

## Castles of Syria (Syria)

No 1229

### 1. BASIC DATA

*State Party:* Arab Republic of Syria

*Name of property:* Castles of Syria

*Location:* Crac des Chevaliers is in municipality of Al Hosn (Homs Governorate); Fortress of Saladin is in municipality of Haffeh (Latakiah Governorate)

*Date received by the World Heritage Centre:* 1<sup>st</sup> February 2004

*Included in the Tentative List:* 8 June 1999

*International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the nomination:* 28 April 1998  
5 February 2003

*Category of property:*

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination, consisting of two *monuments*.

*Brief description:*

The castle of Crac des Chevaliers and the Fortress of Saladin represent examples of the development of military architecture in the Near East during the Crusader Period, in the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Crac des Chevaliers is a completely preserved castle from this period, and the Fortress of Saladin represents historical stratigraphy, which ranges from the Byzantine to Crusader, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods.

### 2. ACTIONS

*Background:* This is a new nomination.

*Date of the Technical Evaluation Mission:* 29 August-6 September 2005

*Dates of request for additional information and of receipt from State Party:* ICOMOS has sent a letter to the State Party on 30 January 2006 and the State Party has provided information on 27 March 2006.

*Consultations:* ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Fortifications and Military Heritage.

*Literature:* The nominated properties are referred to in several publications regarding the history of architecture, and more specifically history of the crusades and military architecture, e.g.: T.S.R. Boase, *Castles and churches of the Crusading Kingdom*, Oxford University Press, 1968; W. Müller-Werner, *Castles of the Crusaders*, London 1966; G. Coppola, *Fortezze medievali in Siria e in Libano al tempo delle Crociate*, Elio Sellino, 2002; M. Hattstein & P. Delius, eds. *Islam, Art and Architecture*, Könemann,

2000; J. Mesqui, *Château d'Orient, Liban et Syrie*, Hazan, 2001.

*Date of ICOMOS approval of this report:* 10 April 2006

### 3. THE PROPERTY

#### *Description*

The nomination consists of two medieval fortified castles, *Crac des Chevaliers* and the *Fortress of Saladin*, which are located in north-western Syria. These two castles represent military architecture that developed in the Near East from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, particularly in the period of the Crusades.

#### *Crac des Chevaliers*

In the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, the site of the *Crac des Chevaliers* (Crac of the Knights), was occupied by the *Castle of the Kurds*. This may also have been the origin of the name 'Crat' in Latin Sources, then 'Crac'. In the Crusader period, the site was in the possession of the *Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem* from 1142 to 1271. The Knights Hospitallers carried out the first important construction campaign transforming the place into *Crac des Chevaliers*. A second campaign was undertaken by the Mamluks who possessed the castle from 1271 to 1300. At the present, the castle is known as: Qal'at al-Hosn. The nominated core zone is 2.38ha, enclosing only the castle, surrounded by a buffer zone of 37.69ha, which covers the open landscape especially on the north side. On the south side of the castle, the buffer zone is articulated in two zones, which extend to parts of the nearby villages.

The castle of *Crac des Chevaliers* offers a superb impression to one approaching it from the surrounding countryside. The first phase (1142-90) of the construction corresponded to the extent of the earlier structure, the *Castle of the Kurds*. In its inner structure, the Crac had two concentric defence lines, enclosing the inner courtyard and forming a polygonal, which was raised to dominate the appearance of the whole castle. In the second phase (1190-1200) and the third phase (1200-71), this nucleus was then developed and remodelled by the Crusaders. After this, the Mamluks contributed to the repair or further improvement of the outer curtain walls, especially on the south side, which had suffered from various battles. They also built new structures such as the massive square tower on the south side (Qalawun, in 1285).

The outer curtain of the castle is furnished on the north and west sides with eight round towers. These towers are provided with carefully positioned loops, i.e. narrow openings to be able to shoot at the enemy. The main entrance gate is on the east side, giving access to a long bent and vaulted ramp, defended by a moat and draw bridge, as well as by numerous facilities built in an ingenious manner. On the west and south sides the inner castle has a remarkable glacis, over 25m at the base, called the 'Mountain', i.e. a structure scarpd into a gentle slope running downwards from the covered area towards the open country thus making it difficult for the enemy to position equipment for climbing the walls. At the south end of the inner structure is a stronghold formed of three great round towers, containing the finest apartments, which also served as a refuge.

