Hebron/Al-Khalil Old town (Palestine)
No 1565

Official name as proposed by the State Party
Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town

Location
West Bank

Brief description
The use of high quality local limestone characterised the re-building of Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town during the Mamluk Period between 1250 and 1517 AD. The focal point of the town was Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs whose buildings lie within monolithic walls built in the 1st century BCE to protect the tombs of the Patriarch Abraham/Ibrahim and his family. These came to be revered as a pilgrim site for the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, part of a triangle of holy sites with Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Hebron town dates back at least to the 1st century AD and probably much earlier. Nearby, on Tell Rumeida are extensive remains of urban settlements, some more than three thousand years old, that have provided evidence for a 4th century AD Christian Pilgrim centre.

The surrounding hills formed a sort of natural fortress for the Mamluk town and separated its well-watered fertile valleys from the desert beyond. The town was sited at the cross roads of trade routes for caravans travelling between southern Palestine, Sinai, Eastern Jordan, and the north of the Arabian Peninsula.

Although the subsequent Ottoman Period (1517-1917) heralded an extension of the town to the surrounding areas and brought numerous architectural additions, particularly the raising of the roof level of houses to provide more upper stories, the overall Mamluk morphology of the town is seen to have persisted with its hierarchy of areas, quarters based on ethnic, religious or professional groupings, and houses with groups of rooms organised according to a tree-shaped system.

What survives today reflects the impact of military actions in 1834; two earthquakes in 1837 and 1927, the demolition of quarters around the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs in 1965 to enlarge the piazza, and since 1967, the impact of settlers, (there are two Israeli settlements in the property), further destruction of buildings and the development of new urban areas in the periphery of the town.

Category of property
In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List
2 April 2012

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination
None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre
30 January 2017

Background
The nomination was submitted to the World Heritage Centre by the State Party on 30 January 2017 to be evaluated under normal evaluation procedures. It was transmitted to ICOMOS on 16 March 2017.

On 9 March 2017, the State Party wrote to the World Heritage Centre to request that the evaluation be changed from normal to Emergency Procedures, as set out in paragraphs 161 and 162 of the *Operational Guidelines*, in order that the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session in Krakow, Poland, in July 2017, could take a decision on the nomination. This change was requested for the following reasons:

- Ten UNESCO Executive Board decisions have not been fulfilled;
- Protest letters addressed to the Director General about continuous violations in Al-Khalil/Hebron have not had any effect;
- Alarming details of Israeli violations including vandalism, property damage and other attacks that impact on the authenticity and integrity of the property;
- The continuity and accumulation of these violations impact on the integrity, authenticity and distinctive character of the property;
- Some violations have irreversible negative impacts on the integrity, authenticity and distinctive character of the property;

Subsequently on 22 March 2017, ICOMOS wrote to the State Party to request supplementary information on the specific conditions that had led to the request to change the evaluation procedures. Over and above, the continuing violations, which have prevailed for a considerable time and are well set out in the Nomination dossier, ICOMOS requested further details on:

- New threats/damage that had emerged since the submission of the nomination dossier at the end of January 2017, and which could justify the requested change of procedure;

- How a decision by the World Heritage Committee might be necessary to stop these recent and sudden threats, reverse any damage caused, and ensure the safeguarding of the property.

The State Party replied on 22 April 2017 to say that:

- Since the submission of the nomination, more than twenty violations have occurred that impact on the visual and/or physical integrity and authenticity of the property and that these violations are part of a systematic hostile campaign; details of the violations were provided;
- Inscription would place the property under international standards of conservation which are binding for State Parties to the World Heritage Convention;
- Inscription would also allow follow-up by the World Heritage Committee;
- These steps could reverse, or at least limit, the damage already done.

Consultations
ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages and several independent experts.

Technical Evaluation Mission
ICOMOS attempted to undertake a Field Visit to the property. It persisted in trying to arrange the necessary travel until early June when it became apparent that the visit was regrettably unfeasible, as the necessary permissions were not forthcoming for travel and access to the Hebron H2 zone, which is under Israel military control, and within which lies the nominated property.

Additional information received by ICOMOS
See above

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report
26 June 2017

2 The property

Description
The nomination dossier focuses mainly on the Mamluk and early Ottoman periods of Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town and its Islamic history. It sets out the overall spatial morphology of the town, and in particular the links between defined areas, quarters (*hosh*) and family houses in relation to its development during the Mamluk and early Ottoman periods. It states that the town bears witness to a progressive sedimentary urban structure.

As the descriptions are quite general and are not augmented by detailed plans, or many photographs, quite how it was adapted over time is not clearly set out, particularly in relation to structures that preceded the Mamluk period as well as to later changes that have taken place over the past two hundred years and,

particularly, more recently (see History). Many old photographs are included in the dossier that show the town in the early 20th century at the end of the Ottoman period but in the main how these views relate to what is there now is not highlighted.

The following description is thus a general overview as in some instances it is not entirely clear how strongly certain urban features survive, persist or can be perceived, and, in the absence of a field visit, verification has not been possible.

Urban plan

In the Mamluk period, the town was divided into three areas of which two have been nominated:

- The area around Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs
- The area of the Qaytoun quarter to the south separated by the *wadi*
- The third area of Sheikh Ali Bakka, which is separate and located to the north-east of the historic centre, is included in the buffer zone.

The nomination dossier does not clarify whether these areas have any specific defining visible characteristics.

A hierarchy of streets connected these three main areas with some of the main streets being covered with vaulting through which openings provide light and ventilation. The two main arteries were al–Shuhada Street that followed the path of the old Jerusalem road and passed through the valley at the periphery of the Mamluk town, and Al-Qasaba, the central axis of the old town, that ran east-west. Off these, narrow and winding smaller roads connected the main areas to small piazzas, and from these, further alleys or dead-end streets led to individual houses. Although these are said to reflect the layout of the Mamluk town, it is also suggested that many alleys and some of the buildings fronting them may date back to 11th century Crusader times, or even earlier to the 7th century Umayyad period.

The nomination dossier states that this road mesh structure is still readable on maps and aerial photographs, but, as these are not provided, what proportion of the dense Mamluk period network of streets survive is not altogether clear.

