



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

**State of Conservation Report**  
**Hatra-Ashur- Samarra-Babylon**

**The report was prepared in response to the decisions of the World Heritage Committee taken during the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee ( Baku, 2019)**

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## Important

The increasing threat factors to cultural heritage in Iraq in general and the World Heritage sites in particular, and the increase the number of questionnaires that the State party filled out in the past year, which coincided with the third session of the third circle of periodic reports on the Arab region undertaken by the World Heritage Committee for the period (2018- 2024) all these indicated to high concern in world heritage demands. The international requirements have increased, and with it the plans must be completed in the World Heritage sites, especially those listed in danger , including the site management plan, the comprehensive conservation plan, and emergency plans of the site. The management plan of tourists.

The state board of antiquities and heritage, and through the formed committees, follow up the completion of corrective measures in the sites in order to remove the sites from the list of danger in response to international demands.

In spite of the limited work on the World Heritage sites that are in danger, we are awaiting the start of the financial expenditures in order to start with conservation works.

If we exclude the sites of (Hatra and Samarra), there are conservation works still underway in the ancient city of Babylon before and after the inclusion on the world heritage list by the state board of antiquities and heritage and WMF in response to the international demands approved by the World Heritage Committee during 43th session Baku / 2019, where in Ashur the work is still ongoing to conserve the retaining wall of the river to reduce the effects of the river.

Accordingly, the State party has fully absorbed the plans and facilities needed in the World Heritage sites, and it plans to complete those plans in the sites in order to preserve the outstanding universal value of the sites and the sustainability of these sites on the World Heritage List.

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## **Executive Summary**

The inclusion of the ancient city of Babylon on the World Heritage List during the (43) session of the World Heritage Committee (Baku / Azerbaijan) 2019, became the sixth historic site in which Iraq is honored to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

In Iraq, the concept of world heritage rises a lot through awareness campaigns that it conducts between local communities and advances in their role in preserving world heritage sites.

In a related context, the state board of antiquities and heritage / Department of International Organizations held an interactive training course by extracting the required data from the World Heritage Center site and the course entitled (Data Mining , World Heritage Literature as a Model, World Heritage Sites in Iraq) between the department's employees, led by the managers of world heritage sites and some representatives of local communities in order to raise awareness.

Despite the few conservation work on the World Heritage sites in Iraq, planning is being taken in the entirety of protection and management operations and awaiting the start of financial expenditures, as the government has approved large financial allocations for the World Heritage sites, namely the archaeological city of Samarra, Babylon and the marshes, and that these amounts will be allocated to conservation work in the sites and this is in response to international demands and establishing of infrastructure facilities.

Towards the same goal, the international organizations department / The state board of antiquities and heritage has

prepared a detailed report on the World Heritage sites listed in danger , and diagnosis of international demands in those sites by reviewing all the decisions issued by the World Heritage Committee related to those sites.

As for the achievements that were made in the World Heritage Sites, the attached report and the recommendations that the State party deems necessary and that the World Heritage Committee consider after increased international pledges to improve the state of the World Heritage sites in Iraq while we did not see anything in the sites, even those that were recently liberated from the hand of terrorism (ISIS)

## **١- Iraq and World Heritage**

### **General background**

Iraq is the first regional country to ratify the World Heritage Convention and adopted the concept of world heritage and its mechanisms through the completion of the first nomination file for the city of Hatra, where he won the honor of listing for the site in (1985) then followed by the city of Ashur in 2003 and then the archaeological city of Samarra in 2007 and Erbil citadel in 2014 and the marshes 2016 and finally the city of Babylon in 2019, and there is an internal move to look at the sites of the tentative list and consider the priorities of the nomination of sites.

There are plans are being developed in other sites such as marshes and Babylon, and planning is taken in the area of drawing the paths of visitors and planning to establish infrastructure facilities as a center for guiding visitors, especially since the sites, after their inclusion on the World Heritage List, witnessed a remarkable tourist movement, and the

tourist movement will increase in light of government interest in outstanding universal value sites .

There is a trend now to develop comprehensive conservation plans for the world heritage sites in danger , as recommended by the World Heritage Committee.

Despite the limited work accomplished in the World Heritage sites, the State party, Iraq is looking forward closely to the international community and taking international pledges and decisions to protect the Iraqi heritage its way for implementation after the road became clear to implement the international pledges and after the liberation of three Iraqi sites listed on the world heritage list in danger.

As our sites were liberated two years ago, and it needs to be in a timely manner for the World Heritage Committee to send a mission to assess the damage in the World Heritage sites, Hatra, Ashur and Samarra.

## **2-General Decision on the World Heritage properties of Iraq**

43 COM 7A.21

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/19/43.COM/7A.Add.2,
2. Taking note of the report provided by the State Party regarding the state of conservation of the properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger, expresses its concern about the lack of comprehensive and detailed assessment of the properties affected by the conflict and about the limited resources available for the safeguarding of affected cultural heritage;
3. Expresses its appreciation to the Director-General of UNESCO for the progress made towards safeguarding of cultural heritage in the Old City of Mosul, and for the

expertise and resources mobilized so far within UNESCO's "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" flagship initiative;

4. Requests the State Party to submit updated documentation of damage incurred at World Heritage properties, to safeguard damaged properties according to the principle of minimal intervention, and to refrain from undertaking conservation and restoration work until comprehensive conservation plans have been developed, in full consultation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
5. Also requests the State Party to revisit and address the priority actions outlined in the Response Plan for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in Liberated Areas of Iraq (2017-2019), with the support of UNESCO and the international community;
6. Reminds the State Party about the need to submit to the World Heritage Centre, for examination by the Advisory Bodies, information on any future plans for major restoration or new construction projects that may affect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of World Heritage properties, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse;
7. Reiterates its appeal to all Member States of UNESCO to cooperate in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage coming from Iraq as per the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2199 of February 2015, 2253 of December 2015 and 2347 of March 2017, and encourages the State Party to ratify the Second Protocol (1999) to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict;
8. Calls again on all Member States of UNESCO to provide technical and financial support to safeguarding efforts for Iraq's cultural heritage, including through the "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" flagship initiative, in order to implement short-, medium- and long-term measures;
9. Also requests the World Heritage Centre to present at its 44th session in 2020 a report on the activities undertaken



within the framework of the “Revive the Spirit of Mosul” flagship initiative;

10. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2020**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the properties and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 44th session in 2020.