### *The Fortress of Saladin*

The Fortress of Saladin (*Qal'at Salah ad-Din, Sahyun*) is located on a rocky spur (altitude 440m), which due its steep slopes is practically inaccessible except from the east. The nominated area of the Fortress is 6.49ha, including only the fort area. The buffer zone (129.52ha) covers the slopes of the fort hill. The fort dominates a vast landscape, from where its structures are visible. It has retained its overall layout and the principal structures. Its plan is formed of a narrow triangle (6.5ha), which points towards the west and is 720m long and 120m at the base. A tortuous access road leads to the castle from the north. The fort has been a feudal castle and the residence of the regional governor. Its construction started in the Byzantine period, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and continued in the Crusader period by the Franks. In the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Ayyubids further strengthened the structures.

The eastern part of the fort has the earliest remains of residential buildings and cisterns, which seem to have been inhabited before the period of the Franks. The upper court, in the centre of the spur, has most of the buildings that served different uses, including military, civil and religious. The lower court, to the west, occupies more than half of the overall length of the castle. It is separated from the upper court by a ditch, and its walls are furnished by four square towers. Two Byzantine chapels have been preserved. One is in the lower court and the other on the south front of the Byzantine castle. This latter was enlarged and modified in the Crusader period.

### *History*

In the general perception, the two castles and various others that had a role in the Crusader period, used to be associated mainly with the European invaders. More recently, their national significance has however been recognized. In fact, the Fortress of Sayun (*Château de Saône*) was renamed *Fortress of Saladin* in 1957 to honour the sultan who conquered it in 1188. This castle has its origins in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, when the region formed part of the eastern boundary of the Byzantine Empire, which was confronted by the Fatimids, the Mirdasids and later the Seljuks, who all erect defensive structures based on the experiences of the Umayyads, Abbasids and early Byzantines. The Crac des Chevaliers dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, when it was known as the Castle of the Kurds. During the Crusader period, starting from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Franks built or rebuilt several castles in the region. Their leaders stayed either in fortified settlements or in castles such as the Fortress of Saladin. In the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Latin lands were handed over to the Knights Hospitallers or Templars, who were then responsible for the construction until the castles were occupied by the Arabs in the late 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Subsequently, Crac des Chevaliers was occupied by villagers resulting in various additional structures. The Fortress of Saladin, instead, due to its relative isolation, was abandoned and remained unused for centuries. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both castles have been subject to restoration as ancient monuments.

### *Protection and Management*

#### *Legal provision:*

The core zone of Crac des Chevaliers is in state ownership. The surrounding buffer zone is divided into three sub-zones: in zone A all new construction is prohibited; in zone B structures up to two stories are permitted; in zone C structures up to three stories are permitted. The zones B and C are mainly privately owned, while zone A has mixed public and private ownership.

The core zone of the Fortress of Saladin is in state ownership. The surrounding buffer zone has three parts: the existing buffer zone, defined in 1959, and the proposed extension in zones A and B. At the time of the nomination, the extension is in the process of being formally adopted. In zone A all construction is prohibited, while in zone B, which is in private ownership, construction is regulated by the municipal master plan.

The nominated sites are protected by Syrian Antiquities Law (no. 222, revised in 1999) and by the Law of the Ministry of Local Administration (15/1971). The Ministry of Local Administration contributes to the protection in coordination with DGAM (*Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées*) and the local authorities.

#### *Management structure:*

DGAM is the only organism in Syria responsible for the protection of heritage sites. In the case of the two nominated castles, these have each a separate management system, organized jointly by DGAM in collaboration with the local authorities. In the case of Crac des Chevaliers the management system involves the village of al-Hosn, and in the case of the Fortress of Saladin, DGAM collaborates with the department located in the regional capital of Latakiah.

At the time of the nomination, DGAM was in the process of adopting a new administrative structure with new regulations that would be integrated so as to allow for a unified management system for the Castles of Syria.

#### *Resources:*

The funds for the maintenance and care of the castles are guaranteed from the annual budget of DGAM.

### *Justification of the Outstanding Universal Value by the State Party (summary)*

The nomination refers to the two castles as representative of a multicultural and military inheritance. Syria has a large number of castles and fortifications, testimony to the movements of peoples in the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Amongst these castles, Crac des Chevaliers and the Fortress of Saladin are considered the most representative. Particularly Crac des Chevaliers is the best preserved of them. The stones of these castles, which testify to the confrontation of two different conceptions, two different religious traditions, are now testimony to coexistence, exchange and interaction, a place for peace and culture, a monument for human genius.