Each of the three areas was traditionally divided into *hara* or quarters that reflected 'ethnic' communities, family clans, religious groups or professions. There are historical references to the Kurds (harat Akrad), the Ja'abari (from the Ja'abar citadel, on the Euphrates), or the Dari clan, (Bani Dar quarter), to the Christian quarter (harat al-Nasara, mentioned by Mujir al-Din) and the Jewish quarter (harat al-Yahud, mentioned in the 16th century Ottoman tax registers and by the Jewish travellers during the same period), and to professions, such as the glassmakers (al-Qazzazine).

Thirteen named quarters are listed in the nomination dossier with two in the buffer zone. How these different areas are still differentiated in some way is difficult to judge from the information presented as no distinct visible characteristics are mentioned.

The trade specialism of each *hara* created a symbiotic interaction between different areas of the town particularly thorough souks. Today, the main souks are al-Qazzazine; al-Lahhamin; al-Hesriyyeh, where carpets and rugs are traded, al-Zayyatine for olive oil and sesame, al Ghazl; al-Laban for dairy produce, al-Sakkafiya and al-Attarine. There were two types of souks: open spaces (piazzas), surrounded by small shops and workshops, and rows of small shops and workshops laid-out on either side of a road. How far these souks are still thriving is unclear, as the nomination dossier shows old photographs of bustling streets and lively souks alongside present day photos of empty streets.

Within each *hara,* family dwellings known as Hebronite *hosh* [plural: *ahwash*] are organised as a group of units around dead-end alleys branching off the more main streets. The layout of the *ahwash* is complex and reflects additions and extensions to accommodate the family's expansion over several centuries. Most of the *ahwash* are built on two or three floors with the ground floor being used for animals, storage or shops.

The nomination dossier outlines a specific typology of the Hebronite *hosh*, but does acknowledge similarities with the *ahwash* of Tripoli in Lebanon. The dossier's presentation lacks architectural plans and drawings showing interior and exterior designs and spatial relationships with the bordering *ahwash* and streets to support such distinctiveness.

Public buildings

Many public buildings, religious and secular, including mosques, prayer halls (zawiyeh), baths, etc. were built or re-built during the Mamluk Period of which some survive today.

The main monument of the town is the centrally sited Al Haram Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of the Patriarchs. Elements of the current building date back to long before the Mamluk Period, as do its religious associations and the reasons why it is revered by Christians, Jews and Muslims alike. The mosque is said to host the remains of God's prophet Abraham/ Ibrahim, his wife Sara, their sons Isaac and Jacob and their wives Rebecca and Leah, as well as Jacob's son Joseph. There is reference in the Book of Genesis to Abraham purchasing the field for the tomb. The sanctity of the tomb site was known from as early as the Herodian Period, (1st century BCE) when a monumental enclosure was built around the sacred Cave of Machpelah, whose location is now lost. This enclosure of massive, finely dressed stone blocks still frames the mosque and within it are structures that reflect later Fatimid, Crusader,

Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods. The great covered prayer hall was constructed in 12th century out of the remains of the Crusaders 11th century Romanesque church which in turn arose from the ruins of a 7th century mosque.

During the Mamluk period, Al Haram Al-Ibrahimi Mosque became one of the wealthiest in Palestine, and it supported the construction of many smaller mosques, schools, prayer halls, hospices, caravanserais, bathes, water fountains etc. in response to a scientific and economic revival.

Only two other mosques survive: these are the Ibn Othman Mosque, believed to date back to the Mamluk Period and the al-Qazzazine Mosque, originally built in the 17th century and party reconstructed in the early 1920's. Five Zawiya still survive but no details are provided as to how they relate to the Mamluk period. Three hammams are still standing, one of which dates back to the Mamluk period while the others were constructed in the 19th and 20th centuries. Four caravanserai lie within the property of which one is thought to date back to the Mamluk period.

A notable feature of Mamluk planning was the water supply system for the town that brought water from springs in its outskirts along an aqueduct to reservoirs, fountains and baths. Two reservoirs survive: the Birkeh al-Qazzazine reservoir (now covered by the al-Qazzazine Mosque) and the Birkeh al-Sultan reservoir, as well as three fountains, the Al-Tawshi ablution fountain (part of Al Haram Al-Ibrahimi/ The Tomb of the Patriarchs complex), the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque patio fountain, and the Al-Ain al-Hamra fountain (red spring), all built during the Mamluk Period.

The property also includes the remains of the al-Qala'a fortress built during the Crusader Period but destroyed in 1834 during the Egyptian Expedition led by Ibrahim Pasha. Only the western façade and the south-western corner remain today.

As the nomination dossier focuses on the Mamluk period, Tell Rumeida is excluded from the boundary as are mention of the earlier Hebronite towns, and other aspects such as wells and caves dating back to the Canaanite, Roman and the Crusader eras.

Even though stress is put on the religious associations of Al Haram Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of the Patriarchs with the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the association of the wider town of Hebron with Jewish and Christian as well as Islamic culture has not been highlighted even though extensive remains testify to these links. And although mention is made of Hebron as being a sacred town and pilgrimage centre in a triangle with Jerusalem and Bethlehem, nor is it clear how these associations are reflected in the town..

Major changes to the property since 1965

In 1965, several houses were destroyed, along with parts of the al-Qala'a, al-Khadama and al-Madrasa quarters when the Jordanian Ministry of Antiquities expanded the piazza in front of Al-Ibrahimi Mosque.

Since 1967 and Israeli occupation, a segregation wall has been constructed that borders Hebron city to the east and north. Within the property there are two Israeli settlements, Avraham Avinu, and Beit Romano Settlements, constructed in the 1980s while others surround the city: Beit Hadassah Settlement and Tell Rumeida Settlement, are located in the buffer zone and in the wider setting there are Qiryat Arbaa' and Ramat Mamre (Kharsine) to the east, and Hagai to the south. In addition, the nomination dossier notes the construction of watch towers and headquarters for the Israeli army in the old city.

