State of Conservation Report (2022)

For

Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem,
Battir –
Palestine (1492)

Bethlehem, Palestine

January 2023
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.
# Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary..........................................................................................................................4
2. Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee (WHCom) Decision 44 COM 7A. 17. ........................................................................................................................................4
2. a & c Progress achieved in implementing the Desired State of Conservation and Corrective Measures adopted by the World Heritage Committee. ........................................................................................................5
   1. Conservation interventions of the Cultural Landscape..................................................7
   2. Enhancing the Physical Situation in and around the WHP .........................................9
2. b. Timeframe for Implementation of the Corrective Measures ........................................11
3. Future Issues Identified by the State Party .................................................................................11
4. Public access to the State of Conservation Report ..............................................................13
5. Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................13
6. Signature of the Authority ..........................................................................................................13
Figures..................................................................................................................................................14
1. Executive Summary

As the 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee (WHCom) did not hold last year (2022), this report briefly summarizes the efforts of the State of Palestine to achieve the Desired State of Conservation (DSOCR) and Key Corrective Measures for the removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger. It also includes several Israeli violations committed in the World Heritage Property (WHP) during 2022.

The State of Palestine is committed to implementing the DSOCR and their corrective measures adopted by the WHCom (Decision 39 COM 8B.52), especially those aiming to conserve the cultural landscape in line with international standards, prevent abandonment and forestation of existing agricultural terraces, and engage the local communities within the WHP.

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 44 COM 7A. 17.

As the 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee (WHCom) did not hold last year in 2022, this section was addressed previously in the 2021 SoC report uploaded via (https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1492/documents/), in addition to that and to ensure an appropriate state of conservation for the cultural landscape, several conservation and enhancement interventions were implemented in 2022. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) continues working, in close cooperation with the responsible stakeholders and local communities, to develop a land-use plan and relevant regulations to avoid uncontrolled urban growth within the Property and its buffer zone. In this context, a project for developing a detailed urban plan and special building bylaws for specifically identified areas in the buffer zone of the WHP is being finalized. It is funded and supervised by the UNESCO Ramallah Office, through its regular budget, and implemented by the Centre of Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP), and the Planning Center of An-Najah National University.

The main objective of this project is to strengthen the existing legislations and regulations for the effective conservation and protection of the cultural landscape, Battir old town, archaeological remains, and ultimately the physical attributes of the WHP in line with its endorsed Management and Conservation Plan (MCP). The specific objectives of the project are as the following:
• Develop a detailed urban plan (DUP) and urban bylaws for specific areas in the WHP that allow urban development to be compatible and homogenous with the overall context of the towns and the conservation objectives of the WHP.

• Regulate new interventions inside Battir's old town, specifying where construction of new buildings or small additions is allowed and/or prevented.

• Approve the developed bylaws as part of a detailed urban plan in the framework of an existing land-use plan by the relevant authorities including the Higher Planning Council in Palestine.

• Equip Battir Municipality and Hussan Village Council with well-defined management tools to facilitate addressing urban transformations in the WHP.

This project is almost finalized and related authorities will endorse its bylaws in 2023.


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

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

As noted in previous SoC reports, the geo-political context in which the Property lies—namely, the direct and indirect effects of the 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.

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 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.

Main Israel, the Occupying Power, Violations during 2022

The Israeli occupation violations continued inside the WHP during 2022. The following Israeli occupation plans, among other actions, affected the WHP's OUV as well as its physical attributes and their authenticity and integrity:

➢ On 7 March 2022, a group of illegal settlers, protected by the occupation forces, stormed the 'Ain Bardamo area, which is located east of the town of Battir within
the boundaries of the WHP. This violation included bulldozing agricultural land, establishing roads, to facilitate the movement of settlers, pitching a large tent (40X10m), and setting up a caravan. It is noteworthy that the settlers, under the protection of the occupation forces, assaulted the landowners and threatened them with death if they tried to approach the area (see figure 1).

- As mentioned in the previous SoC reports, since 2019, a new tunnel and a new bypass road for Israeli settlers (Road 60) inside the eastern part of the WHP, near Beit Jala, have been constructed. This construction has destroyed 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 2).

- On 14 June 2022, the Israeli occupation authorities announced the deposit of detailed plans to expand four settlements (Elkana, Elon Moreh, Har Gillo, Rahalim) in the governorates of Nablus, Salfit and Bethlehem. The Plan (№ .1/4/401) is for the expansion of the illegal "Har Gillo" settlement on the lands of Bethlehem Governorate, specifically inside the buffer zone of the WHP. In the first phase, a new settlement called "Givat Ya'el" or "Yael Givat" with 525 settlement units will be built in an area that reached about 200 dunams. It is part of five thousand planned units that is planned to be established on the lands of the villages of Walaja and Battir inside the buffer zone of the WHP.