### **٣-Iraqi sites listed on the World Heritage List**

The World Heritage sites in Iraq were distributed among the cultural and mixed sites such as the marshes site, where the task of preparing the site's report was entrusted by the Ministry of Water Resources. As for the Erbil Citadel, the administration of Erbil Citadel deals with the World Heritage Center and send periodic reports of the site, so the current report will be about Hatra, Ashur, Samarra and Babylon during 2019 and the sites are;

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

The first historical site in which Iraq receives the honor to be inscribed on the world heritage list , in 1985 and the Kingdom of Hatra is one of the oldest Arab kingdoms in Iraq , specifically in the northwestern plain of the Mesopotamia. The Kingdom of Hatra was centered in the city of Hatra to the southwest of the city of Mosul at a distance (110) km away from the city of Ashur about (60) km. Hatra kingdom appeared in the second or third century B.C. and was ruled by four kings who continued their rule for nearly a hundred years.

The Kingdom of Hatra (Arabia) was known for its architecture, arts, weapons, and industries. This city was comparable to the city of Rome in terms of progress, where it found bathrooms with a sophisticated heating system, controlled towers, tightly

carved inscriptions, mosaics, metal coins, and statues. They also coined money in the Greek and Roman way and gathered great wealth as a result of their economic prosperity. The Persians and Romans tried to invade it repeatedly, as the Roman emperor Trajan and Roman Emperor Septimius Severus failed in the year 199 AD after he occupied both Babylon, Seleucia and Ctesiphon because its inhabitants defended it stubbornly.



**Figure 1 , An aerial view of Hatra.**

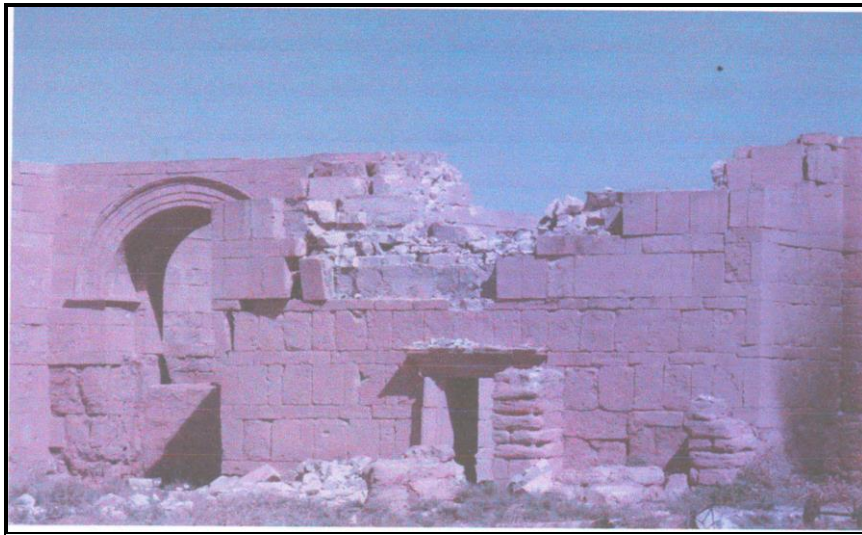
The first interests of the site were by the Germans, led by (Walter Andrae) since 1904, when they were working in the city of Ashur , they drew up plans for the city and studied its remains in 1911.

As for the works of the state board of antiquities and heritage, started work at the site since 1951, where the excavations reached valuable results, where many statues were found inside the temples and written panels in the Aramaic script.

The work of the state board of antiquities and heritage, in the site continued to conserve many of its monuments and for the importance of the site as it was nominated to be the first

historical site in Iraq to be included on the World Heritage List in 1985.

The city occupied in 2015 by ISIS, which continued to occupy the site for two years, and has caused a lot of damage at the site, which we will include in the report of the damage of the site.



**Figure 2 Damage to the eastern wall of the Great Temple (Hatra) as a result of a shell**

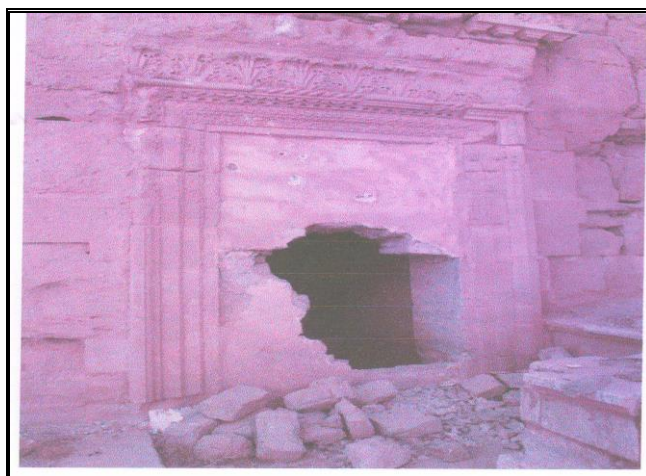
In March 2015, the terrorist organization (ISIS) began destroying archaeological sites in Hatra temples and statues for legitimate reasons from their point of view.

As for the city's position in the World Heritage List, it has been detailed through the following table;

١	Governorate	Ninawa	
٢	The city name	Hatra	
٣	Date of Inscription	١٩٨٥	Inscribed on the list of danger /2015
٤	Coordinates	N35 35 17.016 E42 43 5.988	
٥	Criteria	<a href="#">(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)</a>	
٦	Property	323.75 ha	
٧	Ref	277rev	

Source; World Heritage Center( Access Date 20/1/2020)

Two years after the occupation of the city by the terrorist forces, the site has been liberated , and now the state party is requesting the World Heritage Center to send a technical mission to assess the damage done to the site.



**Figure 3 Entrance to one of the rooms opened by the terrorist forces in the Northern Iwan**

### **3-2 Ashur**

Ashur is the capital of the Assyrian state and continued its historical importance until the end of the seventh century B.C. (614 or 612) B.C.E., it is located on the West Bank of the Tigris River. Its ruins are located 110 km south of Mosul, the site's

excavation carried out at the beginning of the twentieth century by a German team, and other excavation followed in the year (1945) by an Iraqi and German joint research team.



