



Ministry Of Culture

Directorate General of Antiquities & Museums

STATE PARTY REPORT

On The State of Conservation
of The

Syrian Cultural Heritage Sites
(Syrian Arab Republic)

For Submission By
1 February 2020



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INTRODUCTION

This Progress Report on the State of Conservation of the Syrian World Heritage properties is:

- Responds to the World Heritage request during the 43rd session of the world heritage committee in Baku 2019
- Provides an update to the December 2018 State of Conservation report.
- Prepared in to be present on the previous World Heritage Committee meeting 44^e session 2020.

Information Sources

This report represents a collation of available information as of 31 December 2019, and is based on available information from the DGAM braches around Syria, taking inconsideration that with ground access to the Ancient Villages in North of Syria extremely limited for antiquities experts, extent of the damage cannot be assessment right now.

Name of World Heritage property: **ANCIENT CITY OF DAMASCUS**

Date of inscription on World Heritage List: 26/10/1979

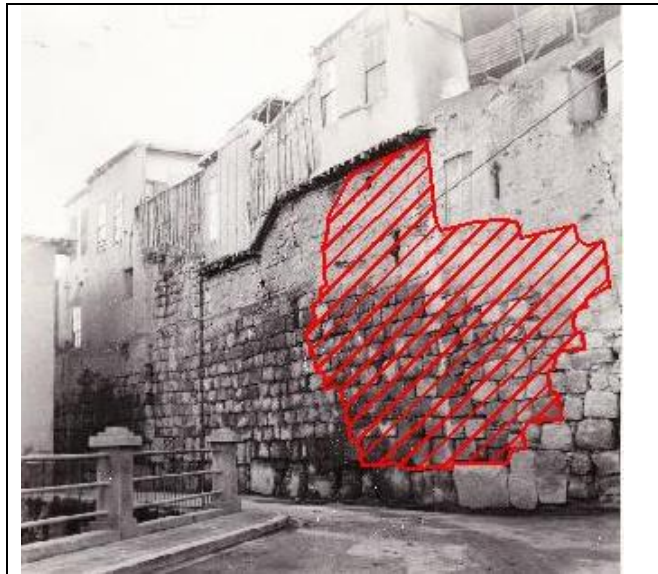
CHALLENGES:

The ancient city of Damascus is still in the beginning of the recovery phase. This phase needs to exert more efforts to study the current state, reverse the deterioration and set appropriate scientific and practical methods to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the historic city as one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world. The ancient city of Damascus was exposed during the year 2019 to more threats indirectly related to the 9 years of crisis, the most important of which are as follows:

1. On 2/2/2019, part of the Ancient City wall collapsed in the area between Bab Al-Salam and Bab_Touma (Al-Farayyn district):

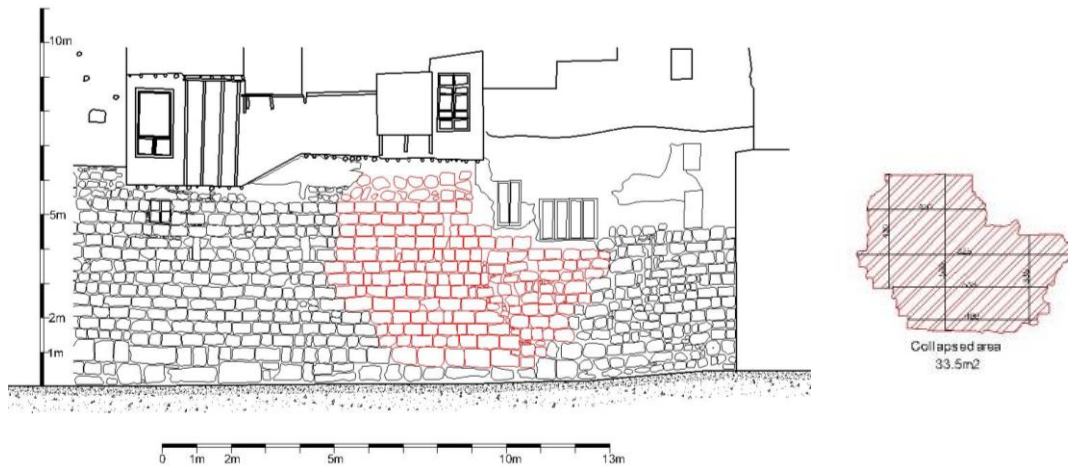
The Wall of the Ancient Damascus consists of (inner and outer wall filled with

traditional mortar), where the outer wall in the mentioned area collapsed over a length of 10 m and a height of 5 m, with a large part of the traditional internal mortar. The cause of the collapse can be explained by numbers of factors, including:



The part of the Ancient City wall collapsed in the area between Bab Al-Salam and Bab_Touma marked in red color

- The lack of maintenance, restoration work, and monitoring of structural changes that occurred during the years of the crisis, where the collapse showed the extreme moisture, corrosion in the internal mortar and the loss of its structural properties , Wall inflation in the areas adjacent to the area of collapse, and the possibility of their fall over time.
- The damaged sewage network in the district adjacent to the Wall (Al-Joura district), which led to water leakage inside the walls to reach the foundations level.