The property is nominated on the basis of criteria ii and iv:

Criterion ii: The two castles are amongst the most extraordinary examples of castle architecture, and

symbolise the phase of the Crusades in the Holy Land, a period marked by exchanges of cultural influences and great development for military architecture. The two sites together may be considered as a sort of catalogue of technical and military innovations resulting from centuries of war and confrontations between Christian armies (Byzantine and then Crusader) and Muslim armies. The influence of the new architectural forms which developed in the region during this historic phase spread for subsequent centuries both in the East and West, thus making an essential contribution to the evolution of architecture and technology.

Criterion iv: The Crac des Chevaliers and the Fortress of Saladin furthermore are architectural archetypes of the 'Medieval fortified castle' by their position, architectural style and technical features. The silhouette and the plan of the Crac des Chevaliers, in particular, may fairly be considered to be the most perfect expression of a type of building - that of the fortified castle - which has come to symbolise the feudal period.

#### 4. EVALUATION

##### *Conservation*

##### *Conservation history:*

The castle of Crac des Chevaliers lost its strategic role gradually starting from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the military base was removed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The site was then occupied by local villagers. In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, first descriptions and measured drawings were prepared of the castle, which had by then become a subject for visitors and researchers. Systematic surveys of the castles in Syria and Lebanon were started in 1927, and villagers were removed from the Crac. The first restorations were undertaken during the French Mandate resulting in the removal of all the superstructures added by the villagers. The large halls were liberated from accumulated soil, revealing the original spatial qualities. The external walls were repaired and the courtyards had damp-proof paving to protect the spaces underneath. DGAM has continued the programme of maintenance, including some restoration and consolidation. In 2004, the main entrance and the donjon were restored by a German team, financed by MEDA-EU.

The strategic role of the Fortress of Saladin was lost after the Mongol period, though it was still used as a local district seat in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Subsequently it was abandoned, and fell partly in ruins. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was surveyed by French architects. During the French Mandate, in the 1930s, it was subject to restoration campaigns; e.g. the main gate was rebuilt in 1936. The strategy of recent years has been oriented towards conservation and consolidation. In 2000-2003, the Aga Khan Trust in collaboration with DGAM has carried out a campaign of excavations in the Ayyubid palace, and parts of the Byzantine walls have been restored.

##### *State of conservation:*

The castle of Crac des Chevaliers is in good state of conservation.

The Fortress of Saladin is partly in ruins, but the principal parts of the structure and their different historical phases have been preserved, e.g. the Byzantine citadel, chapel and

external walls, the Crusader towers, and the Ayyubid palace with its baths and towers. However, some parts require urgent consolidation and conservation.

##### *Protection and Management:*

##### *- Delimitation of the nominated areas*

In Crac des Chevaliers as well as in the Fortress of Saladin, the core zone is limited to the castle itself, which is state property and directly under the management of DGAM. Following the ICOMOS request, the State Party has assured that the triangular area that extends in front of the castle of Crac des Chevaliers is legally protected and is considered an integral part of the core zone. Similarly, in the case of the Fortress of Saladin, the State Party has confirmed that the lower courtyard, which was not included in the original core zone is part of the protected archaeological area and also integrated into the core zone.

Both castles are located on hilltops, where they dominate an open landscape. The buffer zones have been well defined covering in each case the entire hill and also extending beyond.

In the case of Crac des Chevaliers, parts of the village areas on the south side of the castle are included. The northern part of the buffer zone is legally protected, and a new decree will regulate the use of these areas for traditional type of farming. The village of Al Hosn to the south has a necessary planning control. In 1998, some unauthorized houses, restaurants and hotels have been built close to the castle, but the State Party has assured that these will be demolished in 2007.

In the case of the Fortress of Saladin, legal protection exists in the immediate surroundings of the castle, and it is in process of being established for the extended part of the buffer zone. It is recommended that the buffer zone A be extended across the valley, also taking note of the potential archaeological interest of the area.

##### *- Management system*

The representatives of the local and regional authorities have declared their commitment to collaborate in the protection and management of the two sites. At the moment, the management systems of each castle are working, and the State Party has assured that the new management system which will include both castle sites is expected to be operational in March 2006. The management plan takes into account all relevant aspects of management. The Ministry of Culture has decided to establish a special state department responsible for the management of all World Heritage sites in Syria.

