



Ministry Of Culture

Directorate General of Antiquities & Museums

STATE PARTY REPORT

Updating Information for the State of Conservation
Of the

Ancient City of Damascus (dossier n 20)
(Syrian Arab Republic)

May, 2016

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INTRODUCTION

This Progress Report on the State of Conservation of Ancient City of Damascus (dossiers n 20) properties is:

- Provides an update to the December 2015 State of Conservation report.
- Prepared in to be present on the previous World Heritage Committee meeting 40e session 2016.

Information Sources

This report represents a collation of available information as of 31 December 2015, and is based on available information and site visits from the DGAM team in cooperation with (Antiquities of Old Damascus & Syrian World Heritage Sites) on April - May 2016.

Name of World Heritage property: **Ancient City of Damascus**
Date of inscription on World Heritage List: 1979

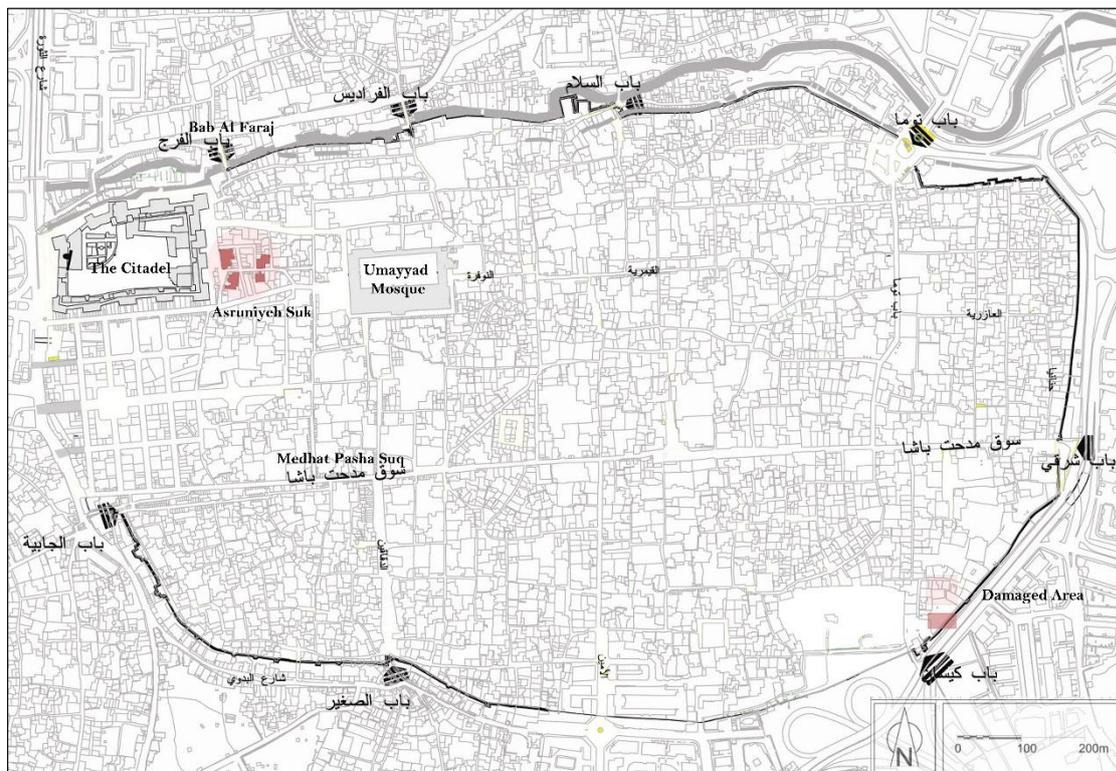
INTRODUCTION

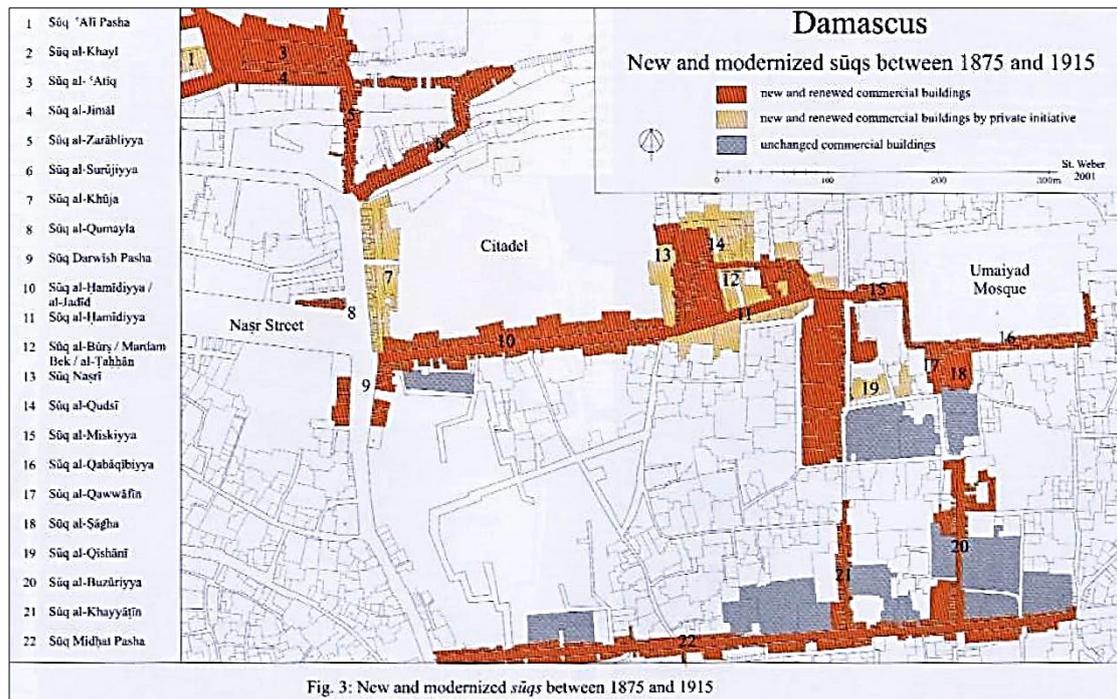
The uncovered Asruniyeh suk is adjacent to the famed Al-Hamidiyeh suk and behind the eastern wall of the citadel.

It built during 1875-1915, this market is named after the Asruniyeh School which was built in the same area during the Ayyubid era. Its name also depend on the type of goods they sell like, Al -Asroniyeh (cooking utensils).

The suk was remodeled during the 20th century, the further integration in to a world economy brought new goods i.e. glassware, household and toys products.

The suk was built in to two floors and sometimes 3 floor using steel beams in construction, several shops had a second - floor store room.





The Suk contains several historical monuments in addition to the shops such as:

1. **The imperial Ottoman Bank:** constructed during the late Ottoman period at the end of the 19th century to serve as the premises for the Imperial Ottoman Bank.
2. **Al-Madrasa Al-Adiliya Al-Soghra:** Zahra Khatoun, the daughter of the Ayyubid king Al-Adil Seif Eddin, and the niece of Salah Eddine, established this Islamic school in the first half of the 13th century.
3. **Dar Al Hadith Al-Nabawi Al Sharif:** The Islamic school was built by the Seljuq Sultan Nour Eddine Zengi in the second half of the 12th.
4. **Dar al-Hadith of Nur al-Din:** it is assumed to have been built between 1164 and 1174, when Nur al-Din ruled over Damascus.

