



**Republic of Iraq**  
**Ministry of Culture**  
**State Board of Antiquities & Heritage**  
**International Organizations Department**

**The damage to Iraqi heritage was greater than expected and the conservation and rehabilitation process required decades of work.**

**Irina Bokova-Director-General of UNESCO-International Coordination  
Conference on the Protection of Iraqi Heritage, 2017**

**World Heritage Sites in Iraq**  
**Hatra-Ashur – Samarra**  
**State of Conservation Reports**

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## 1 -Executive Summary

The tragedy of the Iraqi cultural heritage is the worst since the Second World War, and Taliban movement work in 2001 and the destruction of the Buddha statues in the Bamyán Valley of Afghanistan before they were defeated, the effects of the war were catastrophic for Iraq and the conflict led to the destruction of families and the paralysis of societies, in addition to the imbalance caused to the shared cultural memory and the distortion of identity and civilizational characteristics.

Therefore, the issue of preserving (15) fifteen thousand historic sites in Iraq is a challenge for the country, including sites listed on the World Heritage list such as Hatra , Ashur , Samarra, Erbil Citadel and marshes , aftermath of the 2003 war and as a result of the massive chaos left behind, the saboteur burned libraries and documentation centers and robbed historical buildings and cultural institutions, while smugglers seized cultural objects from museums and archaeological sites. Thus, it has become difficult to minimize the tragedy of Iraq's cultural heritage.

Therefore, the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and through the state board of antiquities and heritage mobilized efforts to deal with the new situation in terms of the restitution of cultural property, the State party has recovered many of the antiquities that have been smuggled out of the country and in the archaeological sites that have been subjected to the illegal digging in which the guards were tightened.

The cultural heritage and its monuments and symbols have become the identity of each country, so those landmarks and symbols became the first to be threatened by the enemy and to obliterate the identity of that country.

In times of war, this identity is often at risk, cultural aspects of conflicts are usually overlooked, and the potential of this identity is

not exploited in terms of peace or the positive force to push for development.

In the exacerbation of the humanitarian situation and the suffering of the heritage of mankind, many treaties and conventions relating to the protection of the heritage of mankind have been launched and the last one , the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of cultural property in time of armed conflict and its two protocols.

Iraq recognized the importance of the conventions as a whole in the preservation of cultural heritage, so that Iraq's accession to those agreements was early, but that it preceded many of the regional countries, and that UNESCO, the nucleus from which all those agreements were launched, entered with Iraq in a long-term partnership, since the eighties of the last century, and the wars waged by Iraq, where the traffic in cultural materials has been very active, for the three World heritage sites of Hatra Ashur and Samarra, all of which are listed on the list of danger , weak funding and fragility of the security situation , where both sits Hatra and Ashur were occupied by the forces of terror (ISIS) and despite the liberation of those sites, no real and significant conservation work was carried out at this time, and in this period the international commitments to protect and preserve Iraqi heritage have increased.

## **2-International initiatives and undertakings for the protection of Iraqi heritage**

International commitments for the protection of the cultural heritage in Iraq have increased both from UNESCO and from States parties, but unfortunately, despite the liberation of many historical sites and the improvement of the security situation, there were no acts of intervention and preservation in the field.

**International commitments could be included in the following table;**

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Meeting of experts at UNESCO headquarters to develop a plan of action for the emergency response and to highlight the challenges and plans to protect and preserve Iraqi heritage and to explore ways to protect Iraq's endangered heritage</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>UNESCO</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>UNESCO strengthens protection measures for cultural heritage sites vulnerable to attack .</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>Advertisement only from UNESCO amid mounting attacks on cultural heritage sites by the forces of terror</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Developing a contingency plan for the protection of Iraqi heritage</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>UNESCO</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Consultative Meeting with the delegation of Iraq to UNESCO regarding the protection of Iraqi heritage.</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>The meeting came to urge the parties, including the international community, to preserve the Iraqi heritage.</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>The Director-General of UNESCO at the University of Baghdad</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Baghdad</b>	<b>The campaign came as a reaction to the</b>