##### *Risk analysis:*

Syria is seismic hazard area. The two castles have fairly massive structures, and therefore not particularly vulnerable. The management plan has foreseen risk prevention. The main risk comes from development. In the case of Crac des Chevaliers this risk is real, considering that there are settlements in the immediate neighbourhood. In the case of the Fortress of Saladin, this risk is less considering that it is far from cities. Nevertheless, even here, some unauthorised constructions have been built close to the castle. The following are some specific issues that have been reported by the ICOMOS expert:

Cable cars are proposed to be built in both castles. The projects are supported by the tourism authorities but have not been officially proposed to the Ministry of Culture. ICOMOS does not consider these projects compatible with the character of the sites, and recommends that they should not be carried out anywhere in the surroundings of the two sites.

ICOMOS considers that the current access routes to the castles are sufficient for the visitors. The proposal to extend the road to south-east of Crac des Chevaliers for a parking is not considered necessary. However, there is the possibility to create parking outside the buffer zone, in south-west direction, where it is less disturbing.

The ICOMOS field mission was informed of a project to build an open-air theatre on the terraces south-west of the castle of Crac des Chevaliers. ICOMOS considers that such a theatre would disturb the integrity of the site, and recommends that it should not be built.

### ***Authenticity and integrity***

#### ***Authenticity:***

The castle of Crac des Chevaliers was subject to some limited restoration during the French mandate, when the relatively recent additions by local villagers were removed and the medieval structures were liberated of accumulated soil. As a whole it has well retained its authenticity.

The Fortress of Saladin is located in an isolated region and was not subject to any changes in recent centuries. It has partly fallen in ruins, and is now an archaeological site. It has been subject some restoration. For example, the main gate of the Ayyubid palace was restored in 1936, imitating the original structure. This type of restoration has now been abandoned, and the main emphasis is on consolidation and conservation. As a whole, the castle has retained its historic condition and authenticity.

#### ***Integrity:***

Both nominated properties are located on hill tops dominating visually the surrounding landscape. Apart from some undesirable interventions in the buffer zones, the integrity of the surroundings is well preserved. The illegal constructions (some houses, restaurants and hotels) that have been built near the castles will be demolished. There are also plans for cable cars and an open-air theatre, which would not be in harmony with the integrity of the landscape. It is recommended that such plans should not be carried out.

### ***Comparative evaluation***

The region of the Near East has a rich heritage of fortifications. In this context, the Crac des Chevaliers is generally referred to in literature as the most outstanding masterpiece of the castles built or managed by the military orders in the crusader period. The Fortress of Saladin represents a different type of castle, which was used as the residence of governors. Even though partly in ruins, this castle is important especially as it became a model for the further development of military architecture in the region.

The nomination document presents a comparative study, which takes into account the fortifications both in the Near and Middle East as well as in Europe. Representing the period of 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the two castles are distinguished for their quality of construction, their multiple historical layers, and their state of conservation.

The study points out that in the region there are other castles, which might be considered as part of the serial nomination in the future. It mentions the castles of Marqab, Qal'at al-Mudiq and Shayzar. These castles are not included in the Tentative List. Syria does have other castles on the World Heritage List, which however represent different historic epochs. The fort of Aleppo has a history that goes back several millennia, and the Bosra fort, inside a Roman theatre, has been partly dismantled in the restoration process.

### ***Outstanding universal value***

#### ***General statement:***

The crusader period represents a particularly violent phase in the history of the Near East and eastern Mediterranean. It resulted in the development and improvement of castles and fortification systems, which had consequences in the east as well as in the west. There were three basic reasons for the large number of fortifications: the long and narrow shape of the Latin Kingdom, the lack of manpower, and the need for a feudal administration. Crac des Chevaliers and the Fortress of Saladin, built in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries are the most representative examples of this development, referred to their quality of construction, the multilayered historical testimony as well as their state of conservation.

#### ***Evaluation of criteria:***

The two properties are nominated on the basis of criteria ii and iv:

***Criterion ii:*** The crusader castles represent a significant development in the fortification systems, which substantially differed from the European rather more passive defense systems, and which also contributed to the development of the castles in the Levant. Within the castles that have survived in the Near East from the Crusader period, the nominated properties represent the most significant examples illustrating the exchange of influences and documenting the evolution in this field, which had an impact both in the east and in the west. ICOMOS considers that the property meets this criterion.

