
Bethlehem, Palestine
January, 2020
The State of Conservation Report (SOC) for the World Heritage Property (WHP) Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines: Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir (1492) was prepared by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in close cooperation with other related stakeholders.
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1. Executive Summary

Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, Palestine (Ref. 1492) was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2014 following an emergency nomination, in accordance with criteria (iv) and (v), and immediately on the List of World Heritage in Danger, after it was acknowledged that the landscape was threatened by emerging and intensifying socio-cultural and geo-political transformations with the potential to cause irreversible damage to the site’s authenticity and integrity—citing specifically the start of construction of an Israeli “Wall” that may isolate local farmers from fields they have cultivated for centuries.

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value adopted by the World Heritage Committee (WHCom) (Decision 39 COM 8B.52), The State of Palestine subsequently prepared the Desired State of Conservation Report (DSOCR) and Key Corrective Measures, which were adopted by the World Heritage Committee (Decision 39COM7A.29) as necessary for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger. In 2016, the State of Palestine also prepared the timeline for the implementation of the corrective measures, which was adopted by the WHCom (Decision 41COM7A.43). In 2019 the Management and Conservation Plan (MCP) was adopted by the World Heritage Committee and endorsed by all key Palestinian stakeholders to ensure a adequate respect and effective safeguarding of the property and its inherent Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

This State of Conservation Report presents a response to the WHCom from the State Party of Palestine to requests made at the 43rd Session of the Committee in 2019, in Decision 43 COM 7A.30, in addition to the progress in achieving the Desired State of Conservation (DSOCR) and highlights the progress in implementation of key corrective measures by all relevant stakeholders. It outlines main activities and projects undertaken throughout 2019 towards conserving the WHP’s OUV and achieving the DSCOR and corrective measures. The primary corrective measures focus on eliminating or significantly ameliorating the imminent threat posed by an Israeli plan to construct a Wall adjacent to the property, which, if implemented, would cause irreversible damage to the site’s authenticity and integrity. Following the inscription of the property, the Israeli High Court of Justice on 4 January 2015 decided to freeze construction of the Wall. However the court stated that the decision was largely based on budgetary considerations and the state maintains the right to build the Wall in the future. Although these developments are considered positive steps towards achieving permanent protection of the property, several Israeli violations have been committed in the WHP during 2019 and are presented in this report. Other factors are still threatening the quality of the landscape at a visual, ecological, socio-economic, and cultural level. Palestine is committed to implementing the corrective measures adopted by the WHCom, especially those aiming to conserve the cultural landscape in line with international standards, prevent abandonment and forestation of existing agricultural terraces, engage the local community with the WHP, and preserve the commitment of the WHCom with respect to human and financial resources.

In light of the above, and in spite of the positive developments achieved since the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List, Palestine wishes to retain the property “Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir” on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
2. **Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee (WHcom) Decision 43 COM 7A.30.**

Para. 3. The Committee acknowledges the efforts made by the State Party to improve the state of conservation of the property;

The proposed plans for achieving the Desired State of Conservation and the corrective measures for the removal of the WHP from the List of World Heritage in Danger respond to the presence of jeopardizing elements that justified the initial inscription of the site on the World Heritage in Danger list, and the factors that are presently affecting the property.

The property is threatened by various external and internal circumstances that are actively damaging the quality of the landscape and threatening its long-term viability at various visual, ecological, socio-economic, and cultural levels. Palestine is committed to promote and implement the corrective measures adopted for this property, especially those aiming to conserve and manage the property in line with international standards.

The state of conservation of the property is affected by several factors, which have contributed to the deterioration of the physical situation throughout the WHP. This deterioration, which is mainly related to the lack of conservation interventions, lack of appropriate water and sewage networks in the village of Battir, and lack of financial resources are negatively affecting the agricultural terraces and physical attributes within the property.

Although the Israeli occupying authorities are currently applying several restrictions and constrains that prevent farmers from restoring the terraces and the agricultural watchtowers in border areas, committed stakeholders and the local community worked together on the preparation of a comprehensive Management and Conservation Plan (MCP) based on previous joint efforts involving Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), Battir Municipality, Beit Jala Municipality, Hussan Village Council and other key stakeholders that have WHP planning and management responsibilities, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment Authority.

To restore an appropriate state of conservation for the cultural landscape, the proposed operational management system shall be in place to effectively manage the entire WHP and ensure its sustainability. The endorsed MCP sets out the main management and conservation objectives, strategies and actions needed for successful conservation and protection of the WHP, as well as identifies the specific measures and programs that should be implemented. Several conservation interventions were also implemented during 2019, or are planned, to achieve the corrective measures presented briefly in this report.

It is worth noting that enhancement of the physical situation of the property and achievement of an appropriate state of conservation is not only based on internal socio-cultural factors, but also on external geo-political factors.
Para. 4. The Committee congratulates the State Party for its progress towards finalizing the Management and Conservation Plan (MCP), and encourages the State Party to take a participatory approach to its implementation, whereby the municipality, local inhabitants, and stakeholders are fully involved and committed;

The “Management and Conservation Plan for the World Heritage Property” (MCP) was prepared in close cooperation with the local community and other key stakeholders who manage parts of the site, or who have statutory responsibilities within it. On 26th of June 2019, additional comments from ICOMOS on the final MCP were received. ICOMOS thanked the State Party for the improved MCP, and indicated that the most important point is to implement the Plan and to raise awareness of it among the largest strata of the decision makers, in addition to produce leaflets explaining the MCP’s content and objectives in Arabic, to be distributed among the community. Moreover, all the key stakeholders shall endorse the MCP to ensure that they are engaged in its implementation and in the allocation of the necessary resources.

