

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/EG/1721/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 19 December 2023

H.E. Ms Leena Al-Hadid  
Ambassador Extraordinary and  
Plenipotentiary to France, Permanent  
Delegate to UNESCO Permanent Delegation  
of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to  
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## **World Heritage List 2024**

### **Umm Al-Jimāl (Jordan) – Interim report and additional information request**

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies are requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2024. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation procedure.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Umm Al-Jimāl” was carried out by Mr. Jean Yasmine (Lebanon) in July 2023. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organisation and implementation of the mission.

On 9 October 2023, an additional information letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the justification for inscription under criteria (iii), (iv), (v), and the buffer zone. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 31 October 2023 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2023, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2024. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2024.

We thank you and your Delegation for your availability and your participation in the meeting held on 23 November 2023 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting. During this last part of the meeting, the Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

#### **Rationale for the selection of the nominated site**

The ICOMOS Panel deliberated on the justification for inscription put forward by the State Party, which has been developed around the idea that Umm Al-Jimāl, with its basalt architecture, is an outstanding example of a rural settlement from the 5<sup>th</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE that testifies to the lifestyle of the people inhabiting the Hauran plateau in Late Antiquity, and their skillfulness in sustainably managing scarce resources in a desert-like environment. In reflecting on that, ICOMOS observed that the comparative analysis presented by the State Party seems to suggest that the nominated property is one of many similar settlements of that time, and that its exceptionality is considered largely in terms of the size of the settlement and extent to which its ruins are preserved today, the state of research, and the attachment of the contemporary community through aspects of intangible heritage. In light of these observations, ICOMOS would like to understand better the reasons for which the nominated property has been selected as an outstanding example of an agricultural settlement of the period in the Hauran region. To that effect, could the State Party provide a description of the broader historical perspective and the geo-cultural context within which the nominated property should be situated and appraised, and clarify what are the most distinctive features that distinguish this settlement among other similar sites within the Hauran region?

#### **Comparative analysis**

In relation to the previous question, ICOMOS noted that among the closest comparators to the nominated property on the World Heritage List is Um er-Rasas (Kastrom Mefa'a), a property in Jordan inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004. The architectural vestiges of this property can be said to be comparable to the nominated property, the difference lying primarily in the use of limestone rather than basalt in the construction of buildings. On the other hand, two sites where basalt was used for construction are currently on the Tentative List of Jordan, namely Gadara (Modern Um Qeis or Qays) and Abila City (Modern Qweilbeh). The Ancient City of Bosra in Syria, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1980, is also a settlement with monumental architecture that testifies to a similar period and preserves both basalt and limestone architecture. Given the similarities between these properties and Umm Al-Jimāl, ICOMOS would be grateful if the State Party could elaborate on the outstanding nature of the nominated property in comparison to these already inscribed properties as well as those on the Tentative List of Jordan.

#### **The term "Hauran"**

ICOMOS acknowledges that the term "Hauran" generally designates a geographic area – a volcanic plateau that extends from southwestern Syria to northwestern Jordan. However, in the nomination dossier the term is used in reference to both the geographic region as well as to describe the people of this area and their culture (as in Hauranian culture or Hauranian community). ICOMOS would like to seek further information on the use of the term "Hauran" in this second sense, and the relationship between culture (people) and the place; in other words, how has the cultural identity of people been produced in relation to the place? Or is the term used by the State Party simply to designate a people of a specific geographic region?

#### **Documentation**

The State Party informed in the nomination dossier and the draft Site Management Plan that all structures at Umm Al-Jimāl will be documented stone-by-stone in 2D and 3D. Moreover, it has been communicated that the documentation related to the state of conservation of the nominated property currently contains a detailed assessment and conservation recommendations only for eighteen structures (out of some 170). The assessment of others will be carried out in the future. Given the importance of the baseline documentation for future management, conservation and monitoring of the nominated property,

ICOMOS would like to know the expected timeframe for the preparation of the said documentation. It would also be of help if the State Party could clarify what documentation of the different elements of the water catchment system of Umm Al-Jimāl is in place, or whether it will be included as part of the mentioned 2D/3D documentation project.

### **Conservation measures**

ICOMOS further notes that medium- and long-term conservation plans are being envisaged for the nominated property but are yet to be prepared. No timeframe for their preparation has been provided. ICOMOS understands that the conservation plans are contingent on the preparation of the abovementioned baseline documentation but notes that, in the meantime, regular maintenance is focused only on eighteen selected buildings, and the state of conservation of half of the nominated property is rather fragile since the ruins have been left purposefully “as found” in the northern part of the nominated site, without any interventions. ICOMOS would be grateful if the State Party could share some information with regard to the (intermediary) conservation measures that will be put in place for the entire nominated property, given the expected rise in visitor numbers.

### **Management Plan**

ICOMOS notes that the draft Site Management Plan presents a general future vision for the site and is a broad framework for the management of the nominated property going forward, without providing specifics. According to the documents provided, the formal processes to protect the nominated site will be established within the next five years, and, in the long term, the nominated property will be developed to serve as a catalyst for the interpretation and development of other sites in north Jordan for research and tourism.

The Umm Al-Jimāl Site Annual Plan (UJSAP) should be prepared within one year from the approval of the Site Management Plan and will include short-term, medium-term and long-term goals. Given that both these documents – the Site Management Plan and the UJSAP – are yet to be finalised, ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could share more details on the different goals, and expected management objectives as well as anticipated activities, in relation to the presented short- and long-term vision for the nominated property.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation procedure.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above requested information by **28 February 2024 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* concerning additional information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this statutory deadline will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any additional information submitted within the statutory deadline, it will not be possible to properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or a large amount of new information submitted at the last minute. ICOMOS would therefore be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation procedure.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin  
Director  
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to            Department of Antiquities of Jordan  
                         UNESCO World Heritage Centre