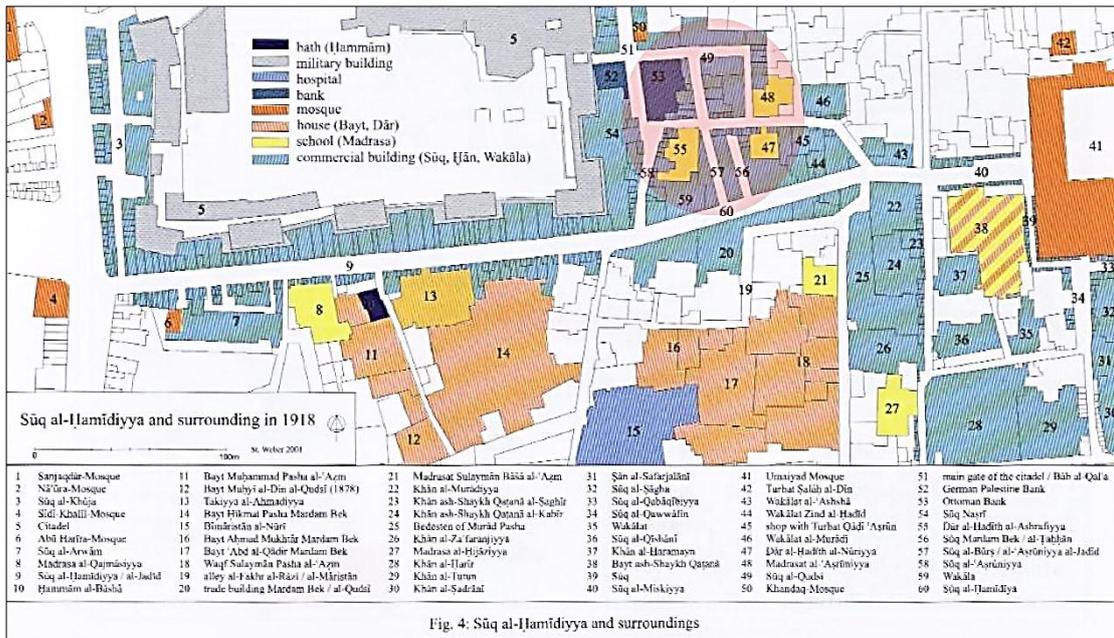


Fig. 4: Süq al-Ĥamīdiyya and surroundings

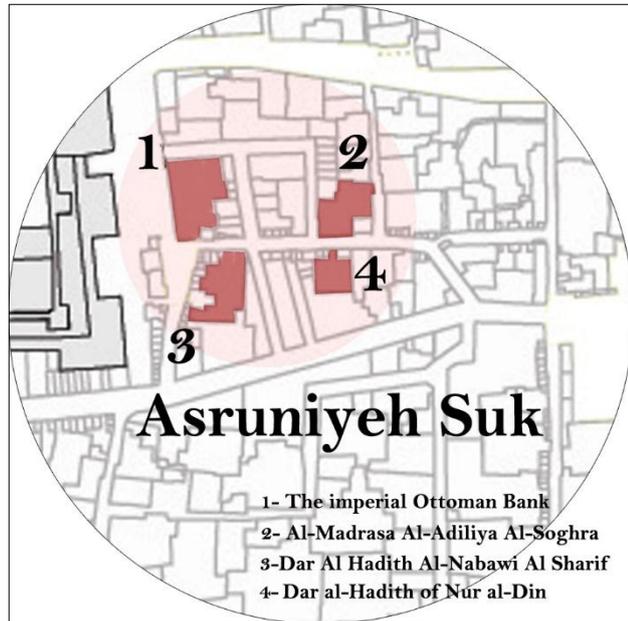
CURRENT STATUS

On Saturday (April 23) a fire ripped through the Asruniyeh Suq, a fire engulfed dozens of shops of more than 100 businesses reportedly sustained damage.

An electrical issue which may be was the cause of the blaze, began at about 6 a.m. local time for seven hours, but investigators haven't pinpointed exactly what happened.

The fire appears to have started in one of the shops, which sustained significant fire damage and spread towards the west side of the walled city, it has completely destroyed the ceiling of the imperial Ottoman Bank.

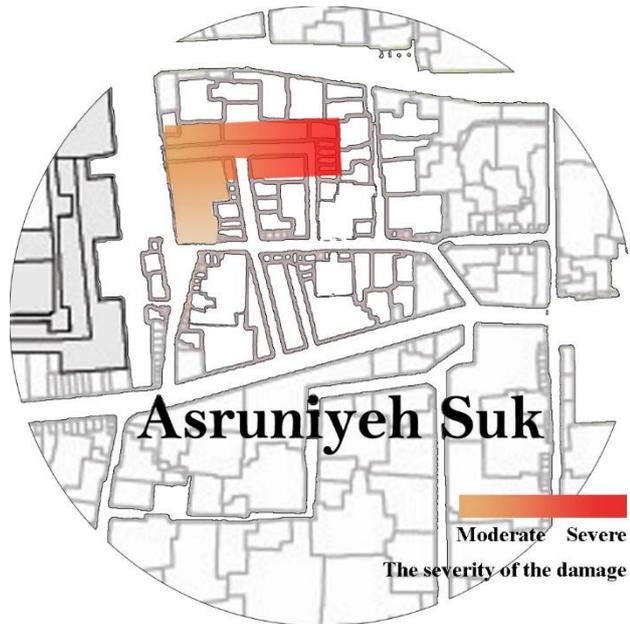
It worth to mention that the old city has been frequently damaged by heavy fires, which unsafe either whole town quarters, from historic times till present.



Map of the damaged area marked by red color

The size of the damage is still being assessed, from our experts rapid assessment we can summarize the damage as follow:

- More than 100 shops damaged.
- Several of the shops 2nd floor burnt down and totally destroyed.
- The bank affected by fire, the roof and windows were destroyed, interior walls damaged by fire while the outer facades witnessed minor damage.
- The rest of the Historical Monuments were undamaged.



PROTECTION MEASURES

According to our request, the Preparedness and response to a possible heritage emergency in the Old City of Damascus had prepared by ICOMOS Working Group together with UNESCO and other partners in December 2013 and was sent in January 2014 by the World Heritage Centre to the DGAM.

The DGAM submit the recommendations to the Damascus governorate in order to be implemented. The plan was carried out on the ground and the DGAM was supervised the implementation by the Governor of Damascus such as:

- Request to shop keepers within the Souk to clean their shops and remove as much as possible any flammable material and obsolete electrical equipment to reduce risk of fire and allow swift evacuation.
 - Promoting Coordination among:
 - Concerned national authorities competent for cultural heritage protection and those competent for disaster response operations (Internal Security Forces, Damascus governorate, Fire brigade, Damascus Health Directorate, Emergency ambulance) and several measures were taken in the old city such as.
1. Install the fire hydrants and fire extinguishers in key locations.