**Figure 4 The Ziggurat of Ashur is one of the city's landmarks**

The city of Ashur sits on a large area estimated at hundreds of hectares, including 65 hectares, as a residential area protected by walls in the Assyrian era. The most important Assyrian monuments are located to the north of the current site, where we find Ashur God temple , which was the holiest place in the city. Excavations also revealed temples, palaces, residential complexes and a large amount of cuneiform inscriptions that formed a major source of Assyrian history.

The excavations of the German mission headed by Walter Andrae in (1904) are considered important for the history of the city, as they revealed many of the city's landmarks, and the state



board of antiquities and heritage has paid a lot of attention to the city.



**Figure 5 , A prominent landmark in the city of Ashur (Tabira- Gate) after its destruction by the terrorist forces**

The city suffers from the impact of natural factors that left its obvious effects on the site, especially from the western side located on the Tigris River, where the Assyrians paid attention to the danger of river flooding and the corrosion caused to the city. It is reported that the first who made retaining wall , king Adad Narari I (1307-1275 BC) from the brick, stone and mortar material in it are asphalt. The retaining wall has been subjected to corrosion and removal in many parts of it due to the effect of the river's water. The state board of antiquities and heritage has done a lot of work in the field of conservation of the stone retaining wall in Ashur ,and and contracted with a national company to preserve the retaining wall , and we will provide you with the full report of conservation if it is completed.

Among the other works that the state board of antiquities and heritage conducted at the site is filling the trench with soil that was dug around the Ziggurat of Ashur, and because of the

danger, it poses to the body of the Ziggurat due to weather factors.

The site was listed on the World Heritage List in danger in 2003 and is still on the list of danger because there are many international requirements on the site in the field of protection and management must be done on the site.

The terrorist organization (ISIS) occupied the entire site and remained in its occupation of the site for two years, and the site was liberated .



**Figure 6 The valley formed by rainwater that led to the fall of the retaining wall stone.**

It became clear that the terrorist forces had caused a lot of damage on the site, starting from the Ziggurat of Ashur, Tabira-Gate, Farhan Pasha Palace and the headquarters of the German expedition . Also, such damage will be included in the special report of Damages to the site.

With regard to the relation of the site to world heritage, the following table has been drawn up;

1	<b>Governorate</b>	<b>Salah al-Din</b>	
٢	<b>Site name</b>	<b>Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat)</b>	
٣	<b>Date of Inscription</b>	<b>٢٠٠٣</b>	<b>Inscribed on the list of danger /2003</b>
٤	<b>Coordinates</b>	<b>N35 27 24 E43 15 40</b>	
٥	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>(iii)(iv</b>	
٦	<b>Property</b>	<b>٧٠ ha</b>	
٧	<b>Buffer zone</b>	<b>100 ha</b>	
٨	<b>Ref</b>	<b>1130</b>	

Source; World Heritage Center( Access Date 20/1/2020)

### **3-3 The archaeological city of Samarra**

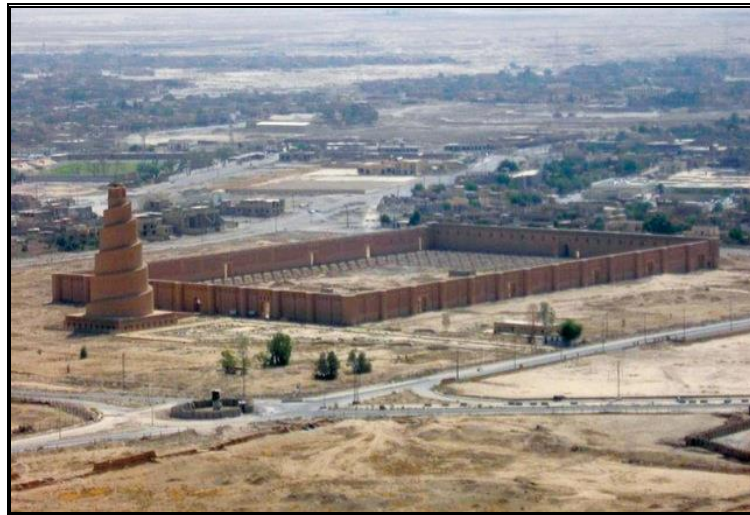
Samarra located on the banks of the Tigris River from the eastern side, and is approximately 120 kilometers from the capital, Baghdad, from the northern side.

The historical city of Samarra gained its fame by taking it as the capital of the Abbasid state during the era of Caliph al-Mu'tasim Billah, and at that time it was able to extend its influence and control over the land extending from the borders of China and central India to the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and it contains archaeological and engineering monuments, and the most important of these prominent monuments at the historical level is the great mosque and its minaret (Al Malwiyya). The caliph's palace and Al Mashooq palace.

The excavations led by Herzfeld in the ruins of Samarra in the period (1911-1913) considered the first of its kind, as archaeologists have never been systematically interested in or specialized in the Islamic era.



The state board of antiquities and heritage has shown interest in the site since the thirties of the last century, as it carried out a lot of excavation and restoration work on the site, and archaeological revival project of Samarra and Mutawakilyya which was launched in the decade of the eighties, bore witness to that interest .



**Figure 7 The Great Mosque of Samarra, known Mallawiya Mosque**

However, many mistakes occurred in the field of conservation and all of these errors were evident on the day of inscription the site on the World Heritage List in 2007, and conservation errors appeared in the Caliphate palace and Al Mashooq palace where they were rebuilt with materials outside the archaeological preservation frameworks and the use of strange materials on the conservation field, such as the use of cement.

With regard to the relation of the site to world heritage, the following table has been drawn up;

١	Governorate	Salah al-Din	
٢	Site name	Samarra Archaeological City	
٣	Date of Inscription	٢٠٠٧	Inscribed on the world heritage list in danger in 2007
٤	Coordinates	N34 20 27.562 E43 49 24.755	
٥	criteria	(ii)(iii)(iv)	
٦	property	١٥,٠٥٨ ha	
٧	Buffer zone	٣١,٤١٤ ha	
٨	Ref	276rev	

Source; World Heritage Center( Access Date 20/1/2020)

City of Samarra was greatly affected by the military operations took place in Iraq, from the war of 2003 until the



**Figure 8: Effects of damages in Qubbat al-Sulaibiyya as a result of the 2014 clashes.**

emergence of the ISIS terrorist forces in 2014, where the city of Samarra became an advanced line in the military operations that took place between the Iraqi army and terrorist forces, and the city's landmarks were very affected.