In October 2019 all related key stakeholders signed the approved MCP, and the document was translated into Arabic for easy understanding by and engagement with the local community (see Figure 1).

In line with the endorsed MCP’s objectives, strategies, and Action Plan, and according to the responsibilities of MoTA’s World Heritage Directorate, many interventions, projects and activities were implemented within the WHP during 2019, although the proposed management structure which was developed by the MCP is not yet in place.

It is crucial that MoTA shall recruit a Site Manager to put in place successful mechanisms for coordination between all stakeholders who have statutory or management responsibilities in the WHP. In addition, MoTA shall establish the proposed two main Committees—the MCP’s Steering Committee, and the Site Management Committee—that shall play an essential role in encouraging, guiding, overseeing and monitoring progress, as well as reviewing and updating the Management and Conservation Plan. However, several regular meetings and workshops were held, or are planned, to coordinate several projects and activities executed or planned within the property until the Management System is operational.

Para. 5. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the State Party’s new Decree Law on Tangible Cultural Heritage includes a requirement for the preparation of Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) and/or Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) to evaluate effectively the impact of potential developments on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of its World Heritage properties;

The Tangible Cultural Heritage Law (No. 11, 2018), Article (23, Par. 2) states that “New buildings and construction additions may be allowed in the cultural landscape properties and in their surrounding areas; or implementation of infrastructure works and major projects after obtaining a written permission from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. The permission should be based on Heritage Impact Assessment and Environment Impact Assessment.”
A special bylaw is being prepared to address the kind and size of projects that required HIAs and EIAs, and the required procedures for granting permissions.

Para. 6. The Committee welcomes the efforts being made by the State Party to implement the corrective measures to achieve the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), and urges the State Party to continue seeking, on a priority basis, the required funds to undertake the development of a sufficient sewage system and the adequate restoration of the irrigation system.

The State Party is prioritizing efforts toward implementation of the corrective measures to achieve the Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, in addition to finding effective solutions of the most urgent environmental problems affecting the WHP, such as water and soil pollution as a result of the lack of a sewage system. As mentioned in the previous SOC report, a project with an estimated 25 million USD budget was prepared, which would put in place an adequate sewage system for the Bethlehem Western Villages including vast parts of the WHP, however, the project is still delayed due to its high costs. The Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WSSA), Battir Municipality, Hussan Village Council, Ministry of Local Government, and Joint Service Council continue to develop temporary mechanisms to address the problem until the required funds are secured. For instance, the related Municipal Councils forbid the construction of new houses without sealed septic tanks, and provide inhabitants with low-cost sewage tanks to empty the collected sewage water every few weeks in nearby sewage stations in Bethlehem. Moreover, a Water and Sewage Unit works to manage the sewage water in the Bethlehem Western Villages, and penalties are imposed on homes without a sealed septic tank. They are working to secure the needed funds for the project as soon as possible.

Para. 7. The Committee requests the State Party to inform the World Heritage Centre of any proposed plans for major restoration or new construction projects that may affect the OUV of the property, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse.

The WHP Management Committees, in close coordination with MoTA, work to oversee, monitor, and manage all actions, projects, and activities that take place within the property, as well as ensure that any project planned or implemented within the property should sustain its OUV and their supporting attributes, and align with the objectives, strategies, and actions of the Management and Conservation Plan. As per the new law for Tangible Cultural Heritage (No 11, 2018), prior to the implementation of any significant intervention or proposed development within the WHP, appropriate HIA and/or EIA impact assessments shall be conducted. However, other impact assessment mechanisms should be put in place to manage the implementation of minor interventions within the WHP.

In the event that any future major intervention or new construction projects are developed which might affect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, the State Party is committed to informing the WHC.

DSOCR#1: Dismissal of plans to build a “Wall” along the property, or within its surroundings,

1.1 Agreement to dismiss plans to build a “Wall” along the property, or within its surroundings,

On 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion, stated that, “the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated régime, are contrary to international law,” and is therefore considered illegal; adding that the “Wall” may refer to any barrier whether it is a physical wall or a fence.

A clearly-defined, binding decision in accordance with Article 6, Section 3, of the World Heritage Convention (1972), which states, “Each State Party to this Convention undertakes not to take any deliberate measures which might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2 situated on the territory of other States Parties to this Convention” is still required at this time. As noted in previous SOC reports, the geo-political context in which the property lies—namely, the direct and indirect effects of illegal building of settlements on surrounding hills and the proposed illegal construction of the “Wall”—is considered the most significant threat to the authenticity and integrity of the property.