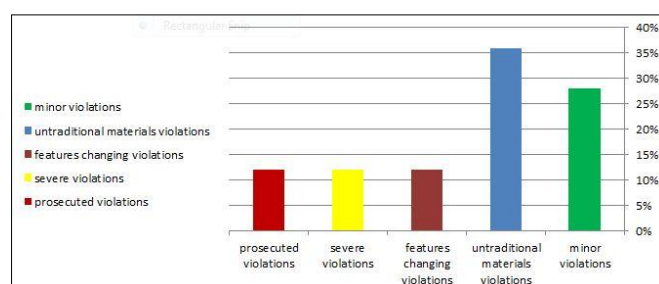


The current state of the collapsed area of Ancient city wall between Bab Al-Salam and Bab_Touma (Al-Farayyn district)

Lack of Funds for preserving the ancient wall is a very expensive venture which government alone cannot sponsor. This explains why the ruin of cultural resources of the city escalates on daily basis due to unavailability of funds for their preservation.

2. The DGAM also takes into consideration the Recommendation of UNESCO to continue implementing all necessary risk prevention and mitigation actions outlined in the Emergency Response Plan in Dec. 2013. The fires have become limited in number and impact but even so still threatening the Ancient City. On 23/1/2019, a fire broke out in Amara district, and on 23/7/2019 and 1/11/2019, two fires broke out in the residential houses in Qanawat neighborhood, should be noted that these neighborhoods are located in the buffer zone.

3. Using untraditional building materials, or building infringing parts: It is one of the results of the population pressure in the city during the years of the crisis, where residential



homes were transformed into shelters housing many families, and under the influence of the need to secure life requirements, more service parts were created in some residential houses (bathroom, kitchen), deteriorating economic conditions and a lack of building traditional material, on one hand professional labor, and its expensive costs on the other. Some of 254 violations were counted in Ancient City, this represent 4% of the total numbers of estates that distributed as shown in the diagram.

MEASURES TAKEN:

1- The DGAM considers the recommendations of the 40th to the 41th sessions of the World Heritage Committee for the elaboration of “development the management plan & gather the historical archives and documentations”. Studies on the management plan began in 2010. But Due to the crisis in Syria in 2011, the priorities have shifted to protection, prevention and documentation of damage. Now, the city and its surroundings have been free of threats, terrorist acts or military actions, taking into consideration the priorities of protection and risk management, lack of adequate funding, poor communication and cooperation with the local community, the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums has begun implementing steps that fall partially within the management plan:

- Cooperation with the Directorate of Awqaf and the Directorate of Education (which owns a large number of historical buildings) to document and preserve the buildings.
- The start of the practical steps for the project (Measuring and Documenting Damascus Ancient City) in cooperation between the General Directorate of Antiquities & Museums, the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Damascus, and the Damascus Governorate) which aims to document historical buildings in the city. The first step of the project is to identify and sort the available documents (diagrams, pictures, update date, etc.). Please refer to Annex (1).
- On 12/14/2019, Damascus Governorate, in cooperation with the DGAM, implemented the activity (Ancient Damascus without a Cars) lasted from 10 am to 6 pm, which is considered as a preliminary experience in a future plan to restrict the entry of cars into the Ancient City. Questionnaires are currently being studied, and a survey of the opinions of residents, visitors and stakeholders is needed to achieve the necessary requirements for the success of the plan. It is planned to repeat the activity at a higher rate.
- Monitor is ongoing to provide safety of electrical installations and fire extinguishers in commercial and industrial shops & stores, and determine the type and quantity of materials stored in warehouses.

2- With regard to the collapse of part of Ancient Damascus wall in the area between Bab Al-Salam and Bab_Touma (Al-Farayyn district): the following steps have been implemented:

- Documenting the current state (with pictures and plans).
- Preserving the archaeological debris.
- Analysis of old photos (before collapsing)

- Implementing temporary support, including the area of collapse and the surrounding area, to prevent further deterioration and similar collapses, in cooperation with the Damascus Municipality.
 - **Lack of funds prevents the completion of the documentation and the necessary consolidation study that the DGAM request a Technical Assistant in order to complete the work in a timely manner.**
- 3- With regard to the Ottoman Bank: The building suffered a massive fire in 2015, which destroyed the structural system on the first floor (spanning roof, walls, and columns). A structural study was conducted by an engineering office funded by tenants. The study was modified according to the notices of UNESCO experts at the technical meeting (Beirut 2016). Construction works has started, where the structure system consists of metal pillars and wooden beams for the pitched roof. It should be noted that the DGAM faces some difficulties in controlling the restoration work due to lack of funding and conflicts of interest among stakeholders.