### **٣-٤ Babylon**

Babylon was one of the most important archaeological sites in the world. The city was the capital of the most famous monarchs in ancient history, Hammurabi (1792-1750) BC who established the first legislation in the world and Nebuchadnezzar (604-562) BC. who built the hanging gardens that came back from the Seven Wonders of the World as Alexander the Great chose it to be a new capital for him, but he died before he could implement his plan.

The city was mentioned for the first time in cuneiform texts from the Akkadian period (2371-2230) BC, but it did not become an important city until the time of Hammurabi (1792-1750) BC. It expanded greatly in Neo-Babylonian era (626-539) BC, as it became the largest city in the world at that time.

City of Babylon located 90 km south of the capital, Baghdad.

Excavation work began in the ancient city of Babylon early by the German expeditions since the mid-nineteenth century and these works remained intermittent until the German mission led by Robert Koldewey began since the beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century with excavation work in different areas of the city, especially in the center, fences, temples and Ishtar Gate, and continued until 1917 were interrupted by the First World War.

The state board of antiquities and heritage in 1939 carried out excavation and conservation work in Babylon. Another work carried out too by cleaning Ishtar Gate and do some repairs. In 1956, the German archaeologist Lenzin excavated for ten days in the Babylonian theater and searched for the scheme developed by Robert Koldewey.

Other work carried out by the state board of antiquities and heritage in 1957 and 1958 included the conservation of the Ishtar Gate and Temple of Ninmah.

One of the major projects in the site the archaeological revival project of Babylon that have been led by the state board of antiquities and heritage since the seventies of the last century which began officially on February 14, 1978.

Through this project, many of the buildings that were uncovered have been conserved, as well as modern installations, including a center of visitors in the center of the site have been erected. In addition, a lot of decorated work of restoration affected the site.

During the war of (2003), the city was subjected to great abuses and damages, as chaos followed after that war, and the museum of the site was subjected to major damage and all its assets were stolen.

#### ٤ --Babylon and World Heritage

If we go back to the first principles to include the site on the World Heritage List, we will find that the first tentative list prepared for the site to inscribe on the World Heritage List was in 1980 and another tentative list in 2003 and since then the state party (Iraq) has made a lot of efforts to prepare the site's nomination file and to inscribe the site on the World Heritage List, but the objections of many advisory bodies, such as ICOMOS, ICCROM, and IUCN, prevented them from going through and completing the nomination file, because of the many abuses and developments that affected the site.

Nevertheless, the state party returned to deal with nomination file of Babylon , where they prepared new tentative list and new nomination file , and in the same time a lot of conservation work have been done by WMF and state board of antiquities and heritage .

Through the World Heritage data, the following table for the site has been prepared;

1	<b>Governorate</b>	<b>Babil</b>	
٢	<b>Site name</b>	<b>Babylon</b>	
٣	<b>Date of inscription</b>	<b>٢٠١٩</b>	<b>The site inscribed on the World Heritage List during the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee . (Azerbaijani , Baku - July 2019</b>
٤	<b>Coordinates</b>	<b>N 32 32 31.09 E 44 25 15</b>	
٥	<b>criteria</b>	<b>(iii)(vi)</b>	
٦	<b>Property</b>	<b>1,054.3 ha</b>	
٧	<b>Buffer zone</b>	<b>154.5 ha</b>	
٨	<b>Ref</b>	<b>278rev</b>	

**Source; World Heritage Center( Access Date 20/1/2020)**

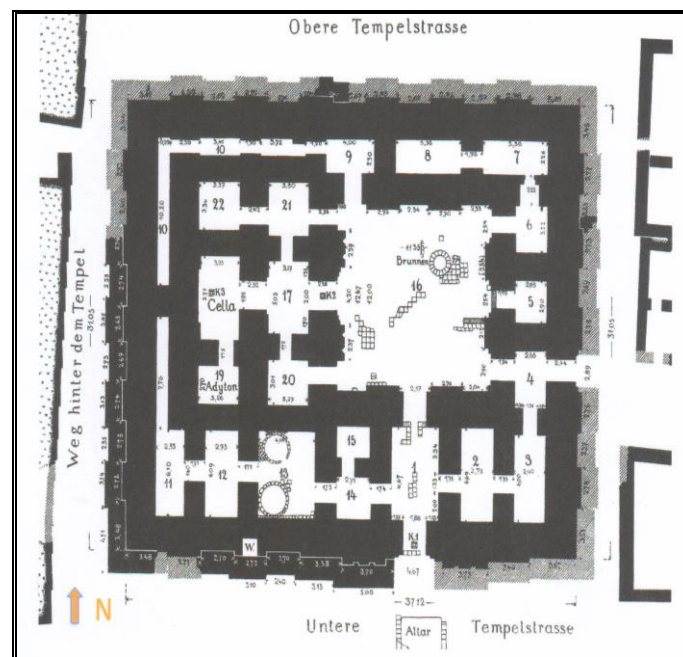
The State party, through the participation of international organizations, attended to do a lot of work on the site and is moving towards achieving and dealing with the issues raised by advisory bodies.

Also, there is a big role for the private sector in the work that took place in the city of Babylon , including one of the donors (Maryam Elias Dawood) and assistance in cleaning and removing debris from the site.

Also, the staff of department of antiquities of Babil had the big role to carry out a major cleaning campaign on the site.

### **5-Conservation work on the site.**

Conservation and rehabilitation work started on the site before and after the inscription the site on the world heritage list . WMF has worked on the site since 2008, where the site management plan and comprehensive conservation plan have been developed. Conservation work has increased extensively, including conservation of Ishtar Temple, one of the main temples in the city, dedicated to Ishtar goddess and the temple has a rectangular layout of length (37.12 m) and width (31.5 m), the temple contains two entrances, the main entrance is in the southern side, and the secondary entrance is in the eastern side.