On 4 January 2015, the Israeli High Court of Justice froze plans for the construction of the “Wall” adjacent to the property. This concluded a three-year legal battle in response to petitions submitted by the village of Battir and supported by the State of Palestine, in cooperation with Friends of the Earth Middle East. The decision came after the Israeli government chose not to re-authorize a 2006 plan to erect a three kilometer stretch of the “Wall,” and subsequently revealed that the plan was not a high security or budgetary priority. The decision of the Israeli High Court of Justice was taken after the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger during the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee. Although this is a positive move towards protecting the site and its authenticity and integrity, threats resulting from the construction of a “Wall” along the property remain valid until a binding decision is adopted by Israel stipulating that no “Wall” shall ever be constructed in or around the site. The decision must secure the long-term protection of the site and its settings.

Moreover, illegal construction of settlements on surrounding hills is negatively affecting the visual and ecological quality of the landscape. To a significant degree, these factors are related to direct acts by the Israeli occupation authorities and should be also dismissed upon a binding decision ensuring the protection of the property. Such acts are progressively subjugating and effectively annexing both the territorial area and the inhabitants of Battir, and thus severely threaten the integrity of the WHP’s landscape and the sustainability of its ecological and environmental equilibrium, in addition to preventing the local community from maintaining their agricultural lands in the areas that are close to the settlements.
During 2019, the Occupying Power has increased its violations and plans within the property. The following Israeli occupation plans, among other actions, are affecting the WHP’s OUV as well as its physical attributes and their authenticity and integrity.

1- As mentioned in the previous SOC report, a new tunnel and a new bypass road for settlers (Road 60) adjacent to the existing roads, in the eastern part of the WHP, near Beit Jala, and directly within the Core Zone are being constructed. Bulldozers and heavy equipment have been operating since August 2019. This construction might destroy significant parts of the WHP landscape, which is characterized by agricultural terraces, watchtowers, water springs, and olive oil presses, affecting the WHP Outstanding Universal Value, its integrity, and authenticity (see Figure 17).

2- On 2 September 2019, a group of settlers supported by Israeli soldiers invaded a land plot approximately 4250m² in Al Makhrou Valley in the top of a mountain, in the WHP core zone, in order to build a new colonial-settlement in the Western Bethlehem area, approximately 900 meters in proximity to the illegal colonial-settlement of “Har Gilo”. The same plot of land was seized by the same settlers three months prior on 6 June 2019, followed by the establishment of caravans, gates, and fences around it. This violation if continued shall contribute to the destruction of the agricultural lands and significant parts of the WHP might lose its OUV, integrity, and authenticity (see Figure 2, 3 and 17).

3- On 27 August 2019, the Israeli Occupying Power demolished a Palestinian home and restaurant located in the same area of the aforementioned land plot in Al Makhrou Valley (see Figure 4).

4- On 25 November 2019, the Israeli Occupying Power demolished and destroyed traditional dry-stone walls and cutting olives trees in Khirbet Battir, in addition to demolishing a tourist rest area which was used to serve visitors to and support farmers working in the WHP (see Figure 5 and 17).

5- The Israeli Occupying Authorities are applying several restrictions and constraints to prevent farmers and related stakeholders from restoring the agricultural terraces, watchtowers, and the traditional irrigation system. For example, in 2019 the Occupying Authorities stopped many projects implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture to restore traditional agricultural paths within WHP and confiscated the equipment and machines used for the project.

6- The Israeli Occupying Power demolished many residential houses located within the property’s buffer zone.

As this DSOCR, “Dismissal of plans to build a “Wall” along the property, or within its surroundings,” is not defined within the adopted timeframe, and is largely dependent on actions and decisions by the Israeli occupation authorities, which are beyond the control of the State of Palestine, no progress has been achieved. In contrast, many violations have been recorded as previously stated.

The construction of the illegal planned new colonial-settlement in Al Makhrou Valley could cause harmful and irreversible negative impacts and serious detrimental effects on the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHP and its integrity, authenticity, and distinctive characteristics.
We ask WHCom to intervene to stop this violation and conserve the agricultural terraces, the cultural landscape, as well as the WHP's land-use patterns.

DSOCR#2: Adequate conservation of the agricultural terraces and their associated components, including watchtowers and dry-stone walls throughout the property,

2.1 Implementation of projects to restore an appropriate state of conservation for the agricultural terraces and their components, including the watchtowers and dry-stone walls throughout the property.

The stakeholders recognize their role in achieving an appropriate state of conservation of the various components of the property, including agricultural terraces and their components, and have been working tirelessly on implementing several projects related to this goal. In 2019, the key stakeholders have implemented many projects within the WHP towards achieving this corrective measure including the following:

1. Rehabilitation of two traditional agricultural paths within the WHP. The aim of this project is to rehabilitate, repair, and enhance approximately 2.3 km of traditional pathways in the Karm Hedadon and Abaseen Spring area, located within the property, which will help farmers access and cultivate their lands. The project started in September 2018 and was completed in February 2019. It is funded through the Ministry of Agriculture with a total budget of $51,000 USD.

2. Rehabilitation of agricultural traditional paths and dry-stone walls in Al Makhrour Valley. The aim of this project is to rehabilitate, repair and enhance about 850meters of traditional pathways in addition to restoring 1,500 meters of dry-stone walls in Al Makhrour Valley, located within the core zone, to help farmers to reach and cultivate their lands. The project started in June 2019 and was finished in October 2019. It is funded through the Beit Jala Municipality with a total budget of $40,000USD (see Figure 6 and 17).