A new bypass road runs through the northern parts of the town. In 2002, buildings were demolished under military order no 02/61/C to create a new street which links the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs to the settlement Qiryat Arba, although the nomination dossier does not detail precisely what was demolished.

Since 1994, the Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/ Tombs of the Patriarchs complex has been divided into two separate parts with restricted access.

History and development
While the focus of the nomination is on the town as developed during the Mamluk and early Ottoman periods, there is evidence of much earlier settlements in the vicinity at Tell Rumeida dating back to 4,000 BC. By 2,200 BC, a Canaanite town had developed with well-fortified Cyclopean walls that were subsequently re-used in a further large, prosperous urban settlement is associated with King David, King of Israel that flourished between the end of the 11th and the end of the 10th centuries BC.

Tell Rumeida was partially abandoned in the Persian Period (539-332 BC), reoccupied during the Hellenistic Period, and flourished again during Roman times (37 BC to 324 AD). During the 4th century AD, pilgrimage accounts mention Christian shrines and a large Cathedral. The town suffered attacks in the 7th century AD when it was largely ruined, although the holy site apparently remained intact becoming derelict only in the 8th and 9th centuries.

Tell Rumeida is not included in the nominated area.

By the late 7th century AD, during the Umayyad Period, Hebron/Al-Khalil was developing as an Islamic town named after the Prophet Ibrahim. It was centred on the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs, constructed on Roman remains and became a "holy city" on the model of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem.

During the Crusader Period in 1099 AD, Godfrey of Bouillon seized Hebron/Al-Khalil and renamed it Castellum Saint Abraham. The prayer halls of the Ibrahimi Mosque were destroyed, but not the outer Roman walls (temenus), which were used in the construction of a Romanesque Church.

In 1187 AD, the town was retaken by Saladin from the Crusaders. Under Ayyubid rule (1187-1250), Hebron/Al-Khalil's importance was re-established, and particularly its special ties with Jerusalem. Different ethnic communities such as Kurds, and Turkmen, in addition to local Arabs, were encouraged to settle in Hebron/Al-Khalil and the holy site was opened for Jews and Christians.

During the Mamluk Period, (1250-1517) the town became a centre for pilgrims and scholars and with economic prosperity, its major neighbourhoods took shape. Following the example of other Islamic cities, the town was divided into quarters according to ethnic, religious and professional differences. And from 1259, the town was administratively linked to other great Mamluk cities such as Damascus, Karak, Gaza and Cairo.

During the long period of Ottoman rule (1517-1917), art and architecture were strongly influenced by Istanbul, capital of the Empire. The town expanded and extensions and additional floors were added to existing buildings.

Like many other cities in the area, in 1831, Hebron/Al-Khalil, fell into the hands of Ibrahim Muhammad Ali Pasha. Following a siege against rebels in 1834, he destroyed the al-Qala'a fortress along with several quarters in the historic centre.

A few years later, the city suffered from a major earthquake in 1837 (and again in 1927) but revived at the end of the 19th century to become an important trade centre.

In 1917, Palestine was occupied by the British Army and later became a British Mandate. Jewish families living in Hebron left the city after the eruption of violence in 1929 and mainly after 1948 war when the British mandate ended and Israel was established.

In 1965, the Jordanian Ministry of Antiquities expanded the piazza in front of Al-Ibrahimi Mosque. Several houses were destroyed, along with parts of the al-Qala'a, al-Khadama and al-Madrasa quarters.

From 1967 onwards, during Israeli occupation, settlements have been constructed in different parts of the city, streets have been closed, access-restrictions imposed and archaeological remains and historic buildings near Al-Ibrahimi Mosque destroyed. A large number of Palestinians have left the old town and Jewish settlers have moved in with two settlements being constructed within the property. At the same time, there

has been urban development in Hebron's hinterland and surrounding villages, which has resulted in urban services such as bus stations, markets and schools being relocated outside the old town.

In 1997, under the terms of the Oslo Accords, agreed between Israel and the National Palestinian Authority, the town was divided in two zones, H1 and H2, with the latter zone under Israeli military control. This has had the effect of further curtailing the movement of people and increasing restrictions. The nominated property lies wholly within area H2.

According to the nomination dossier, military orders closed 512 commercial shops and another 1,114 shops were closed by their owners as a result of restrictions. Overall, 6,000 citizens left the old town.

The migration of the middle-class residents to the outskirts and the resulting de-population of the old town was hastened after the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000.

Measures are now being taken by the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, formed in 1996, to reverse this trend and encourage Hebronites to stay in their old town. And the nomination dossier indicates that these are being effective with 7,044 citizens in 2000 increasing to 10,565 by 2009, and 11,954 by 2014.

3   Justification for inscription

Comparative analysis
The comparative analysis sets out to compare a combination of the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property and the attributes that convey Outstanding Universal Value with other properties on the World Heritage List, on Tentative Lists and elsewhere.

The attributes are considered on the basis of the proposed three criteria: (ii), (iv) and (vi) as follows:

(ii):   -A multi-cultural City
          -A pilgrimage city
          -The architectural sedimentation in Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs
(iv):   -Urban structure and layout
          -Architectural typology
(vi):   -A Holy city and pilgrimage centre
          -Association with spiritual values and beliefs of outstanding universal significance

While ICOMOS agrees with this overall approach, the defined attributes are rather too general as they do not identify precise aspects of the nominated town.

The properties selected for comparison are inhabited cities belonging to the same geo-cultural area as Al-Khalil/Hebron Old Town. They are drawn from the Arab Region and from areas outside the region that may be considered to lie within the similar geo-cultural area.

The large number of selected properties are considered separately in terms of criteria, periods of history, whether or not they have religious associations, and what type of religious association is apparent.

Although the overall comparative analysis is very thorough and extensive, the methodology used in terms of comparing aspects of the property rather than the whole property, with its particular combination of attributes, does weaken its conclusions.