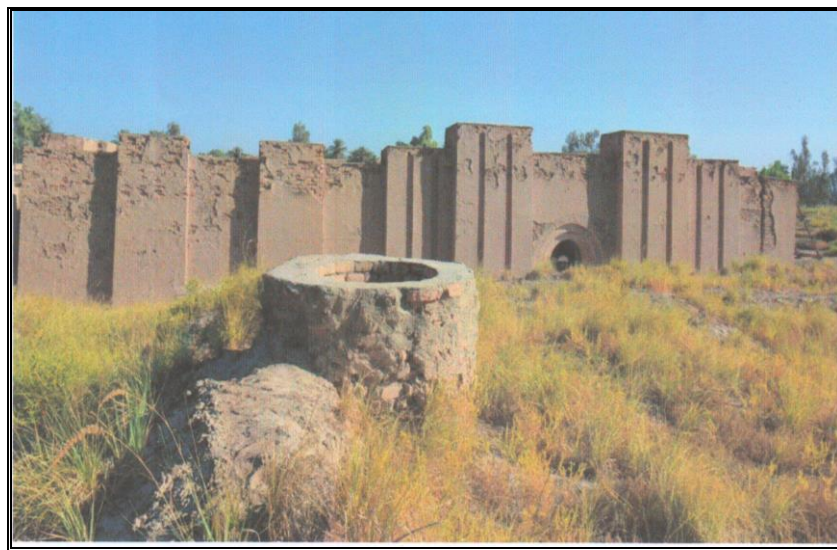
**Figure 9 Ishtar Temple Plan**

Through research and investigation into the remains of the temple, it became clear that it was severely damaged, including;

- Collapses the walls of the temple .
- The presence of cracks extending to the bottom of the rooms ٥
- Removing the clay layer covering the walls .
- The large number of rubble and natural plants around the temple.

Conservation work started in the temple by cleaning it from falling parts due to the lack of periodic restoration in the temple.

For the purpose of conservation this temple , mud brick produced locally and mixed with straw, and produced in the original measurements required for conservation work and it was (33 x 33 x 8) cm.

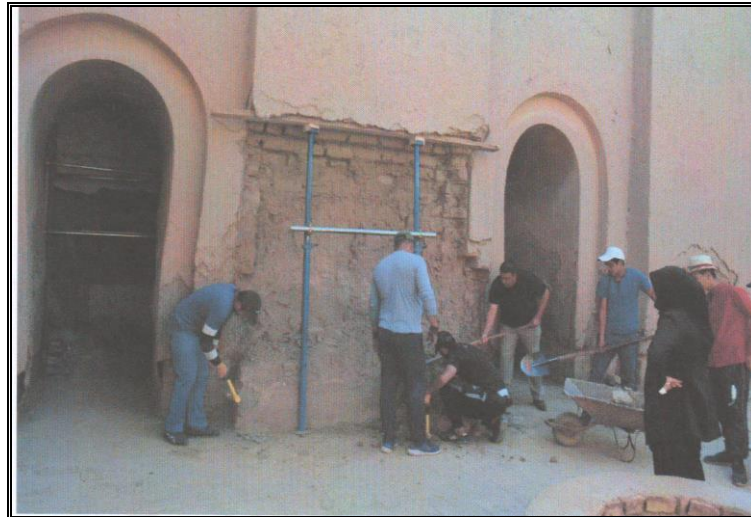


**Figure 10: The area surrounding the Ishtar Temple before conservation work**

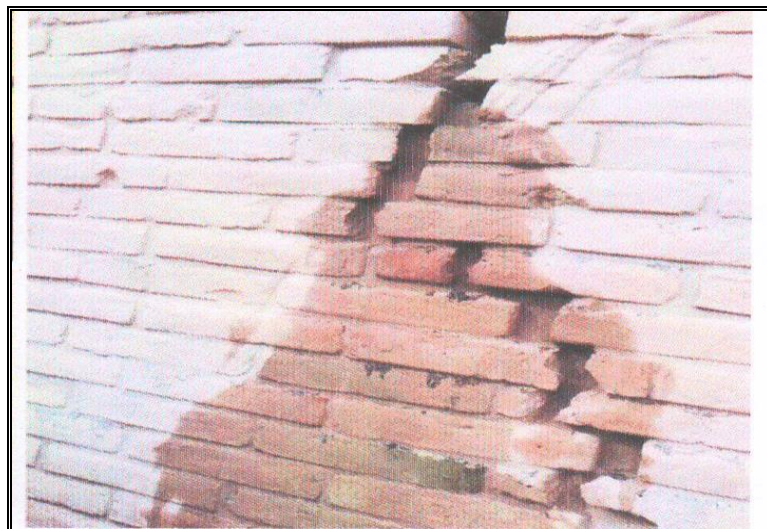
During the conservation process, it became clear that some parts of the temple had been reconstructed with bricks and cement, so the expedition proceeded to remove the modern construction and cement, and to expose the mud walls, and in order to preserve the damaged parts of the walls.



The conservation work that took place on the temple from inside and outside was to track all the damage to the temple, including moisture, cracks and erosion of the walls.



**Figure 11 Part of the ongoing conservation work in Ishtar Temple**



**Figure 12 one of the large cracks that penetrate the temple walls**

All these works are conducted under the supervision of the state board of antiquities and heritage and WMF .

These works and rehabilitation works of the site will continue and in response to the international demands recommended by the World Heritage Committee during 43<sup>rd</sup> session (Baku / Azerbaijan, 2019)



## ٦-Other Works

Follow-up and monitoring of groundwater levels in the city of Babylon, as two-dimensional electrical surveys were carried out within ancient city of Babylon. Where the measurements were taken at (9) stations and with a depth of approximately (70) m. These stations were distributed to cover the study area except for the area behind the houses and Babylonian temples, due to the roughness of the region.

Generally, the city of Babylon was studied geologically for the first time in 1979, by the Iraqi Geological Survey Department, this study showed that the stratigraphic sequence of sediments in the city dates back to the quaternary era.

It came clear that there are two underground water reservoirs, as the thickness of the first reservoir ranges between ( 10-15) m in the areas near the Shatt al-Hilla River and increases as we go away from the river to the east to reach a thickness of (25) m.