3. Rehabilitation of agricultural dry-stone walls and reclamation and repair of the agricultural land in Al Makhrour Valley. The aim of this project is to rehabilitate approximately 220 m² of dry-stone walls in the Wadi al-Makrour, as well as to repair and reclaim approximately 125 douums (31.2 acres) of abandoned agricultural lands to benefit 44 farmers, as well as encourage farmers to use environmental cultivation models by establishing 286 agricultural terraces. This project started in May 2019 and will be completed in March 2020. It is funded by the Government of Aragon in Spain through Caritas Spain, and is implemented by Caritas Jerusalem with a total budget of $250,000 USD (see Figure 6 and 17).

4. A training workshop on dry-stone walls rehabilitation. UNESCO Ramallah Office, in close cooperation with MoTA, successfully achieved a specialized three-day training workshop on dry-stone walls rehabilitation within the WHP. 20 masons, skilled labors, architects and engineers participated in the workshop, and will be involved in the rehabilitation works in the WHP. This activity was organized from 21 to 23 August 2019 in Battir through two high quality international consultants (see Figure 7).
5. **Rehabilitation of agricultural dry-stone walls and hiking trail in Wadi Al-‘Aion “Hussan”**. The project targeted the western part of the WHP in an effort to connect the area with the WHP. To do so, the Palestine Trade Center, "PALTRADE", in close cooperation with MoTA, EQA, Battir Municipality, Hussan Village Council, and Maser Ibrahim AlKalil has designed a project to rehabilitate 2,000 meters of a hiking trail that starts from Wadi Al-‘Aion in Hussan and ends at Ein Jamm’a in Battir. The project’s goals were to create a safe and secure hiking trail that contributes to the steadfastness of the community members and enhance the socio-economic situation of the local community, in addition to enhancing the state of conservation of the dry-stone walls and agricultural terraces along the trail. The project includes restoration of approximately 100 m² of dry-stone walls, and rehabilitates a tourist hiking trail by providing it with rest areas, interpretation panels, and required infrastructure. This project started in December 2019 and will be completed in March 2020. It is funded through PALTRADE and Maser Ibrahim Al-Kalil with a total budget of $19,000 USD (see Figure 8 and 17).

6. **Restoration and rehabilitation of landscapes and Historical buildings in Battir**. The aim of this project is to rehabilitate approximately 700 m² of dry-stone walls in Al-Jinan Zone in Battir, as well as to rehabilitate 500 meters of traditional water canals and 13 traditional historic rooms in Battir at the Seven Widows quarter in addition to other soft components, such as training workshops for restoration technicians and tourism guiding. This project started in April 2018 and will be completed in April 2021. It is funded through Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) through Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and is implemented by Jerusalem old city revitalization program-Taawon with a total budget of $500,000 USD (see Figure 9 and 17).

7. **Biodiversity conservation and community development in Al-Makhrour Valley**. This project was started in September 2018 and will be completed in March 2021. The aim of this project is to conserve biodiversity in Al-Makhrour Valley benefitting the local communities through sustainable use of ecosystem services, including (a) promoting agriculture/green practices, (b) developing ecotourism, and (c) reducing human impact via environmental awareness and education programs while promoting sustainable lifestyles. The project outputs in 2019 were: finalizing a *Biodiversity Conservation Plan (BCP)*; conducting an *inventory and assessment for biodiversity* at both habitat and species level; and *establishing four selling points* within WHP to enhance the economic benefits to the local communities, including for women and youth, secured through sustainable agriculture and eco-tourism enhancement; in addition to raising awareness of and building capacities of local communities and stakeholders to better manage their natural resources, support conservation measures and benefit from sustainable agricultural and eco-tourism interventions. The project is funded through the Darwin Initiative and the National Geographic Society, and is implemented by Palestine Institute of Biodiversity and Sustainability/Palestine Museum of Natural History (PIBS/PMNH)—Bethlehem University, with a total budget of 287,343 pound sterling (see Figure 10).

In fact, this DSOCR and its related corrective measure is projected to be completed by 2024, as adopted within the timeframe, and is largely dependent on actions and projects executed by the State Party. The State of Palestine is working to secure required funds to achieve the DSOCR as planned.
DSOCR#3: Adequate restoration of the irrigation system and the development of a sufficient sewage system to protect water quality on the property

CM3.1: Implementation of a project to restore traditional irrigation systems
CM3.2: Implementation of a project to put in place an adequate sewage system to protect water quality on the property

In March 2020 a project will be started with a total budget of $120,000 USD to rehabilitate circa 500 meters of traditional water canals in Al-Jinan Zone in Battir. Additional projects proposals were prepared to secure funds for the restoration of the remaining irrigation systems within the WHP.

Regular water quality inspections as well as regular cleaning and maintenance works are done every year for the springs, water canals, and collecting pools within the Property.

As previously mentioned, the only progress achieved towards putting in place an adequate sewage system is the establishment of the Water and Sewage Unit, which became responsible for the management of sewage water within the property, and for seeking required funds to put in place an adequate sewage system to protect water quality, in addition to imposing penalties for those who drainage their sewage water in non-sealed septic tanks.

Moreover, the Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WSSA), in close cooperation with the Battir Municipality, executed a project to improve the water supply networks in the Battir Historic Centre, with a total budget of $200,000 USD.