The conclusions drawn are that towns and cities divided into independent quarters based on ethnic, religious or professional grouping can be identified in many historic cities and historic centres in the Arab region and more generally in the Islamic world such as in Damascus, Syria ("Ancient City of Damascus", 1979, criteria (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi)) and Aleppo in Syria ("Ancient city of Aleppo", 1986, criteria (iii) and (iv)), Historic Cairo in Egypt (1979, criteria (i), (v) and (vi)), Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls (1981, criteria (ii), (iii) and (vi)), Fez in Morocco ("Medina of Fez", 1981, criteria (ii) and (v)) and Istanbul in Turkey ("Historic Areas of Istanbul", 1985, criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv)). In most of the properties, the quarters have become less and less visible through the process of modernisation, while they can still be clearly identified in Al-Kahlil/Hebron Old Town since its urban fabric has been relatively well preserved from later interventions due to its sacred character.

Unlike other historic cities in the region with rich Mamluk heritage, such as Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus or Aleppo that experienced considerable developments during the Ottoman period which drastically changed their urban fabric, the Old Town of Hebron/Al-Khalil had more modest changes that did not affect the urban structure and layout of the Mamluk city. This point however is not substantiated in relation to the specifics of what existed and what survives in the Old Town of Hebron/Al-Khalil or of what survives in many Mamluk cities that were similarly developed during the Ottoman period. If it is being suggested that Old Town of Hebron/Al-Khalil is the only surviving or best preserved Mamluk town, then there needs to be a clearer understanding of its precise details.

In terms of housing, it is suggested that although the collective housing system where several families share a hosh is relatively common in all historic cities in the Arab world, the Hebronite *ahwash* differ from the typology found in most other historic cities where the dwellings are generally based on courtyards. The only similarities are said to be with structures in Tripoli but their similarities are not illustrated with plans, nor comparative details of survival. The details provided do not fully justify this conclusion. Hebron's *ahwash*'s typology is not unique in the Arab and Islamic world. Asymmetrical urban structures characterized most Mediterranean traditional urban fabric until the late 19th century. Many factors contributed to forge this urban fabric including climatic and topographic conditions. The architectural

plans, facades, sections and diagrams of functional distribution of the example of the *hosh*, al-Batch, are of modest quality and do not support the arguments put forward.

Moreover, in terms of cities that reflect a period in human history, in relation to criterion (iv), the main comparator is seen to be Tripoli where the city was similarly re-designed during the Mamluk period. It is argued that its Mamluk features no longer have integrity as a result of dramatic recent urban development. Other Mamluk cities such as Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus or Aleppo although much larger are also considered to have a less well defined Mamluk layer.

What is missing here is the necessary detail to support these contentions: precisely what exists in the town of Al-Khalil/Hebron that can be read as the best example of Mamluk planning and buildings.

Although architectural sedimentation is acknowledged as being a common feature of many historic cities and historic centres in the Arab region, the town of Al-Khalil/Hebron is seen to be different in that its architectural sedimentation is confined to one monument, the mosque, while in many other properties the sedimentation is visible across many monuments.

In consideration of the significance of religious associations, it is suggested that Al Khalil/Hebron is unique as a religious place that is valued by all three monotheistic religions for similar reasons as the burial place of God's prophet, Abraham/Ibrahim, his wife Sarah, their sons Isaac and Jacob, and their wives, Rebecca and Leah, while for other holy sites such as Jerusalem, which is also sacred for these three religions, the reasons behind these associations are different for each religion. ICOMOS would support this assertion, that the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs taken alone is an outstanding building for the way it allows three religions to share one set of rites and practices.

The religious associations of the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs cannot be extended from one building to the whole town.

Although the comparative analysis is detailed, the approach of comparing certain aspects of the town rather than the whole town as a combination of attributes leads to some difficult conclusions. Although the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs can be seen as exceptional on its own for its religious associations, and architectural sedimentation, neither of these aspects has been justified for the whole town.

For the whole town, the main claim is the survival of its Mamluk planning and buildings which have not been overlaid in Ottoman times to the same extent as happened in other cities, whose architecture and urban fabric were shaped by the Mamluks, or at least smaller ones, and the survival of its clusters of domestic houses

in a particular form only found elsewhere in Tripoli but where fewer have survived.

As stated earlier, the lack of detailed information on what survives in the town and whether and how the characteristics of the Mamluk town are visible means that it is difficult to understand the strength of these comparisons.

A further weakness is the definition of the property as a Mamluk town as this excludes the extremely important time depth of Hebron, a town whose history can be extended back at least a thousand years before the Mamluk period and possibly much longer. Although it is stated that the nominated property is thought to be one of the oldest cities continuously inhabited in the world, the emphasis of the nomination is on a small period of that history in the form of the Mamluk town, apart from the earlier structures of the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs. This means that the association of Hebron with Jewish and early Christian societies is given little recognition, and Tell Rumeida and other sites are excluded from the boundaries.

Had these sites been included, the comparative analysis would have more readily been able to demonstrate the lack of comparators for a property that could have been seen to have spanned urban settlement from 2,200 BCE right through to the end of the Ottoman Period and also key evidence for the development of three of the world's monotheistic religions.

On the basis of the current Mamluk focus of the nomination dossier, ICOMOS considers that insufficient detail has been provided to substantiate the outstanding nature of the survival of town planning and buildings relating to the Mamluk era.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis has not so far justified consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value
The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

The Al-Khalil/Hebron old town:

- Is an outstanding, exceptionally complete and well preserved example of unique urban and architectural characteristics inspired by the human values of Hebron/Al-Khalil community;
- Reflects continuous fabric which dates back to the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods;
- Was shaped by the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs, an outstanding example of building that illustrates significant stages in human history;
- Benefitted from its location on the main commercial routes in the region;

- Became a meeting place for groups coming from different faiths, ethnicities, and backgrounds, whose intermixing added a high degree of socio-economic and cultural exchange throughout the centuries;
- Has generally been preserved, despite the destructions that affected certain districts of the town in 1965.

ICOMOS considers that this justification sets out some of the characteristics of the old city but does not quite define why is might be considered outstanding or exceptional in relation to other cities that have maintained their intactness and coherence over time in relation to specific cultural traditions or a period of history. Nor does this justification mention the focus on the Mamluk era, which is put forward in the text of the nomination dossier.