As for the second reservoir, it appears at a depth of (10-15) meters from the surface of the earth in the areas near the Shatt al-Hilla River, reaching a depth of about 25 meters in the study area.

Through the study, it was observed that the measured electrical resistance values in the nine stations decrease as we go away from the Shatt Al-Hillah River to the east, as well as an increase in the salinity of groundwater in the area.

## **٧ -Conclusion**

The sector of culture and antiquities is witnessing a rapid movement in Iraq led by the state board of antiquities and heritage and with the participation of WMF as it is now under way in conservation and rehabilitation works in the ancient city of Babylon and after its inscription on the World Heritage List.

In the city of Mosul, an international team is working on a project to revive the spirit of Mosul and under the supervision of UNESCO, through which the team undertakes conservation and rehabilitation works for the historical monuments in the city after ISIS destroyed it, and after a year has passed on the adoption of the tentative list for the ancient city of Mosul by the World Heritage Center.



**Republic of Iraq**

**Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities**

**State Board of Antiquities & Heritage**

**Department of International Organizations**

**State of Conservation Report**

**Hatra, Ashur, Samarra, Marshes and Babylon**

**2020**

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## **Executive Summary**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which spread at the beginning of 2020, had a great impact on World Heritage sites, as many sites witnessed partial closure, as well as the case for World Heritage sites in Iraq, where they witnessed partial closure and concentrating the state of monitoring and watching . However, there were some specific conservation work in the world heritage sites in Iraq such as Ashur, Babylon , Ur and Uruk.

Among the incidents that must be mentioned are the meetings that took place via the Internet (online) in which Iraq participated, and the meetings were with the World Heritage Center, and the second meeting was with the Regional Center for World Heritage in Bahrain, and intensive meetings were held between the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Water Resources to develop solutions and treatments regarding the Makhoul Dam and its impact on the ancient city of Ashur and archaeological sites in the area.. .

In addition, the International Organizations Department at the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, and within the framework of World Heritage Capacity Building, has held two World Heritage courses according to the (E- blended learning program), the first course from 15/1/2020 until 15/2/2020 and the second course on 1 / 11/2020 until 31/12/2020 .

Among other documentary work at the world heritage sites , and in response to international demands, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage completed the first report of the damages assessment in Hatra.

## **1. World Heritage Sites in Iraq**

Many visions, ideas, and plans crystallized with the necessity to carry out conservation , protection and management work, especially in the sites inscribed on the danger list, which were liberated two years ago from the grip of terrorism (Daesh)

Due to the poor security conditions and the lack of financial funding, there were surveys of the affected sites, monitoring the sites in light of the spread of the Corona epidemic, and carrying out some specific conservation work.

## **2. Hatra**

The first Iraqi site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1985, and the State Party has completed a lot of work in the field of protection and management. The site has been completely occupied by the forces of terror in mid-2014, as these forces have caused a lot of damage to the site, and as a result, in 2015 the site was inscribed on the list of danger , and after the site was liberated in 2017, many local committees visited the site and examined the damage of the site. Nevertheless, the State party's request remains that the World Heritage Center to send a committee to assess the damage at the site, there have been many national and international undertakings to conduct protection, management and conservation work on the site, but there isn't anything on the site.

At the beginning of February 2020, the site witnessed a visit by a team of experts from an Italian university and according to the agreement concluded with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, and during the stay of that team for five days, the damages suffered by

the buildings at the site as a result of weathering factors were also documented. Terror forces (ISIS) at the site



**Fig.1: Side of damage caused by forces of terror in the Temple of Al-Lat**

**(Source: Department of Antiquities of Nineveh, 2020)**

As a result of the damage to the site, an agreement has been made with the ALIPH organization (the International Alliance for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Conflict Areas) to carry out conservation work in the most affected areas of the site, and it has been determined to carry out conservation work in February of 2021 in cooperation with the archaeological cadres of the state board of antiquities and heritage.

By removing the threat of the forces of ISIS terrorism from the site, we look forward that World Heritage Committee to take a decision to remove the site from the list of danger after the threat of terrorism removed.

The weather conditions had a great impact on the buildings of the site, as the basic material in Hatra architecture is the use of limestone blocks, which were characterized by porosity and thus the penetration of water into the stones, where the humidity increased.

**Table 1: Site within World Heritage**

Name of the site	Year of inscription	Criteria	Notes
Hatra	1985	(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)	The site was included in the danger list in 2015 after the site was occupied by ISIS, and after the site was liberated, the State party and the international community undertook with measures in the field of protection and management, including setting a site management plan and a comprehensive conservation plan. Therefore, the State party seeks to start implementing corrective measures and removing the effects of damage after occupying the site by ISIS for three years.

### **3.Ashur ( Qalat Sherqat)**

The city of Ashur is one of the most important historical cities whose news has occupied the ancient Near East accidents . The city located on the west bank of the Tigris River and 54 km north of the city of Sharqat and about 110 km south of the city of Mosul.

Ashur is the second historical site that Iraq attains the honor of being inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2003, but on the list of danger due to the presence of threats facing the site, the most important of which is the Makhoul Dam project. The State party carried out a lot of protection and management work on the site, but it did not match the size of the threats and dangers, so the site remained on the danger list.



**Table 2: The site in the World Heritage List**

Name of the site	Year of inscription	Criteria	Notes
Ashur  (Qalat Sherqat)	2003	(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)	<p>The site was included on the World Heritage List in the year 2003 Iraq war, after that the site inscribed on the list of danger due to the presence of wars and the effects of the construction of Makhoul Dam on the site. Therefore, the site remained throughout that period on the danger list until the site was completely occupied by ISIS and after the site was liberated, the state party and the international community pledged to begin the protection and management measures at the site, and it is worth mentioning that the (ALIPH) organization has conserved the Tabira Gate, the most damaged landmark on the site as a result of its detonation by the terrorist forces.</p> <p>This work will contribute to stabilizing the landmarks and parts that are destined to fall after Ashur (Qalat Al Sharqat) became an advanced line of the military operations that took place in the region against ISIS terrorist gangs.</p>

The occupation of the site by the terrorist forces (ISIS) in mid-2014 had a great impact on the city and its monuments, as terrorists carried out many acts of damage , the last of which was the bombing and destruction of the largest landmark on the site, the Tabira Gate.