Further actions, activities, and projects are planned to take place during 2020 in order to achieve this DSOCR and its related corrective measures. Further, additional efforts shall be made to secure the required funds to put in place an adequate sewage system and to achieve these corrective measures by the year 2023.

DSOCR#4: Protection methods in place for the property and its buffer zone

CM4.1: Preparation, approval, and implementation of an MCP for the property
CM4.2: Development and implementation of an active system of management that involves local communities and stakeholders

For centuries, the task of conserving and managing the WHP’s physical and cultural landscape was undertaken by the villagers, who carefully maintained and utilized the landscape as their resource. However, today conservation of historical property requires highly specialized tools and expertise. Such is needed to enable the State of Palestine and the related local authorities to safeguard this outstanding site for present and future generations.

As previously mentioned, in 2019, the Management and Conservation Plan was developed and endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in close cooperation with key stakeholders and in consultation with UNESCO. If the management system is operational during 2020, it will provide strong guidance for several management issues and activities within the WHP, particularly those which are affecting its OUV, integrity, and authenticity.
Within the framework of preparing the MCP and after adopting it, MoTA jointly organized a series of stakeholder consultation workshops concerning the current and planned projects and activities within the property, in order to establish better coordination and cooperation. These workshops contribute to decreasing overlap between projects, and to integrating several plans and activities within the context of the MCP.

As previously mentioned, MoTA also proposed a new institutional structure that includes a “General Directorate of the World Heritage Sites in Palestine”, which aims to provide a comprehensive management system for all world cultural heritage sites in Palestine. The responsibilities of this proposed directorate are to conserve, manage, valorize, and promote the inscribed World Heritage Properties, as well as to ensure effective implementation of the aforementioned MCP. This directorate is responsible for forming the WHP’s proposed Operational Management System that involves all key stakeholders, local communities, and private sector, and includes the Steering Committee (SC), the Site Management Committee (SMC), and Site Manager.

During 2019 the Biodiversity Conservation Plan (BCP) for the WHP was prepared as one of the main outputs of a project entitled: “Biodiversity Conservation and Community Development in Al-Makhrou Valley in Bethlehem, Palestine” over the years 2018-2021. This BCP works to advance the knowledge-based regarding the biological importance, ecological services, habitats and species of conservation value and relevant pressures of the WHP. It presents strategic objectives and action plans for effective protection and maintenance for the property’s valuable biodiversity, ecosystems and its supportive habitats while considering both the landscape and socio-economic systems and climate change aspects. This is accomplished while also considering support for the livelihoods of the local population and outreach to the decisions makers and stakeholders in an effort to have an impact on biodiversity conservation that can be replicated at the national level.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the World Heritage Directorate coordinate with all related stakeholders and NGOs all projects, actions, and activities executed or planed within the WHP until the management system is operational, as well as takes a lead in management planning for the WHP in order to ensure the development of capacity building in heritage management according to international principles at both state and local levels. Within this framework, the WHP’s Site Manager participated in filling the third cycle of periodic reporting for the Arab States region during 2019.

As this DSOCR and its related corrective measures are planned to be completed by 2021, as adopted within the timeframe, and are largely dependent on the endorsement and implementation of the MCP and the Operational Management System, the State of Palestine is committed to achieving them as planned.

**DSOCR#5: Adoption of a management plan and monitoring system, and a sustainable management structure in place**

- **CM5.1**: Preparation of a set of indicators for monitoring the property and implementation of a monitoring system
- **CM5.2**: Development of protection methods for the property and its buffer zone
Regular monitoring of the implementation of the Management and Conservation Plan is crucial because such feedback can be used to inform improvement of its effectiveness and potential for success.

A monitoring system shall be established to undertake the regular monitoring of the World Heritage Property and its Buffer Zone as soon as the management system becomes operational, in conjunction with the Site Management Committee and the Site Manager duties, which are responsible for the implementation of the MCP. The monitoring system takes into account a number of key indicators for measuring the state of conservation of the property, as well as reviews progress in implementing the MCP’s objectives, strategies, and actions in light of the attributes of the OUV, in addition to contributing to the protection of the assets in the WHP through conservation and maintenance works in conformity with international standards and the engagement of the WHP’s local community. A set of monitoring indicators were developed, covering the five themes established during MCP preparation, namely the management and planning, conservation and protection, tourism and visitor management, engagement of local community and public awareness, and infrastructure and accessibility. Each key monitoring indicator defines its characteristics, its responsible entity, and the frequency by which it shall be measured.

For example, one of the main threats that affect the WHP is the urban growth in and around the cultural landscape. New houses, shops, and roads are constructed every day. These activities will negatively affect the WHP’s OUV. Hence further monitoring, coordination, joint planning, and interference by the Management Committees and the Site Manager will be required to avoid uncontrolled urban expansion and development. To this end, a land-use plan in addition to a bylaw shall be developed to address this problem and follow-up workshops shall be organized with the Ministry of Local Government and related Municipalities to put in place practical solutions for these issues.