What are set out in the nomination dossier are the characteristics of the Mamluk town, particularly its urban morphology and defined quarters, and the religious associations of the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs, and it is suggested that these aspects have persisted over time in a way that cannot be seen in other cities from the same geo-cultural region as they were more substantially altered in Ottoman times.

ICOMOS considers that although Hebron may be a good reflection of town planning of the Mamluk period, it cannot readily be seen as exceptional on the basis of the evidence provided in the nomination dossier which does not well connect the ideas of Mamluk morphology with what survives on the ground in terms of the level of details provided. And although the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs reflect stages of history and also of universal significance relating to the way adherents of three monotheistic religions share one set of rites and practices, such justifications cannot be said to apply to the whole town on the basis of what has been nominated.

Moreover, ICOMOS considers that Hebron/Al-Khalil has greater potential to be recognised on the World Heritage List in relation to its long and rich urban history, not just during the Mamluk Period, and to its profound connection with three of the world's monotheistic religions. To achieve this, the property would need to encompass Tell Rumeida and other key sites as well as the whole core of the Mamluk town, including the third area Sheikh Ali Al-Bakka, which, as suggested in the nomination dossier, actually reflects much earlier street patterns and earlier ground floor buildings facing the streets.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The boundaries of the proposed site are said to correspond to the boundaries of the continuous fabric of Hebron/Al-Khalil Town during the Mamluk Period, which is linked to the 'rampart' houses, some of which survive.

The line is apparently based on travellers' narratives and architectural survey. However, without detailed maps or plans having been provided to define and justify this line, it is difficult to comment on the logic of the boundary. Moreover, one area of the old town, Sheikh Ali Al-Bakka, has been excluded. More evidence needs to be provided on sources as well as a detailed map that displays the boundaries of the continuous fabric of Hebron/Al-Khalil old town during the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods.

The nomination dossier underscores the state of intactness of the majority of the property but acknowledges the destruction of some parts of the property during the 1960s and the vulnerability of what remains in relation to policies undertaken by the Israeli army, especially, concerning the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of Patriarchs which was divided and become subject to Israeli military measures after a massacre perpetrated in 1994 by an Israeli settler.

The nomination dossier also details the impact of two new Israeli settlements, the closure of roads that prohibit an understanding of the overall layout of the town, the demolition of buildings to create a new street which links Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs to the settlement Qiryat Arba, and the negative, accumulative impact of Israeli violations including vandalism, property damage and other attacks, all of which appear to impact adversely on the integrity of the property, some irreversibly.

In the absence of a Field Visit, ICOMOS has been unable to evaluate fully the integrity of the property or its potential vulnerabilities.

Authenticity

According to the nomination dossier, "the property meets the conditions of authenticity as it reflects adequately well-preserved cultural values which are the essential parts of its universal value". In terms of specifics, the text mentions that the morphology of the old town, its spatial organization and water system have remained mostly unchanged, and have retained their Mamluk form and design, that traditional materials are still used in the conservation and restoration works in the old town since the mid-1990s, that there is continuity of use of certain buildings erected during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods.

In order to justify this approach, more details need to be provided to illustrate how the boundaries of the town correspond to the Mamluk and Ottoman periods; more evidence for the Mamluk architectural repertoire of the preserved buildings and the water supply system, and more photographic illustrations. Further, details need to be provided as to what conservation and/or re-building has been undertaken in the old town since the 1990s and what happened before this period; whether further example of Mamluk buildings still in use can be approved beyond the one hammam built in 1226 that is mentioned.

The division of the mosque and other barriers within the town are said to have an adverse impact on authenticity. The text states that the division of the own into two into two parts, H1 and H2, threatens its character. The nomination dossier also details the impact of two new Israeli settlements, the closure of roads that prohibit an understanding of the overall layout of the town, the demolition of buildings to create a new street which links Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs to the settlement Qiryat Arba, the negative and cumulative impact of Israeli violations including vandalism, property damage and other attacks, all of which impact adversely on the authenticity of the property some irreversibly.

In the absence of a Field Visit, ICOMOS has been unable to evaluate fully the authenticity of the property or its potential vulnerabilities.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed
The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi).

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the old town represents an outstanding example of a community who came from a myriad of different faiths, ethnicities and backgrounds, and drew inspiration from the same traditions and values, especially those of the Prophet Ibrahim/Abraham, as exemplified in the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs which connects every quarter of the town and shows a sedimentation of different cultural influences and styles.

ICOMOS considers that although the old town clearly housed a multi-cultural community that came to share values and approaches, what has not been demonstrated is how the town as a whole reflects in its form and structures the contribution of this community in terms of an interchange of ideas.

It is stated that the urban planning of Hebron/Al-Khalil's Old town is a kind of map of its inhabitants' social relations, clearly showing the system of social relationships between inhabitants within each quarter and also the relations between the inhabitants in different quarters within the road system. And it adds that the interchange of various cultures and ethnic groups within the same space is reflected in the urban fabric of the old town. The difficulty is that these statements have not been related to any specificities that could illustrate the points made. How the quarters were and perhaps still are distinctive is not made clear, nor why one area has been excluded.

The Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs reflects many different layers and styles that are in turn related to its history, but it is the town as a whole that has been nominated and to which this criterion needs to apply.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not so far been demonstrated.

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that Hebron/Al Khalil Old Town bears witness to a flourishing town of the Middle East that experienced its "Golden age" between the 12th and the 15th century. The existing urban structure dates back to the Mamluk period, with a second-story system introduced during the Ottoman period. The town is a unique example of an urban structure that has preserved remarkably the historical urban fabric as well as the morphology and residential typologies dating back to the Mamluk period.
The residential parts of the Old Town were built in a *hosh* system, which represents a unique typology different from the common residential typologies found in other Arab and Islamic cities.

ICOMOS considers that the details provided in the nomination dossier and the comparisons undertaken have not clearly substantiated precisely what Mamluk urban structures and buildings have survived, and how they relate to earlier and later urban forms, and particularly how they combine to reflect an outstanding example of an urban system that was widespread in the Middle East area.