	<b>launched a United 4 Heritage program</b>			<b>destruction of Iraqi heritage by the forces of terror.</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Iraq and UNESCO sign an agreement on the management, protection and preservation of the archaeological city of Samarra, which is scheduled to begin conservation work in the Great Mosque and its minaret of al Malwyya</b>	<b>2015</b>		<b>No works started on the site.</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Call from UNESCO by the Director-General entitled Save Iraqi Cultural Heritage.</b>	<b>2015</b>		<b>The call came after the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on the protection of Iraqi heritage and submitted the project draft by Iraq and Germany with the approval of a majority of members.</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>The Director-General of UNESCO welcomed the liberation of Hatra city and pledged to send the damage Assessment Committee as soon as situation permitted.</b>	<b>2017</b>		<b>No International Committee of Damage Assessment was sent</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>International Conference on the Protection of Iraqi Heritage</b>	<b>2017</b>		<b>The conference was held for two days and to discuss the priorities of conservation , especially after the liberation of many historical sites in Iraq from the grip of the forces of terrorism</b>

### **3-World Heritage Sites in Iraq**

The five World Heritage sites in Iraq now have more than half of them inscribed on the World Heritage List in danger, where Hatra and Ashur have been greatly affected, where two sites fully occupied by the forces of terror (ISIS) until they were liberated after two years of captivity ,The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage ( SBAH) has mobilized international efforts for the protection of Iraqi heritage and as a prelude to conservation and preservation work in the liberated sites, damage assessments have been carried out both by international organizations and the State party and to expand the description of the world heritage sites, through the following description;

#### **3-1 Hatra**

Hatra city locates 80 km south of Mosul, the city is believed to have been established at the beginning of the 2nd century BC, Known for its architectural engineering , art, weapons and industries, the Hatra kingdom was at the level of Rome in terms of progress where it found bathrooms with advanced heating system, observation towers, court, carved engravings, mosaics, coins and statues.

The city has included a lot of outstanding universal values (OUV), so the site has been inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1985 and since then, the State party carried out a lot of excavation and conservation work on the site, but it did not match the importance of

the site till its occupation by terrorism (ISIS) and the following table shows the city's World Heritage site;

**Table 1 shows the city's World Heritage site**

<b>1</b>	<b>Name of property</b>	<b>Hatra</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Ninawa</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Geographical coordinates to the nearest second</b>	<b>N 35 35 17.016 E42 43 5.988</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Date of inscription</b>	<b>1985, On the World Heritage List in danger/2015</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>323.75 ha</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Ref:</b>	<b>277 rev</b>	

**Source: World Heritage Centre (Access Date 25/12/2018)**

The site was inscribed on the World Heritage list in danger in 2015 after the site s occupied by the forces of terror (ISIS)

After the site has been liberated, damage assessments have been carried out at the site, whether by international organizations or by the State party. Satellite imagery shows places of vandalism that the site has been exposed to and published by the World Heritage Center , coinciding with the liberation of the city from forces of terrorism.

The most objective assessment of the damage in the site was that carried out by the Ninawa Antiquities and Heritage Inspectorate. The



report of the site's mission to assess the damage showed that the site was not severely damaged in relation to the sites of Nineveh and Nimrod, and that acts of vandalism and maiming were limited to the human and animals faces that adorn the arches and the entrances of the Iwans in the Great Temple and the destruction of the gypsum version of the statue (Abu bint Damon)



**Figure 1 Places of vandalism in the site between 2016-2017**

**Source: World Heritage Centre**

### **-Damage Details**

- 1- The great Temple wall in the main temples area, where it was subjected to a 120 mm mortar shell, which landed on one of the rooms located within the eastern wall of the temple.
- 2-The damage to Marin Temple is one of the main temples in the city dedicated to the worship of the main God in the city, which feature with two rows of columns, which surround the rooms from all

four sides and the damage the shooting on the row of the outer columns of the temple in the southern part of it.

3-The temple of Trinity which is one of the main temples in the city and dedicated to the worship of Marin, Marten and Brmren gods the damage done in this temple where the terrorists broke and distorted all the sculptures carried on the arches that adorn the façade of the outer Iwans.



**Fig. 2 Damage of the eastern wall of the Great Temple Square as a result of a mortar shell fall**

It is noticeable that the terrorists have parked some of the wheels inside the Iwans , which burned down when the city liberated, and that the clouds of smoke have tarnished many of the arches.

4. Damage in the southern Iwans where the terrorists broke and distorted the statues of the eagles on the walls and some of them is exposed to shooting and dropping some statues on the ground.