As this DSOCR and its related corrective measures are planned to be completed by 2021, as adopted within the timeframe, and are largely dependent on the endorsement and implementation of the MCP and the Operational Management System, the State of Palestine is committed to achieving them as planned.

b. Timeframe for Implementation of the Corrective Measures

The State of Palestine prepared the timeframe for the implementation of the corrective measures, which was adopted by the World Heritage Committee (Decision 41 COM 7A.43). Article 3 of this decision encourages the State of Palestine to review this timeframe in order to accelerate pace for any of the key corrective measures if possible. As mentioned in the previous SOC report and after reviewing the timeframe, the key stakeholders of the WHP recommended in favor of preserving the timeframe as it was previously defined due to a lack of appropriate funds and resources allocated for the property. It is worth noting that the timeframe is adequately integrated within the MCP’s objectives, strategies, and action plan.

In spite of the fact that the Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and related corrective measures are planned to be achieved within a period of 10 years, the first DSOCR, “Dismissal of plans to build a ‘Wall’ along the property, or within its surroundings,” is not defined within the known
timeframe, as it is largely dependent on actions and decisions by the Israeli occupation authorities, which do not fall under the jurisdiction of the State of Palestine, and is therefore undeterminable at this time.

3. **Other Current Conservation Issues**

In addition to the projects and activities related to the DSOCR and corrective measures mentioned above and in the previous SOC reports, the actions highlighted in subsequent sections of this report were carried out during 2019. They are divided into two categories: (1) conservation interventions of the cultural landscape and (2) the enhancement of the physical situation in and around the property.

**a. Conservation interventions of the Cultural Landscape**

*List of other efforts and activities implemented in 2019 towards conserving and enhancing the Cultural Landscape*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects and Activities</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Lead Partner(s)</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The protection and preservation of Palestinian cultural heritage related to natural history and ethnography</td>
<td>September 2018 to August 2019</td>
<td>£94,650 GBP</td>
<td>Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability (PIBS) and Palestine Museum of Natural History (PMNH) at Bethlehem University</td>
<td>This project focuses on the protection and preservation of Palestinian cultural heritage related to the natural history and ethnography of more than 250 localities in the West Bank of Palestine, including the WHP. The project’s outputs were: (1) collect and preserve between 30-50 tangible objects related to agriculture; (2) document minimum of 350-400 intangible heritage records; (3) increase awareness and cooperation between relevant stakeholders and local communities; (4) raise the profile of the museum among the public to increase awareness and understanding about the cultural heritage; (5) increased amount of people involved in data collection and provision;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Description</td>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Organization/Institution</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving the cultivation of Battiri Eggplants</td>
<td>May 2019</td>
<td>$5,000 USD</td>
<td>Battir Municipality</td>
<td>The project encouraged farmers to plant more than 10,000 eggplants during the last season (Spring-Summer). It purchased improved seedlings and sold them to farmers at half price. Subsequently, most of the crops were sold to the WHP’s visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize Jerusalem to Battir Festival</td>
<td>19-20 April 2019</td>
<td>$8,000 USD</td>
<td>Volunteer for Hope Association/ Jerusalem</td>
<td>Volunteer for Hope Association organized a cultural festival within the WHP for two continuous days, with the aim of encouraging farmers and women to market their products, including organic vegetables, handcrafts, and glass and pottery souvenirs to the WHP’s visitors. (See Figure 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize a Battiri eggplant festival</td>
<td>17 August 2018</td>
<td>$10,000 USD</td>
<td>Palestine Cellular Communications Company, Jawwal</td>
<td>The festival was organized for one day, with the aim of encouraging farmers to market their products, including eggplants, handcrafts, and Battir honey, to the WHP’s visitors. (See Figure 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop organic agriculture in the Wadi al-Makrour</td>
<td>January to April 2019</td>
<td>$80,000 USD</td>
<td>Caritas Jerusalem (This project is funded by the Government of)</td>
<td>This project aims to encourage farmers to use new environmental agriculture methods and techniques. It will support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Implementor</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising public awareness in schools towards cultural heritage</td>
<td>March to November 2019</td>
<td>$1,000 USD</td>
<td>Battir Public Library</td>
<td>Several awareness raising workshops and lectures were held by the Battir Public Library, for the Battir’s girls’ and boys’ schools, in order to raise public awareness about the cultural heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize an olive picking festival</td>
<td>20 October 2019</td>
<td>$1,000 USD</td>
<td>Bethlehem Governorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Palestinian Police, and Palestinian Universities</td>
<td>This activity aims to help farmers to pick their olives grooves in Khirbet Battir (See Figure 12).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive trees planting activity</td>
<td>February 2019</td>
<td>$2,000 USD</td>
<td>Bethlehem Governorate</td>
<td>Organize olives trees planting activity in lands near railway to safeguard them from Israeli confiscation (See Figure 13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage inhabitants to create green areas and encourage planting of trees</td>
<td>October 2019</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Battir Municipality and Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>The Battir Municipality, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, provided the inhabitants with 450 trees to be planted in home gardens and public spaces to create green areas within the WHP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize specialized training workshop for traditional plastering and stone pointing</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
<td>$4,000 USD</td>
<td>Battir Municipality, Jerusalem Old City Revitalization Program– Taawon, and MoTA</td>
<td>This activity was organized with the participation of 15 masons, skilled labors, architects and engineers, who will be involved in the rehabilitation works of the historic buildings in Seven Widows Quarter (See Figure 14).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Enhancing the Physical Situation in and around the WHP

As mentioned in the previous SOC reports, negative impacts resulted from the village’s weak infrastructure are recognized by all stakeholders. Since the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List, various stakeholders have sought to enhance this situation through multiple interventions, including rehabilitation of abandoned traditional buildings inside the historic center of Battir for reuse as community or tourist facilities; improvement of the socio-economic status of the local community; and improvement of the infrastructure, especially roads networks, water supply networks, and management of solid waste.