ICOMOS considers that focusing only on the Mamluk period also means that potentially outstanding aspects of Hebron's urban history and persistence have been overlooked.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not so far been justified.

Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that thousands of years ago, Hebron/Al-Khalil was a town where prophets visited, lived and were buried. Beliefs, traditions and ideas have been the foundation of the town's lifestyle for many centuries. The Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs has come to symbolize these very important values, thus perpetuating the importance of Hebron/Al-Khalil for mankind.

ICOMOS considers that the justification for this criterion must apply to the whole property not just to one building. Whereas if only the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs was nominated it might be possible to see it

as reflecting ideas of universal significance relating to the way adherents of three monotheistic religions share one set of rites and practices, such a justification cannot be said to apply to the whole town on the basis of what has been nominated.

ICOMOS considers that there could be potential to consider a wider justification for this criterion if the property encompassed structures that extended its history to much earlier phases and provided more evidence of the way the long history of Hebron has been shaped by the three monotheistic religions.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not so far been justified.

4 Protection, conservation and management

The aim for a comprehensive vision to manage and control the area in all related fields and sectors in a participatory management concept as set out in the nomination dossier, is clearly counteracted by the constraints currently imposed on zone H2 of the town.

'Normal' planning and management processes cannot be undertaken by the three partners (Hebron/Al-Khalil Municipality – Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and antiquities – Hebron Rehabilitation Committee).

And in spite of the prominent initiatives of the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee founded in 1996, the infrastructure and public services in zone H2 appear to have regressed.

In the absence of a Field Visit, it has not been possible to assess the potential effectiveness of the protection and management measures put forward in the nomination dossier or their current implementation.

5 Emergency threats affecting the property

The State Party has set out the following emergency threats as a reason for requesting an Emergency Inscription:

- Ten UNESCO Executive Board decisions have not been fulfilled;
- Protest letters addressed to the Director General about continuous violations in Al-Khalil/Hebron have not had any effect;
- Alarming details of Israeli violations including vandalism, property damage and other attacks that impact on the authenticity and integrity of the property;

- The continuity and accumulation of these violations impact on the integrity, authenticity and distinctive character of the property;
- Some violations have irreversible negative impacts on the integrity, authenticity and distinctive character of the property.

Subsequently the State Party provided details of incidents between the submission of the nomination dossier on 1st February 2017 and mid-April 2017, during which period more than 20 violations occurred that were said to impact on the visual and/or physical integrity and authenticity of the property. As well as restrictions to freedom of movement, and prohibitions against calls to prayer, these included:

- Occupying forces dug a 30cm hole at the site of Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi, removed a set of historic stones and covered part of the entrance with concrete;
- Military forces prevented restoration work on the roof of the Hammam Ibrahimi roof and at Birket al-Sultan;
- Occupying power prevented members of Hebron Rehabilitation Committee from undertaking restoration work in two historic homes;
- Occupying power damaged Birket al-Sultan mosque by conducting illegal excavations;
- Cultural heritage site (historic home) seized for military purposes;
- Israeli army installed a barrier of cement blocks in the Old Town.

The State Party also summarised violations between February 2015 and January 2017. As well as restrictions to freedom of movement, and prohibitions against calls to prayer, these included:

- Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) conducted a dig in Tell Rumeida neighbourhood, believed to be part of creating a Biblical Park to explain the Jewish history of the site and the city and caused considerable damage to the area; (Tell Rumeida is outside the nominated property)
- Features of the Seven Steps Area and Ablution Space at the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs were changed;
- Israeli occupation authorities banned maintenance of the Maqam en Nabi Yaqin mosque;
- Israeli occupiers dug the cave below the floor of the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque;
- The Israeli government began to implement plans to establish a new settlement on the former bus station in the old town.

What is clear is that threats and violations are systematic and long-standing. They have a significant impact on the lives of ordinary citizens, resulting in the gradual depopulation of the old town, (although this is to a degree now being reversed), and also interfere with the conservation of cultural heritage assets. Over time, these can be seen to threaten the resilience and

sustainability of urban life, and the conservation of the property.

The current situation has persisted for more than the past two decades and before the 1997 Oslo Accords divided Hebron into two main zones: H1 under Palestinian control and H2 [in which the nominated property is located] under Israeli control which facilitated settlements and imposed restrictions in zone H2. In 1994, the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs was divided into two parts with special military measures imposed by the Israeli army following a massacre perpetrated by an Israeli settler. As the dossier underlines, this turned the site into "a permanent hotbed of tension and clashes".

The nomination dossier indicates that one of the main objectives of inscription of Hebron Old Town on the World Heritage list is to reduce the restrictions imposed by the Israeli Army on everyday life. "This UNESCO registration should help to limit restrictions on the Old City's life, particularly to the rehabilitation works and economic development because of the Israeli occupation".

The threats and violations reflect a long-standing and complex political situation. To address these, ICOMOS suggests that a political response will be necessary as a framework to support rehabilitation and restoration work.

6 Summary

In response to the requirements of Emergency Nominations as set out in *Operational Guidelines*, paragraph 161, ICOMOS has considered whether:

- The property is in Danger, as a result of having suffered damage or facing serious and specific dangers from natural events or human activities, which would constitute an emergency situation;
- An immediate decision by the Committee is necessary to ensure its safeguarding;
- The property may unquestionably justify Outstanding Universal Value.

ICOMOS has considered carefully the conditions put forward for Emergency Inscription in the context of the nomination originally being submitted for an ordinary evaluation.

ICOMOS considers that the property is under threat as a result of a long-standing and complex Israeli-Palestinian political situation. Restrictions have been in force in the old town since 1967 and these were intensified in 1994 and following the Oslo Accords. As well as leading to boundary walls, new roads and the construction of two settlements within the property, some demolition have taken place and conservation has been hindered. Moreover, the restrictions on free movement and the transfer of services to the periphery have had the effect

of encouraging outward migration from the old town, although this is now slowly being reversed.

ICOMOS considers that the property is under threat; it also considers that the reasons for these threats relate to long-standing issues.