- On 13 September 2022, the Israeli occupation authorities stormed the Al-Makhrour area, while some workers and farmers were maintaining their lands and watchtowers. They were asked to stop working and leave the area without giving any reasons or explanations. Afterwards, the Israeli occupation authorities sent military orders and notifications to many of the landowners to completely stop the maintenance works.

- On 21 December 2022, the Israeli occupation authorities escalated their arbitrary measures inside the WHP. They uprooted dozens of olive trees and demolished an agricultural house in the town of Battir (see figure 4).

- As mentioned in previous SoC reports, on 17 November 2020, a group of illegal Israeli settlers established a new illegal settlement outpost inside the WHP in the Wadi al-Makhrour area. In 2022, the settlers expanded that settlement and destroyed more agricultural lands, causing a serious impact on the OUV of the WHP, its authenticity and integrity (see figure 5).

The State of Palestine denounces continuous threats and violations of the Israel, the Occupying Power, that are harmfully affecting the authenticity and integrity of the WHP.
and are not in conformity with the provisions of relevant UNESCO conventions, especially the 1972 and 1954 Conventions.

*The WHCom is kindly asked to take all possible measures to oblige the Israel, the Occupying Power, to stop such violations and to conserve the agricultural terraces and 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.**

**CM 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 State of Palestine in cooperation with related 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 has been working tirelessly on implementing several projects to achieve this corrective measure. The following activities were implemented in 2022. They are divided into two categories: (1) conservation interventions of the cultural landscape, and (2) the enhancement of the physical situation within and around the Property.

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

The following table includes other efforts and activities implemented in 2022 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>Maintenance work of the dry-stone walls: phase II</td>
<td>May-June, 2022</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>UNESCO Ramallah Office in cooperation with MoTA</td>
<td>Maintenance work for parts of the dry-stone walls that were damaged because of weather conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting of the Steering Committee of the WHP</td>
<td>Aug. 2022</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Members of the Steering committee</td>
<td>The status of the WHP and the repeated Israeli attacks against the property were reviewed and discussed. It also included a discussion of the role of the steering committee members in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
implementing the MCP for the WHP, preserving, and developing the Property (see figure 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving the cultivation of Battiri Eggplants</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>US$12,000</td>
<td>Battir Municipality</td>
<td>This activity was organized to urge farmers to plant more than 17,000 eggplants during the last season (Spring-Summer). The Battir Municipality 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>Developing and opening a public service centre inside the building of Battir municipality</td>
<td>Mar. 2022</td>
<td>US$52,000</td>
<td>Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF)</td>
<td>The municipality rehabilitated a public service centre in the municipality building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive seedlings activity</td>
<td>Feb. 2022</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>The Jerusalem Zakat Committee</td>
<td>More than 1000 olive trees were distributed to farmers to strengthen their steadfastness in their lands within the WHP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize a Battiri eggplant festival.</td>
<td>Aug. 2022</td>
<td>US$12,000</td>
<td>Battir Municipality</td>
<td>A two-day festival was organized to encourage farmers to sell their products and handicrafts to the WHP’s visitors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizing an activity entitled “My Heritage, My Identity”
(see figure 9) | July and Aug. 2022 | US $ 3000 | The National Committee for Summer Camps, and Battir Municipality | It was organized for children from 6-12 years old.

Tourist Information Center in Battir Municipality building
(see figure 10) | Feb. to Dec. 2022 | US $16000 | Engagement Global foundation | In the framework of the German-Palestinian Partnerships Project / Battir-Bruel, and the Engagement Global Foundation, a tourist information centre was established inside Battir Municipality building to serve visitors of the WHP.

Sports program for all
(see figure 11) | 2020-2024 | 7,200 euros | Valle de saint-brieuc – france, and Battir Municipality | A training program for “The Sports for All” was organized in Battir town. It targeted all categories of local community from different ages, including all kinds of possible sports, football, volleyball, and athletics.

2. Enhancing the Physical Situation in and around the WHP
As mentioned in the previous SoC reports, since the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List, various stakeholders have sought to enhance this situation through multiple interventions. They have included rehabilitation of abandoned traditional buildings inside the historic centre 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. The following table includes the 2022 efforts towards enhancing the physical situation of the WHP. Projects and Activities.
DSOCR #3: Adequate restoration of the irrigation system and the development of a sufficient sewage system to protect water quality on the Property.