List of 2019 efforts towards enhancing the physical situation of the WHP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects and Activities</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation of Khirbet Al-Bader and Khallet Battir roads</td>
<td>January 2019</td>
<td>This project aimed to rehabilitate the Khallet Battir and the Khirbet Al-Bader roads. Funded by the MDLF with a total budget of $121,627 USD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation of Battir main road</td>
<td>July 2019</td>
<td>This project contributed enhance Battir’s main street. Funded by the Ministry of Local Government with a total budget of $200,000 USD (See Figure 15 and 17).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixing interpretation panels along hiking trail</td>
<td>February 2019</td>
<td>23 interpretation panels which include information about the property’s natural and cultural values were fixed along the property’s hiking trail. Funded by the Environment Quality Authority with a total budget of $5800USD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several cleaning Activities within the WHP</td>
<td>November 2019</td>
<td>Several cleaning activities for the roads, schools, agricultural terraces and public spaces were implemented by school students within the WHP (See Figure 16).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Future Issues Identified by the State Party

In conformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, a set of future actions address a set of proposed projects that will assure implementation of the corrective measures as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects and Activities</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implement the Management and Conservation</td>
<td>Pending funding and activation of</td>
<td>In order to implement the endorsed Management and Conservation Plan, MoTA shall recruit the Site Manager and activate the Steering Committee and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>the Management System</td>
<td>Site Management Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restoration and rehabilitation of landscapes and historical buildings in the Battir village</strong></td>
<td>2020 to 2021</td>
<td>During 2020 this project will continue to document, restore, and rehabilitate a number of historical buildings within the WHP, as well as conserve dry-stone walls and historical water channels in Al-Jinan zone. The project will also conduct capacity building workshops for a group of specialists in addition to awareness raising activities and volunteer campaigns for the residents of the village of Battir to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving the heritage and the cultural scene. <em>Funded and conducted by Jerusalem Old City Revitalization Program–Taawon with a total budget of $500,000 USD.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The bus parking lot and visitor interpretation Centre -Battir</strong></td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>This proposed project aims to establish a bus parking lot, visitor interpretation Centre, and two prepay toilets within Battir village to cater the WHP visitors and tourists. <em>Funded by the German Government with a total budget of $50,000 USD.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restoration and rehabilitation of 15-30 watchtowers</strong></td>
<td>2020 to 2021</td>
<td>This project aims to document, restore, and rehabilitate a number of agricultural watchtowers within the WHP, as well as conserve dry-stone walls and historical water channels in Al-Makhour Valley. <em>Funded by the Government of Aragon in Spain through Caritas Spain.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The bus parking lot and visitor interpretation Centre –Beit Jala</strong></td>
<td>2020 to 2021</td>
<td>This proposed project aims to establish a bus parking lot and visitor interpretation Centre within Beit Jala to cater the WHP visitors and tourists. <em>Funded by the Government of Aragon in Spain through Caritas Spain.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Tail of Trail: Exploring Path to Develop</strong></td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>This project aims to rehabilitate and preserve agricultural terraces of Al-Makhour –Battir hiking trail, in addition to produce promotional materials, training and capacity building and awareness campaigns for the WHP community. <em>Funded by the British Council through Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation “CCHP”.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establishment of a sewage network</strong></td>
<td>Pending funding</td>
<td>This proposed project aims to establish a sewage network for the Battir village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wastewater treatment plant for Battir and</strong></td>
<td>Pending advice of the World</td>
<td>This plan aims to construct a wastewater treatment plant to treat the sewage discharged from the villages of Battir and Hussan, and to promote the reuse of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hussan Heritage Committee and funding

- treated wastewater in the area. It will be established in the buffer zone of the WHP. The treatment plant will contribute to resolving underground water pollution, which is causing severe damage to the springs and irrigated crops.
- A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) shall be undertaken and subsequently submitted to the World Heritage Centre prior to implementation of the project.

5. **Public access to the State of Conservation Report**

The State Party agrees that the full State of Conservation Report can be made publicly available via the WH center’s Information System.

6. **Conclusion**

As highlighted in this State of Conservation Report, the State of Palestine conducted several projects and activities during 2019 to conserve and sustainably develop the WHP and its OUV, with the aim of achieving the Desired State of Conservation and corrective measures set for the site to be removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger, including rehabilitation of parts of the agricultural terraces, rehabilitation of the traditional pathways, enhancement of community engagement in the conservation and management of the WHP, and raising public awareness towards the WHP’s OUV.

The endorsed Management and Conservation Plan for the WHP shall be implemented by the beginning of 2020, as soon as the operational management system is put in place, to ensure an adequate respect and effective safeguarding of the property and its inherent Outstanding Universal Value.