***Criterion iv:*** In the history of architecture, Crac des Chevaliers is taken as the best preserved example of the castles of the crusader period, and it is also seen as an archetype of a medieval castle particularly in the context of the military orders. Similarly, the Fortress of Saladin, even though partly in ruins, still represents an outstanding example of this type of fortification, both in terms of its quality of construction and the survival of its historical stratigraphy. ICOMOS considers that the property meets this criterion.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Recommendations*

ICOMOS recommends that the State Party:

- Keep the World Heritage Committee informed about any changes that are planned within the nominated areas and their buffer zones.

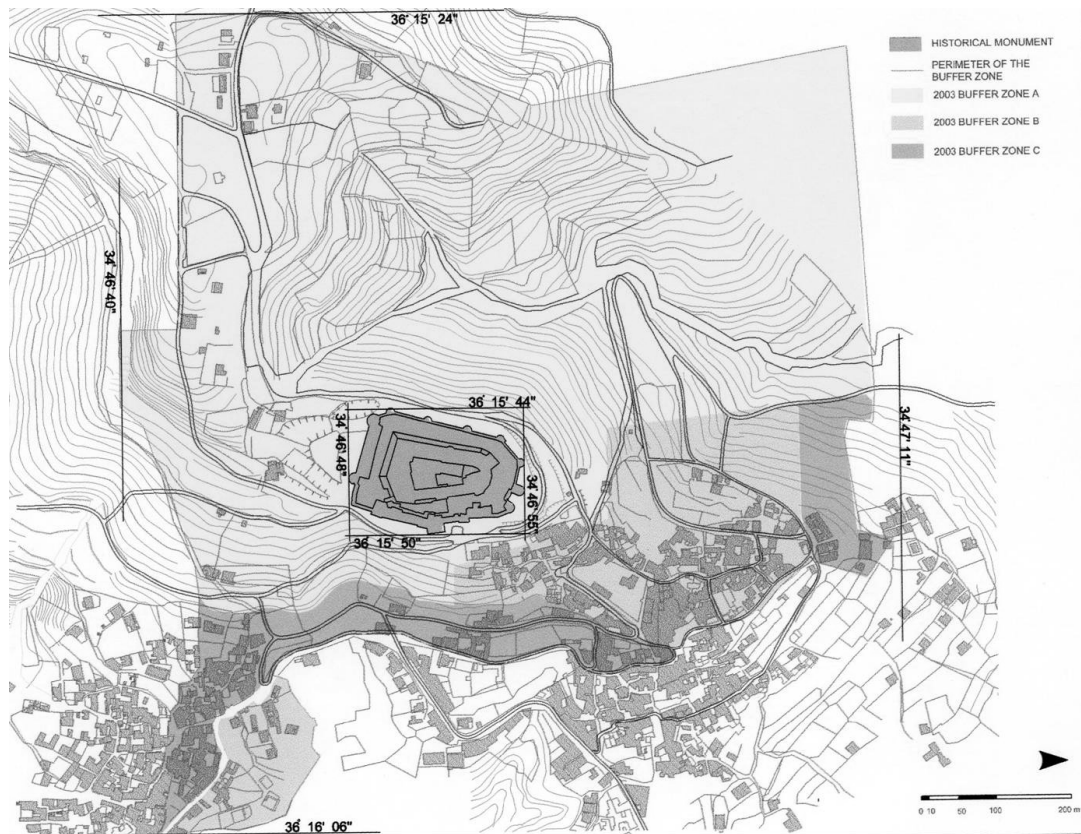
### *Recommendation with respect to inscription*

ICOMOS recommends that the Castles of Syria, Arab Republic of Syria, be **referred back** to the State Party in order to:

- provide a firm commitment that the cable cars would not be built within the core or buffer zones of the nominated properties;
- report back on the implementation of the new management system and initiatives regarding the clearance of illegal structures;

ICOMOS also notes that the State Party has agreed to change the name of the nominated property into: “*Crac des Chevaliers and Qal’at Salah El-Din*”.

ICOMOS, April 2006



Map showing the boundaries of the Crac des chevaliers



Map showing the boundaries of the Fortress of Saladin



**Crac des Chevaliers**



**Bank and keep**





**Fortress of Saladin**



**East ditch**