**Figure 3 Damage to the columns in Marin temple from the south side**

5-Damage in the northern Iwans group, the damage done to this part was to distort and break the sculptures with human and animals forms that adorn the facades of the arches and the entrances of the Iwans and in this part of the Iwans the terrorists opened the entrances to the rooms, which include dozens of artifacts and broken statues representing Hatra city figures.

6-For site administration headquarters, furniture and assets at Headquarters, such as machinery and work materials, theft of a fence (BRC) and damage to the on-site antiquities Police building,



**Fig.4 Entrance of one of the rooms opened in the North Iwan**

After the liberation of the city from ISIS, the State party started work in the city, where the staff returned to work on the site.

In conjunction with the liberation of the city and with the start of the Third Cycle of the Periodic Reporting exercise (2018-2024) of the Arab region, the State party submitted a proposal for minor modification by adding buffer zone where the site boundaries never changed and the proposal had been submitted to the world heritage committee.

### **3-2 Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat)**

Ashur is the city-the state that became the capital of the ancient Assyrian kingdom, its old name (Pal Til.) and formed with Nineveh and Erbil the nucleus region of successive Assyrian kingdoms. It is located 60 miles south of Mosul on the banks of Tigris . Ashur was the capital city of the Assyrian kingdom, in 2500 BC, but the King Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) moved the capital north to the city of Calah (now Nimrod). In 612 BC, the city fell and attacked by the Babylonians and the Medes, and destroyed its big cities.

Ashur has lived for twelve centuries as the capital of a state began an empire and ended an empire not like all cities, was special a civilized advancement and continuous construction .

Ashur as a city that lived all historical periods and the fall of the city or the state the end of civilization and reconstruction, and many communities lived in it such as Parthians, Sasanians and later the Arabs peoples, all these peoples left great civilized remains.

All of these cultural features in the city have created outstanding universal values, (OUV) under which the city inscribed on the world heritage site in list in danger in 2003.

The state party and the German expedition carried out a lot of excavations and conservation work in the city. In mid-2014, the site was fully occupied by the forces of terror (ISIS) and remained under the control of terrorism until the site completely liberated in 2017.

The state board for antiquities and heritage -Department of Ashur's antiquities has returned to work on the site and has made a preliminary report on the damage done at the site.

### **-Site through World Heritage.**

The city of Ashur inscribed on the list of World Heritage in 2003 on the list of danger, the year in which the international coalition launched the War on Iraq and the ensuing deterioration of the security situation and the lack of financial allocations to carry out conservation work on the site , till it occupied by ISIS forces but after the site

liberated in 2017 the State party through the state board of antiquities and heritage to promote and upgrade the site is assisted by the international community, where the damage assessment has been done in the site, in preparation for the conservation work and restoration of the action of the forces of terrorism and to enter into the site details through the World Heritage, the table (2) prepared.

**Table 2 shows the city's World Heritage site**

<b>1</b>	<b>Name of property</b>	<b>(Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat)</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Salah Edden</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Geographical coordinates to the nearest second</b>	<b>N35 27 24 E43 15 40</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Date of inscription</b>	<b>2003 , on the World Heritage List in danger/2003</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>(iii)(iv)</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>70 ha</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Bbuffer Zone</b>	<b>100 ha</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Ref:</b>	<b>1130</b>	

**Source: World Heritage Centre (Access Date;20/1/2019)**

In conjunction with the liberation of the city and with the start of the Third Cycle of the Periodic Reporting exercise (2018-2024) of the Arab region, the State party submitted a proposal for minor modification of the buffer zone only for more protection of the site.

### **-Preliminary Damage Assessment**

There has been a lot of damage in the city as a result of its occupation by the forces of terrorism and it is possible to describe the damage in the following form.

### **-Tabira Gate**

It is one of the most important gates of the city it was dedicated to the passage of Ashur-The great gods-and the traffic processions of Ashur (god) which move out annually to celebrate in Bait Akito and return from the same gate and the king not enter or exit from and to the city except from Tabira Gate and the Assyrian army only conquered after taking the permission from Ashur (gods) reside in the temple of Ashur – and conquers and achieved the victory and returns with the spoils and captives to be presented in the hands of Ashur ( gods). The Army also enters and exits through Tabira gate. The state board of antiquities did conservation works for the gate in 1988, it returned a distinguished monument .

The gate was affected by destruction its body where the walls bricks fell and the shoulders of the gate were most affected and the earthquake that had occurred in the area affected the site.