The threats resulting from the Israeli Occupying Power’s plans, including construction of a “Wall” along the property, construction of new illegal settlements within or around the property, and opening of new bypass roads remain valid until a binding decision, in conformity with Article 6 Section 3 of the World Heritage Convention (1972), is adopted by concerned Israeli authorities. It is critical to the long term stability of this WHP, its integrity and authenticity, that this threat is disabled through binding action.

In spite of considerable achievements and the positive efforts of various stakeholders in enhancing the state of conservation of the property and its surroundings as well as the dismissal of some of threats to the WHP, Palestine wishes to retain the property “Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir” on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
7. Signature of the Authority

This State of Conservation Report (SOC) for the World Heritage Property (WHP) **Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines: Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir (1492)** was prepared by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in close cooperation with other related stakeholders.

Dr. Ahmed Rjoob  
Director General of the World Heritage  
Focal Point of the World Heritage Convention
8. Figures

2. New colonial-settlement in the WHP opened by settlers on 9/2019
3. New colonial-settlement in the WHP opened by settlers on 9/2019
4. The Israeli Occupying Power demolished a Palestinian home and restaurant.

5. The Israeli Occupying Power demolished traditional dry-stone walls and cutting olives trees in Khirbet Battir.
6: Rehabilitation of agricultural dry-stone walls and reclamation and repair of agricultural land in Al Makhrou Valley
7: Training workshop on dry-stone walls rehabilitation
8: Rehabilitation of agricultural dry-stone walls and hiking trail in Wadi Al-Aion “Hussan”
9: Restoration and rehabilitation of landscapes and Historical buildings in Battir
10: Biodiversity conservation and community development in Al-Makhour Valley
11: Jerusalem to Battir festival & Battiri eggplant festival
12: Picking olives festival
13: Olive trees planting activity

14: Training workshop for traditional plastering and stone pointing
15: Rehabilitation of Battir main road

16: Cleaning activities within the WHP
Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines—Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir—

17: The WHP Map
Summary of State of Conservation Report (2020) for

Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines– Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir–

Palestine (1492)

Bethlehem, Palestine
January, 2021
Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, Palestine (Ref. 1492) was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2014 following an emergency nomination, in accordance with criteria (iv) and (v), and immediately on the List of World Heritage in Danger, after it was acknowledged that the landscape was threatened by emerging and intensifying socio-cultural and geo-political transformations with the potential to cause irreversible damage to the site’s authenticity and integrity—citing specifically the start of construction of an Israeli “Wall” that may isolate local farmers from fields they have cultivated for centuries.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee has been postponed to June/July 2021. In reference to the summary records of the 14th extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee that was held online on 2 November 2020, the Committee took a decision regarding the 2020 State of Conservation Reports. It states that “With regard to the state of conservation cycles, individual reports foreseen for examination by the 45th session in 2021 would simply be examined together with all those planned for the 44th session in 2020. For properties facing conservation issues of utmost importance and for which a report was initially planned in 2020, the States Parties concerned would have the possibility to provide the Secretariat with additional information by the deadline of 1 February 2021, at the latest “.

The last SOC report (2019) addressed the main issues of the Management and Conservation of the World heritage Property and responses to the World Heritage Committee’s Decision (43 COM.). The State of Palestine confirms all information mentioned in the previous SOC report, and its commitment, including the progress in achieving the Desired State of Conservation (DSOCR) and the implementation of key corrective measures by all relevant stakeholders.

However, the situation has extremely changed by the beginning of 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The extreme exceptional circumstances that prevailed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 worldwide, has affected all aspects of life, including most of activities planned to be implemented in the Property during 2020. The main conservation activities and projects that were reported in the previous SOC have continued.

The COVID-19 pandemic, has heavily hit tourism activities in the Property. Most of tourist facilities, souvenir shops, restaurants, and guest houses have been closed and the income of inhabitants, working in this sector, has strongly affected. However, a shining spot was also found, most of framers and villagers have returned to cultivate their lands and preparing them to the summer and winter seasonal crops.

On the other hand, the Israeli Occupation violations have continued inside of the WHP during 2020. For instance, on 17 November 2020, a group of illegal Israeli settlers supported by Israeli soldiers invaded a land plot inside the WHP in Al Makhrou Valley near AL-Hariq area. They pitched tents to establish a new colonial-settlement in the Western Bethlehem area (figure 1). Also, the Israeli Occupation Authorities are planning to establish an industrial zone in the land of Hussan, Battir and Wadi Fukan villages. The planned industrial zone size is 632.87 acres and it spreads across a mountainous topographic area that crosses the water drainage. This terrain has high environmental value, with its southwestern side located in the domain of Wadi Jam’a’s drainage basin, which is on the buffer zone of the World Heritage Property and intrudes into its core zone (figure 2,a,b).
These violations might destroy significant parts of the WHP landscape that is characterized by agricultural terraces, water springs, and olive oil presses, affecting the WHP Outstanding Universal Value, its integrity, and authenticity. The State of Palestine confirms its commitment to achieve the Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and its corrective measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee.

In light of the above mentioned information, and in spite of the positive developments have been achieved since the inscription of the property on the World Heritage List, Palestine wishes to retain the property “Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir” on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
Figures:

Figure 1: Israeli violations inside the WHP
Figure 2,a: Location of the illegal Israeli Occupation industrial zone in the WH
Figure 2, b: Location of the illegal Israeli Occupation industrial zone in the WHP