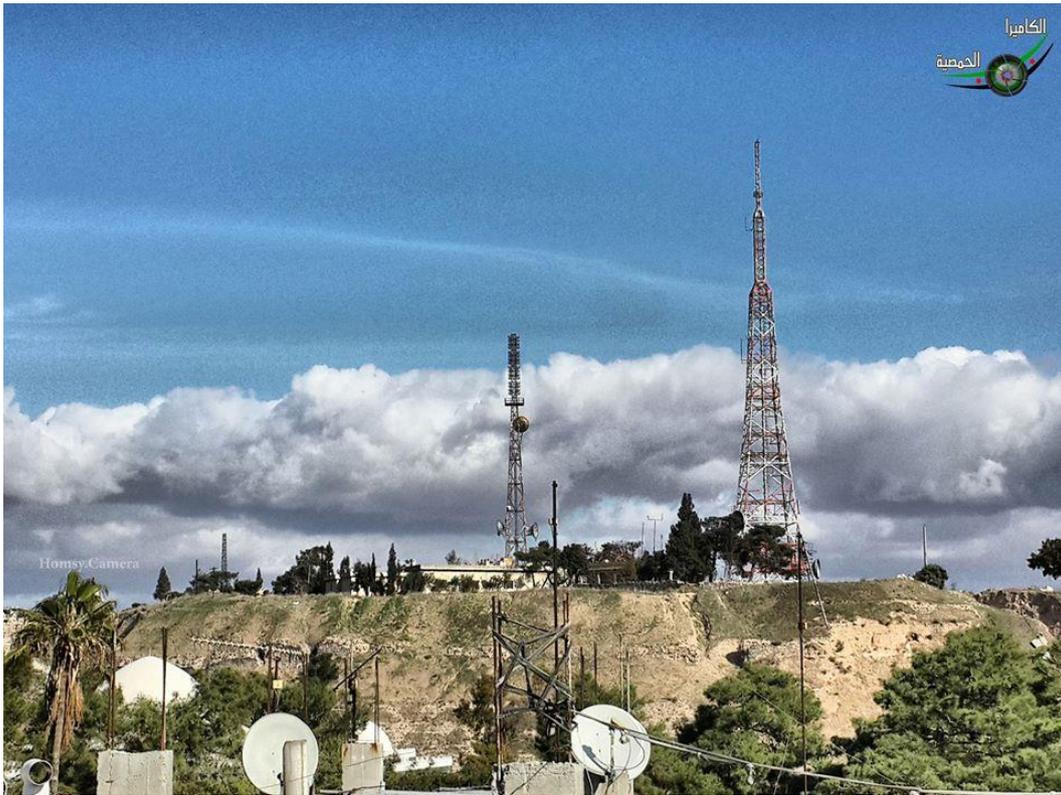
- Sham News Network compiled a news report, shared by the Association to Protect Syrian Archaeology, of damage to a column architrave and the walls of the Temple of Bel, caused by shelling. The video can be seen [here](#).



(Photo of the souq (market) in Deir ez Zor. Photo copyright: [DGAM](#))

Photos published of the damage to the Souq in Deir ez-Zor

- The DGAM have released a series of photographs of the damage sustained to the historic souq (market) in Deir ez-Zor. The souq, which has an Ottoman gate, is part of the registered heritage of Syria
To read the full article, in Arabic, click [here](#).



(Photo of the castle, 24 January 2014. Photo copyright: [Homsy Camera](#))

Reports of further damage to the castle in Homs

- According to the Facebook group, the Syrian Revolution 2011, there has been renewed shelling of the castle in Homs. The comment was made on the 30 March on their page, available [here](#).