The fall of bricks from the inside to the North (outer) tower is severely disrupted and may collapse if not conserved . The shoulders of the gate , which are the most damaging, their status and shape are alarming and call for urgent restoration, and the earth quick has its effect on the gate, so that a lot of bricks falling off.

The three gate arches and their shoulders were greatly affected by the explosion caused by the forces of terror (ISIS) at the site.



**Figure 5 Tabira Gate after destruction**  
(Source: Sherqat Antiquities Department ,2018)

### **-Farhan Pasha Palace**

The palace locates in the northeast corner of the historic city of Ashur, the palace overlooks the Tigris directly from the east and north





overlooking the spacious Sherqat plain, and from the West and south, bordered by the ruins of the historic city and the palace itself is based on the rubble of the temple of Ashur god .

The palace took its name, from Sheikh Farhan bin Safwaq Al Jarba, head of the Shammar tribe in the reign of Wali Medhat Pasha (1868-1872)

In 1978, it was fully conserved by state board of antiquities and heritage to make a local museum of antiquities discovered in the city of Ashur and remained so until the Gulf War, and the palace remained unchanged until the terrorist gangs of ISIS took control of the city and ruined it.



**Figure 6 Destruction by the terrorist forces in the palace**

**-The palace of Walter Andre (German Expedition Headquarters)**

The construction of this headquarters began at the beginning of the excavations of the German expedition in Ashur in 1903 by Walter

Andre, who planned his expedition to work for several years, where the work lasted from 1903-1914 where the First World War broke out and the work of the German mission ceased in the site.

Construction of the headquarters according to the eastern style where the headquarters consists of an intermediate square surrounded by the building from all sides and since then the headquarters was left until the state board of antiquities and heritage conserved the headquarters and took as a residence for members of the archaeological Revival project of Ashur City.



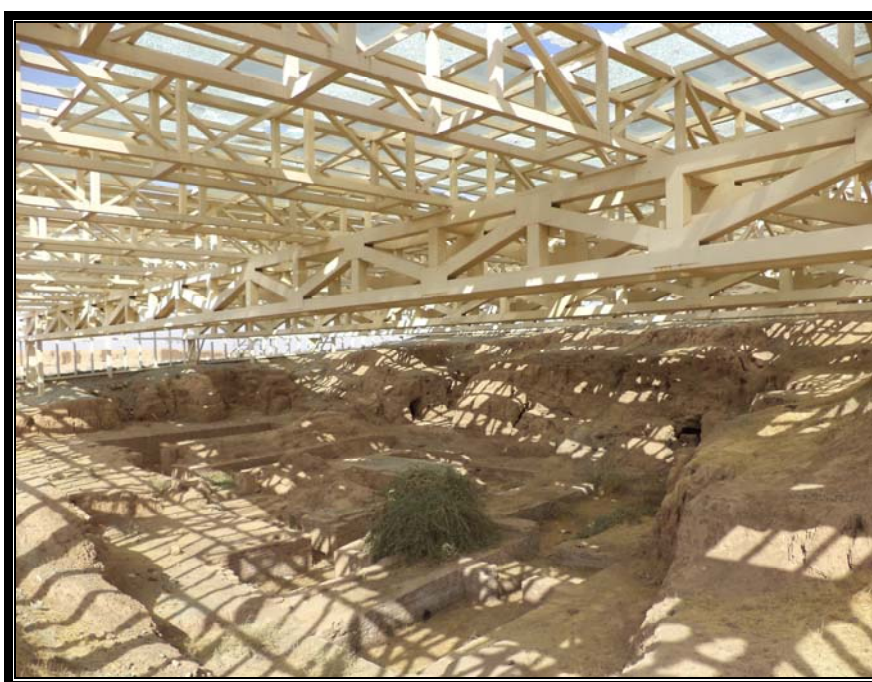
**Figure 7 vandalism on the first floor of Headquarters**

When the terrorist gangs of (ISIS) entered the archaeological city, they were taken from the headquarters for their residence and during their residence, they stripped him of everything and the air raids affected it as a result of being taken by ISIS terrorist gangs.

## **-The Royal Cemetery**

The Royal Cemetery is one of the most important cultural monuments in the city of Ashur and a unique model. Unique in everything in its planning, construction and design as well as being the only Assyrian model discovered yet.