## **-Excavations and Conservation Works**

The works on the site for this year were as follows;

### **Filling of the trench surrounding the Ziggurat of Ashur**

The ziggurat of Ashur, bearing the temple of Ashur God in the ancient city, is considered the most important and prominent cultural landmark in the city. It is a solid mass of sun-dried mud of size (40 x 40 x 12 m) built with a bonding material of pure clay, and it has a square-shaped base measuring (61 x 62) m. and semi-pyramid body, topped by a temple of Ashur God, the great goddess of the Assyrians. It is located in the northeastern part of the city, along the northern wall, opposite the al-Mashhalal Gate and overlooks Wadi Umm al-Chababit.

There are many tunnels that took place in the body of the ziggurat, as a result of archaeological excavations conducted by foreign archaeological expeditions, which expected that the body of the ziggurat contained many treasures.

These tunnels posed a great danger to the body of the ziggurat, especially in the winter season, where the severe erosion due to rain, so the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage decided to fill these tunnels and canyons that surround the ziggurat, and the trench filling process was completed on 18/1/2020. Thus, the base of the ziggurat is protected from the impact of rain.

### **-Conservation of Tabira Gate**

Tabira Gate is one of the most important landmarks in the city of Ashur. It was discovered by the German expedition at the beginning of the twentieth century within thirteen gates intersecting the walls of the city of Ashur and located at the end of the northwestern side of the city walls, and it is one of the important establishments that the Assyrian king erected [Tukulti - Ninurta I 1244-1208 BC.] and renewed by the [Assyrian king [Tiglath -Pileser II 967-935 BC]



**Fig. 2 Tabira Gate before exploding by terror (ISIS)**

**(Source: Department of Antiquities of Sherqat, 2020)**

The plan of the gate is summarized by building a platform made of mud brick in the form of a large bench measuring [26.5 x 21 m] to arrange the floor of the building with a height (8 courses) from the east (28 courses) from the west side, and above this platform a gate was erected.

The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage paid the city most of its attention, and the archaeological revival project of the city of Ashur in the 1980s is only evidence of that interest, as a lot of excavation and conservation work took place in the site.

Due to the importance of the Tabira Gate, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage completed conserving of the gate in (1988), and it returned as a distinguished landmark in the city.

### **-Blowing up the gate by the forces of terror**

The gate reached hand of vandalism that covered its entire body, as the sides of the brick walls fell and the brick casing fell from the inside to the northern tower. In the operation to liberate the city from the grip of terrorism, where the terrorist forces set out to blow up the gate, and severely damaged, and after liberating the site in mid-2017, the initial damage to the site was estimated and the damage was great.



**Fig. 3: An image of the vandalism of the gate by ISIS.**

**(Source: Department of Antiquities of Sherqat, 2020)**

### **-Conservation of Tabira Gate / The first stage**

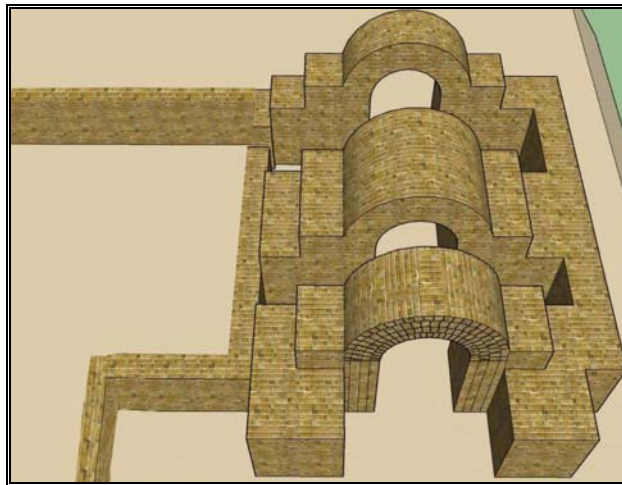
The American University in Sulaymaniyah team/ Iraq - with the support of ALIPH - International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas, begin its first season of conservation to the Tabira gate, The parts that are due to fall as a result of the terrorist gangs detonating the shoulders that bear its three arches , so that the focus was as a first stage on the northern shoulder of the first arch in relation to the entering the city because this arch had been more damaged than the other two arches.

The Sulaymaniyah University team prepared the required mud brick on site, and the four ovens of mud brick on the site were prepared, where the required mud brick was prepared too . The team successfully completed its first season, to be followed by subsequent conservation seasons.

It was a good opportunity for the team of the Department of Antiquities and Heritage of the American University in Sulaymaniyah to work in Ashur, and despite the short conservation season of (150) days, the university team pledged to resume work in Ashur again.



**Fig. 4 conservation work performed by the team at Tabira Gate in 2020 season**  
(Source: Department of Antiquities of Sherqat, 2020)



**Fig.5 An imaginary view of the gate after completing its conservation.**

(Source: Department of Antiquities of Sherqat, 2020)

These are the conservation works that took place at site this year, and there are still many works that must be completed on the site in the field of protection and management.

#### **4 .Samarra Archaeological City**

One of the major historical sites at the national and regional level is Samarra Archaeological City, which was included on the list of the World Heritage in Danger in 2007 and due to the presence of many threats facing the city and the severe shortage of protection and management work, so the city and throughout this period remained on the danger list.

With the spread of COVID-19 pandemic,, the site was subjected to partial closure, and there were no conservation work on the site for this year . Therefore, work on the site was limited to taking partial closure measures and monitoring the site.

As for the works that took place on the site in 2020, they were as follows;

1-There was a violation of the boundaries of the Abu Delaf Mosque by farmers, and legal measures were taken against them and their violation stopped.

2- There was violation on the archaeological site of Asabian, located in the Jubairiyah area, where citizens built random residential homes and legal measures have been taken to stop the transgression.

3-There was an infringement on a part of the archaeological area surrounding the Palace of Decoration( Bait Al Zakherf). These works have been stopped and legal measures have been taken against the transgressors.