The installation of the structural system which consists of metal pillars and wooden beams for the pitched roof in the Ottoman Bank

Physical conservation works have been carried out at the property and works are progressing according to available funds. The reasons for placing the Ancient City on the Danger List no longer applied as the ancient city is not facing danger of war anymore. In this case the DGAM is ready to welcome the monitoring mission and to implement the necessary corrective measures to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Measuring and Documenting Damascus Ancient City's cultural architecture and urban structure project

An architectural, urban, historical, and documentary joint effort between (Directorate of old Damascus, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums "DGAM", Directorate of Damascus Antiquities "DDA", and the University of Damascus – faculty of architecture).

Introduction:

The overall work includes an architectural, documental, analytical and digital documentation of Damascus's monuments and urban segments/areas and the surrounding areas, whether it's registered in the local heritage sites list or not.

It also includes descriptive text about the history of these monuments and the changes they went through, and their coordinates on Damascus historical plan, to be stored with the authorities and represent a reference for decision makers, urban planners, archeologists, and researchers. And all those who are concerned about elevating the cultural awareness and preserving, rehabilitating, and learning from the lessons of cultural heritage.

Facts:

The faculty of architecture has been working for years on documenting and archiving Damascus's architectural and urban elements with its surroundings as well, and about 300 building. 25 urban areas distributed inside and outside the walled city have been documented. Including, site plans, level plans, sections, elevations, details, ornamentations, inscriptions, photographs, and historical references.

In addition to, the archives of both the DGAM and DDA contains a great number of survey plans, photographs, references and mailings which describe these monuments and sites, and a large quantity of Arabic and foreign language writings that portray Damascus's urban and architectural history, not to forget the specialized staff and scientists in this respected establishment.

Finally, the archive of the Directorate of old Damascus contains a large number of documents and references that show the physical state of buildings and their previous and current state, in addition to, a vision for their development, and a staff that is in contact with the monuments on a daily bases.

Vision:

Consolidating the information from the previously mentioned parties into one coherent reference and sorting it as database is now an urgent necessity for the preservation policy and other policies.

Mission:

- Measuring, archiving and digitizing the plans, documents, data, photographs, writings and everything related to historical and archeological buildings and sites registered or not registered in Damascus and surroundings, to be a reference held by the authorities for researchers, planners and stakeholders.
- Setting a timetable for the overall scope of work which includes, staff members, necessary equipment, software required and budget.
- A printed reference with the title “Architectural and Urban Atlas of Damascus” in Arabic and in English to be produced as a summary of the work accomplished.



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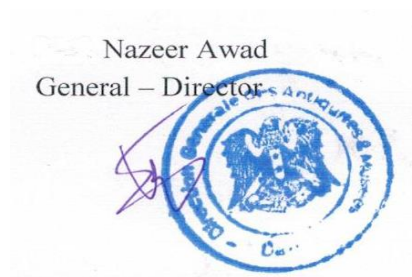
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Information Sources

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Name of World Heritage property: **ANCIENT CITY OF DAMASCUS**

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANTS

Founded in the 3rd millennium B.C., Damascus was an important cultural and commercial center, by virtue of its geographical position at the crossroads of the orient and the occident, between Africa and Asia. The old city of Damascus is considered to be among the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. Excavations at Tell Ramad on the outskirts of the city have demonstrated that Damascus was inhabited as early as 8,000 to 10,000 BC. However, it is not documented as an important city until the arrival of the Aramaeans. In the Medieval period, it was the center of a flourishing craft industry, with different areas of the city specializing in particular trades or crafts. The city exhibits outstanding evidence of the civilizations which created it - Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic. In particular, the Umayyad caliphate created Damascus as its capital, setting the scene for the city's ongoing development as a living Muslim, Arab city, upon which each succeeding dynasty has left and continues to leave its mark. In spite of Islam's prevailing influence, traces of earlier cultures particularly the Roman and Byzantine continue to be seen in the city. Thus the city today is based on a Roman plan and maintains the aspect and the orientation of the Greek city, in that all its streets are oriented north-south or east-west and is a key example of urban planning. The earliest visible physical evidence dates to the Roman period – the extensive remains of the Temple of Jupiter, the remains of various gates and an impressive section of the Roman city walls. The city was the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate. However, apart from the incomparable Great Mosque, built on the site of a Roman temple and over-laying a Christian basilica, there is little visible dating from this important era of the city's history. The present city walls, the Citadel, some mosques and tombs survive from the Middle Ages, but the greatest part of the built heritage of the city dates from after the Ottoman conquest of the early 16th century.

MEASURES TAKEN:

- The national process for preparing the DSCOR is undergoing the report will be submitted to the WHC soon to be discussed with the experts.
- In addition, the DGAM team are working in identifying and studying the dangers threatening the area which is located in the northern side of the city along the Barada River between two gates, Ban Touma and Bab Al Salam (Al Joura District - contract n 4500428397) in recommendations of the World Heritage Committee

on the importance of documenting the current situation of the ancient city.



The DGAM team during the work in Al Joura district

- Activities carried out under the project documentation of the ancient city (photographs, archival material, etc.).
- **A detailed document (DSCOR) will be submitted including the conservation plan that applied in the ancient city with the cooperation of Ancient City directorate.**