2. Remove deposits of flammable or explosive materials far away from vulnerable heritage structures.
 3. Secured the safety of the water reservoirs in the Old City.
 4. Remove the stored explosive material around the historic areas.
- Coordinating with Waqf ministry, Damascus University, Directorate of old city to share the documentation and data.
 - Engineering union to preserve the national heritage through lectures, seminars, workshops, conferences, and follow-up rehabilitation and restoration projects, and the formation of joint committees for this purpose.
 - Ministry of Tourism to monitor the compliance of tourist facilities in the old city readiness of fire extinguishers, secure public safety, and avoid storing facility of gas, fuel and implementation of self-protection measures .
 - Evacuation for collections in the heritage buildings.

One of the main old problems of the old city is that electrical work is dangerous and confusing, infrastructure of the electrical installation is inadequate and unsafe Systems, in addition the risk of electrical fire, shocks, short circuits increased because of the localized power failures that increases dramatically in Damascus and in Syria at all.

This is why the old city faced several fire problems recently in the walled city and its buffer-zone.

Asruniyeh Suk

The Imperial Ottoman Bank



The North Facade before damage



The North Facade - April 2016



The West facade towards Damascus Citadel -2012

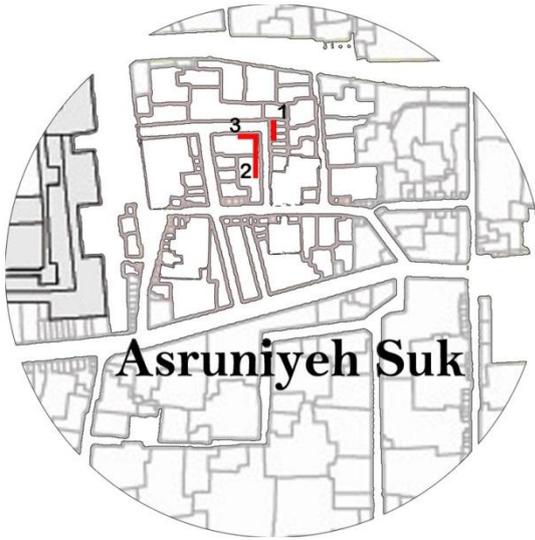


The West Facade - April 2016



The West Facade - April 2016

Asruniyeh Suk



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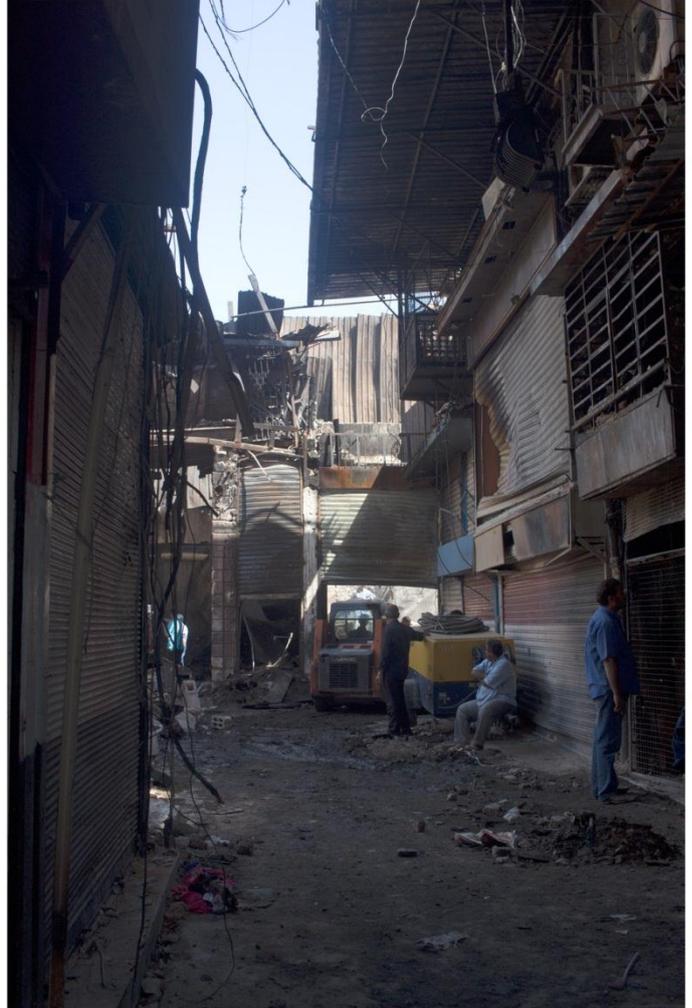


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Asruniyeh Suk



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2



1



Asruniyeh Suk



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