**-The city within world heritage**

**Table 3: The city’s World Heritage site**

Name of site	Year of inscription	criteria	Notes
<b>Samarra Archaeological City</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>(ii)(iii)(iv</b>	<p>The inclusion of the city of Samarra on the list of danger came in a difficult circumstance that Iraq is going through in light of internal instability after the 2003 war. After that, the province of Salah al-Din fell into the hands of ISIS. The exploding the shrines of two imams has worsened the security situation.</p> <p>The State party seeks to initiate corrective measures as recommended</p>

			by the World Heritage Committee in the field of protection and management, and as circumstances permit and the importance of the national and international site, the city of Samarra has been taken as the capital of Islamic civilization through the legislation of the Samarra Law, the capital of Islamic civilization, which was approved by Parliament in 2018.
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## 5. The Iraqi Marshes

The first mixed Iraqi site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List and represented a live interaction between man and his environment in all its manifestations.

The marshlands region, both natural and cultural, as the natural side, which is under supervision of ministry of water resources, as it manages the site and organizes what is related to the management of the environmental aspect of the site, and provides the World Heritage Committee with everything that happens on the site and the cultural side, which is under supervision of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage.

**Table 4 the site within world heritage**

Site name	Year of inscriptions	Criteria	Notes
The Ahwar of Southern Iraq	2016	(iii)(v)(ix)(x)	Marshes are the first mixed Iraqi site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, represented as human interaction with his environment since ancient times. The site needs a lot of work in the field of protection and management at the cultural and natural levels,

			<p>including infrastructure facilities such as the Administration Unit Building and the Visitor Guidance Center.</p> <p>The State party seeks to initiate corrective measures as recommended by the World Heritage Committee and to establish infrastructure facilities in the site.</p>
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The cultural side of the site represented by three sites: Ur, Eridu and Uruk, and these sites were due to the spread of the COVID -19 epidemic, so there was no work except in Ur and Uruk, where the three sites were partially closed.

### **The work in the city of Ur**

The city of Ur was affected by COVID -19 epidemic a lot, as the site was closed and concentrating the state of control was tightened, and the Temple of Dab-Lal Mach and Ziggurat was surrounded by a BRC fence.

The State board of Antiquities heritage has also prepared, in cooperation with Un Ponte Per.... A plan to develop the site and turn it into sustainable archaeological site open to the visitors, whereby visitors' services and the parking of large and small wheels are transferred near the site's arriving point in order to protect the site and avoid any damage to its antiquities .

The proposed plan to develop the site includes the following points;

- 1-Sorting out a plot of land within the boundaries of the site and for erecting the visitor guidance center and to be within the plans through which the site is managed.
- 2- Modification and retrofitting of a public garage floor for buses and public cars for visitors, guests and employees.



## **- The city of Uruk**

The site did not witness any excavation or conservation work for this year by the German expedition, but due to the presence of one of the landmarks discovered at the site, which is the stone building, which dates back to the late Uruk era (the fourth millennium BC) and is exposed to weathering factors and its occurrence in Lower area of the city of Uruk and the rain accumulates in it, which will affect the stability of the building and perhaps the building will collapse completely, and the German expedition had its intention to act and intervened to save the building, but the prevailing conditions due to COVID -19 epidemic had



**Fig. 6 The stone building in the city of Uruk before burial**

**(Source: Department of Antiquities of Muthanna, 2020)**

postponed taking any action in a timely manner. Therefore, the German expedition requested the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage to bury and cover the entire building with soil until the situation improves in the future, and to re-discover and conserve it. The building was documented before it was buried.

## **6 .City of Babylon**

The city of Babylon is the last site that Iraq attains the honor of being inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2019, and the State Party made a lot of efforts over a period of three decades until the site was included on the list.

The old city of Babylon is one of the important tourist destinations at the national, regional and international levels before the listing process, so the listing process for the site on the World Heritage List will enhance the city's site, and the state party intended to establish infrastructure facilities and adopt the principle of sustainable tourism.

**Table 5 the site within world heritage**

Site name	Year of inscription	criteria	Notes
<b>City of Babylon</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>(iii)(vi)</b>	The last Iraqi site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, and if we followed the Babylon file, we would find the first tentative list of the site was in 1983, and many consulting bodies objected to the inclusion the site on the list due to the presence of a lot of conservation work outside the familiar range in the conserving of historical buildings, but Iraq returned the file again in order for the listing process to be completed in 2019, and during the site listing session that took place in Azerbaijan, the consulting bodies wanted to include the site on the danger list under the pretext that there were many errors in the conservation that took place at the site, but many delegations interfered and Iraq pressed, the site was included on the World Heritage List (without risk) The State party pledged, as stated by the Minister of culture , of effective measures on site in the field of protection and management , and the Iraqi Parliament approved the Babylon Law, The civilized capital of Iraq in 2017.

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## **-Work of conservation**

WMF resumed its work in Babylon and after a long hiatus as a result of COVID -19 epidemic, as the organization's team prepared the temple of Ninmah for scheduled conservation work for the end of this year.

The works that were completed in this temple were;

- Cleaning the room between the room and the sacred room (Cila) from debris and dust falling from the ceiling and wall.



**Fig. 7: Side of conservation work at the temple of Ninmah this year**  
(*Source: Department of Antiquities of Babylon, 2020*)

- Leveling the floor of this room and making it ample for the movement of people and wheel-borrow in order to do conservation work.
- Spraying pesticides to eliminate the ground (termites)
- Carrying out the sorting process, for the mud brick from the others falling materials from the southern wall of Cela room, and it has been well preserved to ensure that it is not exposed to weather factors.
- Install metal supports and wooden structures under the walls prone to collapse of Cela room.

-Working in preserving channels for draining water from the roof, which will ensure that water does not collect in some areas of the roof.

-Removing and raising the old stairs that were built with bricks and cement, and erecting a new wooden staircase for the movement of workers inside the temple.

## **7. Conclusion**

It became clear from state of conservation report that the protection and management work was limited to the lack of financial funding and the spread of COVID -19 epidemic. Therefore, hope remains on the World Heritage Center, and within the capacity building of the states parties to the convention is to hold more seminars and meetings (online) and send committees to assess the damage occurred in the sites.

We also ask and hope that the World Heritage Center will stand with us in order to develop solutions and remedies to remove the three sites of Iraq (Hatra, Ashur, and Samarra) from the danger list.

The State party is also to start implementing Makhoul Dam this year, so we ask the World Heritage Center for technical assistance in order to preserve the city of Ashur and the archaeological sites in Makhoul Dam basin.