**CM 3.1:** Implementation of a project to restore traditional irrigation systems

**CM 3.2:** Implementation of a project to put in place an adequate sewage system to protect water quality on the Property

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation of Al-Marj Road</td>
<td>Sept. and Oct. 2022</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of Al-Marj Road, conducted by Battir Municipality in cooperation with the local community at a cost of $45,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(see figure 12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation of Qornet Al Zaourour Road</td>
<td>Oct. 2022</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of Qornet Al Zaourour Road, conducted by Battir Municipality in cooperation with the local community at a cost of $11,500.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and installation of street lighting units (see figure 13)</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Battir Municipality maintained and installed the street lighting units inside the town at a cost of 12,500 USD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building retaining walls</td>
<td>June and July 2022</td>
<td>Battir Municipality constructed retaining walls for some streets at a cost of 11,500 USD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation of the internal water networks of Battir</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Battir Municipality rehabilitated the internal water networks in Battir at a cost of $4,300.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance and construction of stone walls in the area of Khirbet Battir</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Battir municipality maintained and constructed stone walls in the Khirbet Battir area, with support of the local community at a cost of $3,500.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No achievement has been achieved in 2022, due to the limited financial resources. Additional efforts shall be made to secure required funds to put in place an adequate sewage system and to achieve the 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

This DSOCR and its related corrective measures were completed in 2021 as scheduled in the timeframe.

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

As mentioned in the previous Soc report, this DSOCR and its related corrective measures were planned to be completed by 2021. The first corrective measure (CM5.1) was achieved in 2021 as scheduled; however, the second corrective measure (CM5.2) is planned to be achieved during the first quarter of 2023, as the project of the land-use plan and its bylaws have been finalized, and is being endorsed by related authorities.

2. b. Timeframe for Implementation of the Corrective Measures

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, in addition to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions that cause additional delay in the implementation of certain projects and activities as scheduled in the MCP action plan. It is worth noting that the timeframe was adequately integrated within the MCP’s objectives, strategies, and action plan, but further revision is needed now.

3. Future Issues Identified by the State Party

In conformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, the following table describes future potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended to be implemented within the Property, buffer zone and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHP.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects and Activities</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of the Management and Conservation Plan</td>
<td>More efforts will be made to continue implementing projects and activities in 2023</td>
<td>The site manager in cooperation with the Steering and Site Management Committees will follow up on the implementation of the MCP and will make more efforts to secure funds needed to implement its action plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus parking lot and visitor interpretation Centre</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>This proposed project aims to establish a bus parking lot, visitor interpretation centre, and two prepay toilets within Battir town to serve the WHP’s visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project of sustainable tourism through safeguarding, rehabilitation and promotion of the Agro-Cultural Landscape in Battir</td>
<td>The duration of the project is 36 months</td>
<td>The project will be implemented by the Ramallah UNESCO Office, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in cooperation with MoTA and the Ministry of Agriculture. Its main aim is to promote agro-cultural tourism as a driver for economic and social development. It will also conserve and promote the WHP making it a more attractive tourism destination to bring more benefits to the local community through agro-tourism, as well as through the integration of the WHP with the religious touristic route that leads thousands of tourists to Bethlehem, the other World Heritage Property in the same district. The project is funded by the Italian government. Partners of the project: • Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities as a partner/project lead and main beneficiary • The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. **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 World Heritage center’s Information System.

5. **Conclusion**

The State of Palestine in cooperation with related stakeholders and partners has continued its efforts during 2022 to preserve and sustainably develop the WHP and its Outstanding Universal Value, to achieve the desired state of conservation status and its specific corrective measures to be removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger. However, threats arising from the plans of Israel, the Occupying Power, remain the main factors threatening the WHP and its OUV, including the construction of a "wall" along the property, the construction of new illegal settlements on or around the property, the planned industrial zone, and new bypass roads. These threats remain in force until a binding decision is issued, per Article 6.3 of the World Heritage Convention (1972) by the relevant Israeli occupation authorities. It is critical to the long-term stability, integrity and validity of this WHP that this threat is disabled through binding actions.

Despite the significant achievements and positive efforts of various stakeholders in promoting the conservation status of the WHP and its surrounding areas, **the State of Palestine wishes to retain the property, “Palestine: Land of Olives and Vineyards – Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir” on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

6. **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
Figures
Figure 1: A map and photos showing the location of the Israeli occupation violations within the boundaries of the WHP
Figure 2: Photos showing the new tunnel and new bypass road (Road 60)
Figure 3: Maps showing the proposed illegal settlement bloc within the WHP’s boundaries
Figures 4: photos showing the uprooted olive saplings in the AL- Khammar area by the Israeli occupation authorities
Figure 5: Photos showing the expansion of the colonial-settlement at the al-Makhrour area inside the WHP 2019, 2021, 2022
Figure 6: A photo shows the meeting of the WHP’s Steering Committee

Figure 7: Photos showing the developing and opening a public service centre in Battir municipality building
Figure 8: A photo showing the organization of the Battiri eggplant festival

Figure 9: A photo shows the activities organized for “My Heritage, My Identity”
Figure 10: Photos showing the Tourist Information Centre inside the Battir Municipality Building
Figure 11: Photos showing the activities organized for the “Sports program for all”
Figure 12: A Photo shows the Rehabilitation of the Al-Marj Road

Figure 13: A photo shows the maintenance and installation of the street lighting units