Since a Field Visit could not be organised, ICOMOS cannot judge whether recent incidents have drastically increased the level of threats to a degree that the situation may be considered an emergency for which an immediate action by the World Heritage Committee is needed.

The justification for inscription put forward in the nomination dossier relates to the way the Old town of Al-Khalil/Hebron is considered to be an outstanding example of planning and architecture of the Mamluk period, that reflects complex cultural interchanges, associated with ideas of international significance.

While ICOMOS considers that the old town clearly housed a multi-cultural community that came to share common values and approaches, what has not been demonstrated is how the town as a whole reflects in its form and structures the contribution of this community in terms of an interchange of ideas. It is stated that the urban planning of Hebron/Al-Khalil's Old town is a kind of map of its inhabitants' social relations, clearly showing the system of social relationships between inhabitants within each quarter and also the relations between the inhabitants in different quarters within the road system. And it adds that the interchange of various cultures and ethnic groups within the same space is reflected in the urban fabric of the old town. The difficulty is that these statements have not been related to any specificities of the architecture or planning that could illustrate the points made. How the quarters were and perhaps still are distinctive is not made clear. Nor precisely how the planning and architecture were re-shaped during the Mamluk and early Ottoman periods and what if this survives.

A much stronger and more specific case would need to be made to justify how the old town might be considered as outstanding in relation to its Mamluk planning and buildings combined with its religious importance. More details would be needed to illustrate precisely what was built in Mamluk times, what has survived and what has changed over time and to substantiate the idea that the areas and quarters reflect different professions, religions and social structures as well as a multi-cultural interchange and the way the layout of the houses may be said to be specific to Hebron.

ICOMOS considers that strengthening the justification for a nomination focused on Mamluk and early Ottoman aspects might be possible, and would need to include all three areas, rather than just two, but suggests that a much clearer potential appears to exist for Hebron, both the currently nominated old town and its forerunner Tell Rumeida, being considered as demonstrating the long

evolution of urban settlement reflecting many periods in history, associations with the three Abrahamic religions and their pilgrimage rites.

While Al-Ibrahimi Mosque/The Tomb of Patriarchs reflects many different layers and styles that are in turn related to layers of history, and in being considered sacred by three of the world's main monotheistic religions could be considered too be associated with ideas outstanding universal significance. But it is the town as a whole that has been nominated and not this single building. The nomination dossier mentions that in Umayyad times was a pilgrimage site for the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and that during the Ottoman Period, Muslim pilgrims went from Jerusalem to Mecca, passing through Hebron/Al-Khalil, Islam's fourth holiest site. But these early and later association are not developed or linked to aspects of the town that could be said to reflect this pilgrimage activity. The main reasons for these omissions appears to be a focus on the Mamluk period and the exclusion of Tell Rumeida on which ancient Hebron was sited until the Mamluk period. ICOMOS considers that there appears to be the potential for a strong case to be made for considering Hebron as a pilgrimage centre but to support this Tell Rumeida would need to be included and a clearer focus on sites relating to Jewish heritage.

ICOMOS would also like to note that the importance of Tell Rumeida as part of historic Hebron is clearly underlined in a UNESCO report [July 2005] which states: "Preserving the spatial relation between Tell Rumeida, the wadi and the old urban fabric around the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque must be an absolute priority for the comprehension, conservation and fruition of the Historic Hebron", [p. 612]. Moreover, this report highlights that a "Revitalization of Hebron Old Town Project" (1999-2001) planned to establish an archaeological park at Tell Rumeida, linked to the city by a tourist circuit.

ICOMOS considers that the inclusion of Tell Rumeida in the property would reinforce its multicultural and multi-religious character and give it great time depth – justifying the claim that Hebron is one of the oldest cities continuously inhabited in the world – which the currently nominated property cannot substantiate - and also allow it to develop a much clearer rationale for Hebron as a town being a major focus for pilgrimage for the three Abrahamic religions.

In view of the lack of a Field Visit, combined with limited details on certain aspects being provided in the nomination dossier, ICOMOS has not been able to fully evaluate the justification proposed for Outstanding Universal Value in the nominated property, particularly in relation to integrity, authenticity and management, but does consider that there are potential vulnerabilities and weaknesses in the case as presented.