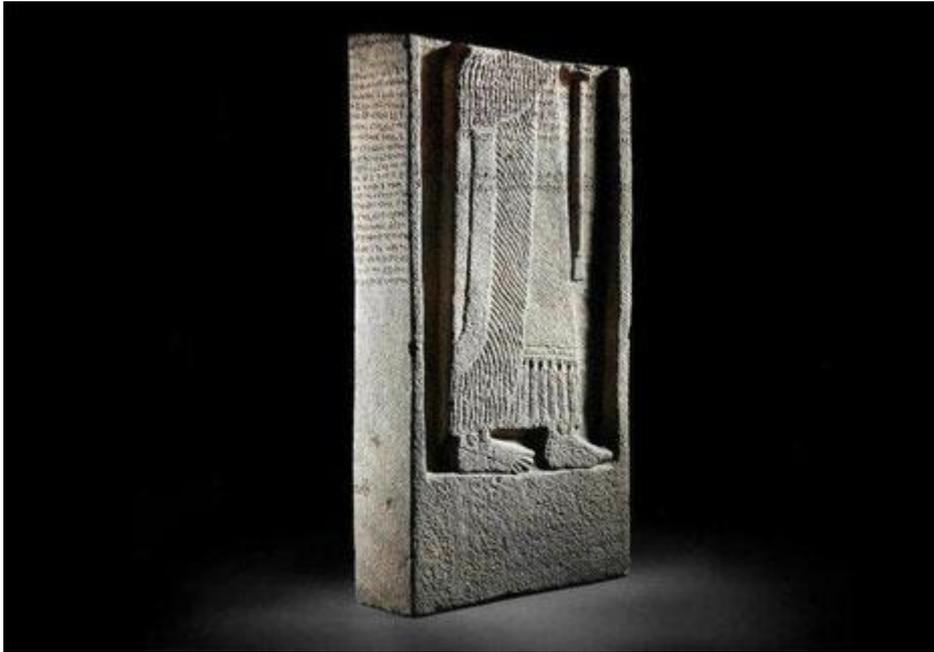
Updates on Looting



(Photo: St Simeons. Photo Copyright: [Aleppo Archaeology](#))

Photos of looting at World Heritage Site and Tentative World Heritage Site

- The Facebook group Aleppo Archaeology have shared a photo of 'looters taking a break' at the site of St Simeon's Basilica, part of the World Heritage Site of the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria. The photo can be viewed on their Facebook page [here](#).
- The Facebook group, Le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger, have shared a photo of the looting at the Tentative World Heritage Site, Dura Europos, available on their Facebook page [here](#).



(Photo: Auction Lot 99, Bonhams Auction House)

British Museum will not bid for potentially looted relief up for sale at Bonhams

- Our previous newsletter reported on a potentially looted relief that is due to be sold on the 3rd April in Bonhams, London. It is apparently from Tell Sheikh Hamad, and is the matching lower part to the upper part of the stele, which is in the British Museum. The original article (in Arabic) and the video (Arabic with English subtitles) is in Al-Akhbar, and can be read [here](#).

Additional information about the lot has come to light:

"The piece consigned to Bonhams is 1.4m tall and depicts the lower two-thirds of the praying king. It is being sold by a private collector in Geneva and was "given as a gift from father to son in the 1960s", according to the auction house, but no details about when it left Syria are available. Bonhams is confident about the provenance, although some experts are concerned that the antiquity could have been illicitly excavated or exported...The Switzerland-based owner of the stele tried to sell it at Christie's New York in 2000, with an estimate of \$600,000 to \$800,000, but it failed to sell. It was only after this that Karen Radner, an Assyriologist at University College London, linked the piece with the fragment in the British Museum and identified the praying figure as Adad-nerari III."

Nonetheless, although it is the matching part to the existing stele, the British Museum has announced they will not be bidding for it.

To read the full article, *British Museum will not bid for fragment of Assyrian stele – even though it owns the rest*, in The Art Newspaper, click [here](#).



(Photo: Returned Palmyra Relief. Copyright: [DGAM](#))

Further details released of the looting of Palmyra World Heritage Site, but locals are trying to stop it