It is called the Royal Cemetery due to the Assyrian kings buried only.



**Figure 8 Vandalism caused by ISIS gangs in the Royal Cemetery**

The cemetery discovered by the German expedition (1903 – 1914). The mission left us with an outline of the cemetery. Following the inscription the site on the World Heritage List, the state board of antiquities and heritage has made an iron structure covering the cemetery with thick glass ceilings and protecting it from atmospheric erosion and the pressure of visitors on the site.

When the terrorist gangs of ISIS occupied the site, they smashed the entire glass and covered the cemetery with the scattered glass that fell into it from the roof and sides.

The forces of terrorism (ISIS) have not ceased to damage and sabotage the city of Ashur, but to the distant archaeological sites from Ashur for two purposes;

The first is to get the artefacts and antiquities in sites where the shovels of diggers have not been extended after looking for new antiquities in new sites for the purpose of trading them. Second take it as shelters to hide out if they feel danger.



**Figure 9 One of the tunnels dug by the forces of terror in Khirbet al-Amsehali**

**The most important are four archaeological sites :**

A-Khirbet al-Amsehali

B. Khirbat al-Cloba

C-Eastern Mosque Khirbat

## D – Western Mosque Khirbat

The damage on the site was therefore significant, requiring the State party, in accordance with the World Heritage Convention and the pledges and decisions of UNESCO, that the international community should assist the State party in conservation and restoration of the ravages of the forces of terrorism.

### **3-3 Samarra Archaeological City**

Samarra locates on the eastern end of Tigris between Baghdad and Tikrit and about 120 north of Baghdad, the city construction began as the second capital of the Abbasids by Caliph Al- Mu'tasim and was planning the city on an engineering system, as the remaining of Samarra confirm that its planning was on a highly engineered system, the main and sub-roads were stretched in perfectly straight lines, and the construction on the eastern side of the city began because of good properties, then the caliph looked at the reconstruction of the western side and after the completion of Al-Mu'tasim from the building of the city of Samarra according to the plan of the engineers, people from different countries have arrived to reside in it after the caliph settled, and became the capital of the Islamic State. For the importance of the site historically, the site was declared archaeological site in the Iraqi newspaper (Official Gazette of Iraq) of the 1930s.

The first archaeological excavations were carried out in the city between 1911 and 1914 by German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld.

The state board of antiquities and heritage has done a lot of work in the field of excavation and conservation since the 1930s.

### **-The Site through the World Heritage**

The site contains a lot of outstanding universal values ( OUV) that qualify for inclusion on the world heritage list , so the state party submitted a nomination file and to be included in the list of world Heritage in danger 2007.

Since then, the State party has done a lot of work, including the removal of faulty work of conservation , especially in the Great Mosque.

The following table shows the location of the city through the world Heritage

**Table 3 shows the city's World Heritage site**

<b>1</b>	<b>Name of property</b>	<b>Samarra Archaeological City</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Salah Edden</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Geographical coordinates to the nearest second</b>	<b>N35 27 24 E43 15 40</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Date of inscription</b>	<b>2007 , on the World Heritage List in danger/2007</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>(ii)(iii)(iv)</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>15,058 ha</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Bbuffer Zone</b>	<b>31,414 ha</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Ref:</b>	<b>27</b>	

**Source: World Heritage Centre (Access Date;20/1/2019)**

## **-The city through the conflict.**

City of Samarra, including the archaeological area, is more influenced by the emergence of the terrorist organization (ISIS) as an advanced line of military operations between the terrorist organization and the Iraqi Army forces.

So many buildings in the city were affected by military operations, including Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya ,and the most damaged sites in the city was the Sur Ashnas, which is located in the north of the city of Samarra.

The conservation and restoration work did not carry out in the city and the work limited to the assessment of damage in the site.

## **Conclusion .**

Through the paragraphs of the report, it is clear how much damage has been done in the World Heritage sites in Iraq, with which international commitments have increased and which must be activated, especially since the security situation is now encouraging for the interventions in the field and doing preservation work and sporting some of the falling parts of the mentioned sites.

The State party therefore strongly requests the World Heritage Committee to urges States parties to fulfil their obligations to the other States parties in the event that their sites are endangered.

The State party is also see, following the liberation of World Heritage sites, and the World Heritage Committee should dispatch missions



for the development of centralized damage reports on those sites.