7 Report

Since a Field Visit could not be organised, ICOMOS cannot judge whether recent incidents have drastically increased the level of threats to a degree that the situation may be considered an emergency for which an immediate action by the Committee is needed.
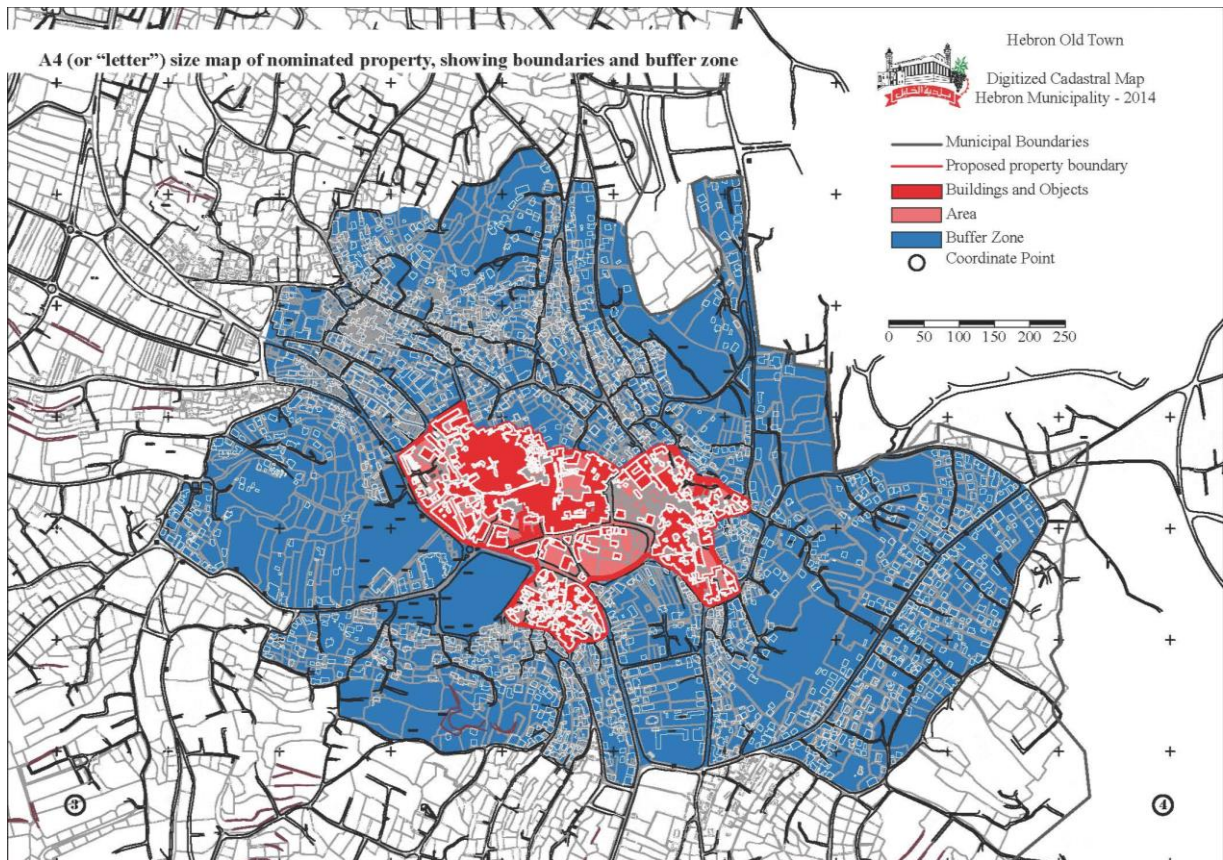
In view of the lack of a Field Visit, combined with limited details on certain aspects being provided in the nomination dossier, ICOMOS has not been able to fully evaluate the justification proposed for Outstanding Universal Value in the nominated property, particularly in relation to integrity, authenticity and management, but does consider that there are potential vulnerabilities and weaknesses in the case as presented. ICOMOS cannot therefore confirm that the property unquestionably justifies Outstanding Universal Value.

8 Recommendations

In view of the lack of a Field Visit, ICOMOS has not been able to fully evaluate whether the property unquestionably justifies some criteria, conditions of authenticity and integrity and management requirements nor whether recent incidents have drastically increased the level of threats to a degree that the situation may be considered an emergency for which an immediate action by the World Heritage Committee is needed.

Under these circumstances, ICOMOS recommends that a field visit to Hebron/Al-Khalil Old town, Palestine, be carried out as soon as possible to assess these issues.

ICOMOS would be ready and willing to offer advice and support in developing what it considers to be the strong potential for Outstanding Universal Value to be demonstrated for an enlarged property that includes Tell Rumeida, the three areas of the old town, and other sites with religious associations.
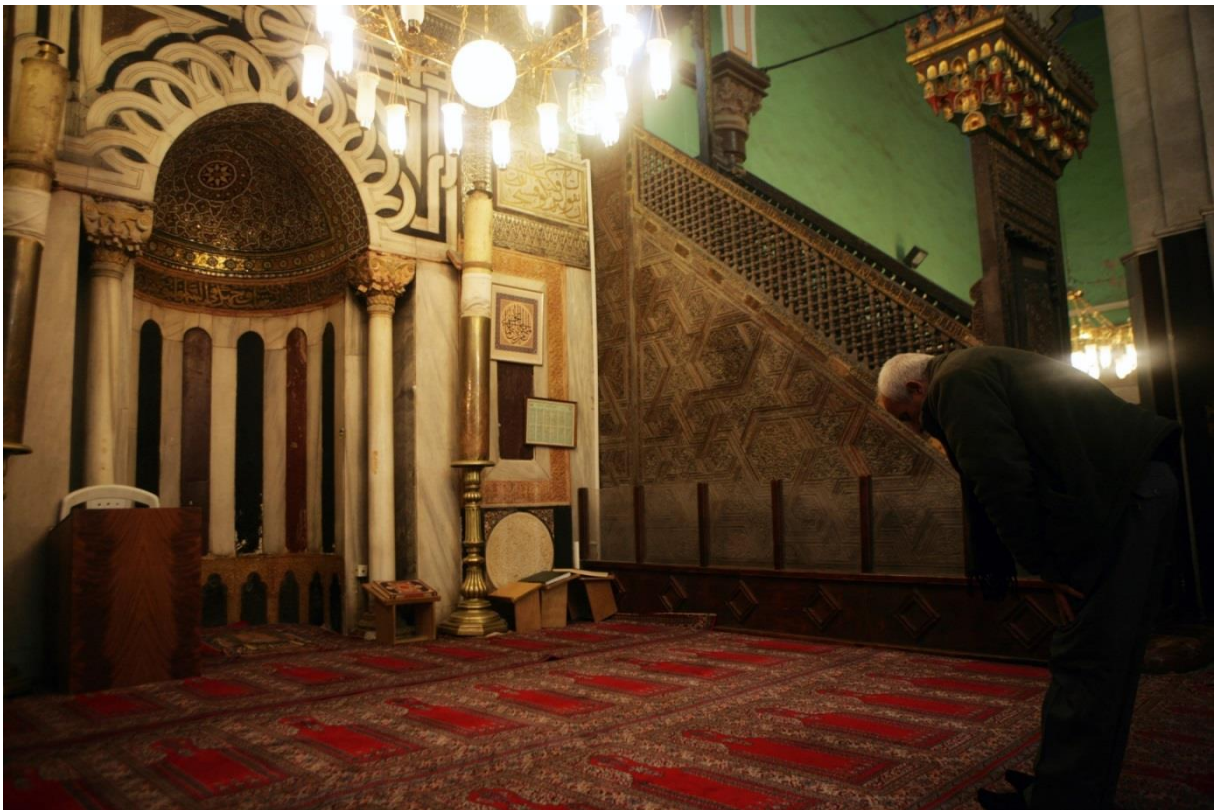
Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property

Overall view of Hebron/Al-Khalil Old Town

Traditional houses

Al-Ibrahimi Mosque