- A reporter who recently visited Palmyra has published the information he learned about the looting at the site
"The Director of Palmyra's very impressive Museum, Dr. Khalil al Hariri, showed this observer more than one hundred priceless artifacts that had been stolen by rebels and recovered over the past two years from hiding places. This was mainly accomplished with the help of the local Syrian Nationalist population who refer to themselves as Palmyrenes. Sometimes risking sniper fire or revenge attacks, local citizens continue to collect and report to authorities the stolen treasures. These and many other antiquities are now secured due to their efforts. As a result partly of citizens vigilance and the far-sightedness of the Syrian government, and the lessons learned from Iraq and the Baghdad Museum, all of Syria's 32 Museums, as well as 80% of all antiquities housed inside the local Palmyra Museum were buried secretly early in the conflict and as of today, none of the storage vaults have been discovered or damaged, with locals keeping secret what they know. Heavy metal doors have also been installed at the entrances of Syria's Museums with security augmented by government forces and volunteer local 'neighborhood watch' committees comprised of ordinary citizens...
[The Director] explained how today, international mafia operations backed by investors in Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and even by certain Western Museums and famous antiquity auction houses, are using massive heavy equipment to scoop thousands of square meters from deep into our past in just minutes, as they violently and brutally gouge out our culture heritage to cash in by selling our treasures".

To read the full article, *Palmyrenes: Risking their lives to preserve our Global*

Updates on Damage.

- Additional details of some of the recovered tomb reliefs have been released by News agency SANA, along with pictures of the condition the reliefs were found in. "Authorities confiscated eight stolen antiquities dating back to the first and second centuries AD. The archeological pieces were stolen by armed terrorist groups from several sites and hidden in their dens in Palmyra Orchards area in order to be smuggled outside the country. Curator of Palmyra Museum Khalil al-Hariri told SANA the peices include two heads of clergymen made of limestone, a part of funeral scene, a part of a Palmyra lady statue a bust of a priest and some other items. Al-Hariri added the pieces were handed to authorities, as experts are studying and documenting them according to adopted scientific methodologies."

To read the full article, click [here](#).

- More than 15 additional busts and reliefs have been returned to the DGAM. The reliefs are depictions of families, confiscated on the 30 March 2013. They date from the 1st to the 3rd Century AD and were placed inside cemeteries. Photos of the busts are available [here](#), and details and photos of the reliefs are available [here](#). (Articles are in Arabic).



(Image from article by Al-Monitor - original caption read:
A general view shows a church among residential buildings in the Armenian Christian town Kassab after rebel fighters seized it, March 24, 2014. (photo by REUTERS/Stringer))

Iconoclasm at Kassab

Kassab. According to news Agency Al-Monitor, writing on 27th March "The fighting has continued for the fifth day in a row in the hills and villages around Kassab in the northern Latakia countryside, particularly in the villages Samra, al-Nabain and Jabal al-Nisr. There have been no violent clashes in the town itself, which for the first time was stripped of its crosses. Jabhat al-Nusra members destroyed them when they entered town. This was confirmed by Abu Qatada al-Masri, who posted on his Twitter account pictures of al-Nusra members destroying crosses inside the churches."

To read the full article, *Kassab falls to Syrian opposition gunmen*, click [here](#).

Reports and Updates from the [Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums](#)



(Photo Copyright: DGAM)

Meeting of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage and the Syrian Department of Antiquities

- The Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage held a meeting in Bahrain attended by the Director of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage Mounir Bouchenaki and the Director-General of Antiquities and Museums Mamoon Abdul Karim to discuss issues of heritage protection in Syria, in addition to discussing the proposed

stressed the work of the DGAM had a positive impact on preserving the archaeological collections and sites, and that they were keen to continue to support them, and to encourage the local community and societal elites to assist. The meeting addressed the potential role of the Regional Centre in supporting the cultural heritage of Syria in coordination with UNESCO and other stakeholders. It will also encourage and motivate donors around the world, particularly across the Arab world to support and save the cultural heritage of Syria, in addition to the preparation to document damage in the old city of Aleppo and develop a plan of action for the conservation, restoration and revival of the affected heritage buildings, in collaboration with the DGAM. It will also organise a centre and workshops for the staff of the DGAM who are working in violent area to increase their abilities, and will assist in preventing looting.

To read the full article in Al Wasat (in Arabic), click [here](#). To read the full article, also in Arabic, on the DGAM website, click [here](#).

Policy Changes and Updates from Syria

- None

International Activity

News Updates (Not covered in other sections)

Interactive map created of damage to sites

- Interactive map published showing some of the worst damage done to sites from shelling, looting and archaeological monuments. Whilst not comprehensive, it provides an interesting overview.
To see the map, published by the Global Post, click [here](#).

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