



Ministry of Culture  
Directorate General of Antiquities & Museums

# **STATE PARTY REPORT**

On The State of Conservation  
of The

**Syrian Cultural Heritage Sites**  
(Syrian Arab Republic)

For Submission By  
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## INTRODUCTION

This Progress Report on the State of Conservation of the Syrian World Heritage properties is:

- Responds to the World Heritage on the 41 Session of the UNESCO Committee organized in Krakow, Poland from 2 to 12 July 2017.
- Provides update to the December 2017 State of Conservation report.
- Prepared in to be present on the previous World Heritage Committee meeting 42e session 2018.

### **Information Sources**

This report represents a collation of available information as of 31 December 2017, and is based on available information from the DGAM braches around Syria, taking inconsideration that with ground access in some cities in Syria extremely limited for antiquities experts, extent of the damage cannot be assessment right now such as (Ancient Villages in North of Syria and Bosra).

Name of World Heritage property: **ANCIENT CITY OF DAMASCUS**  
Date of inscription on World Heritage List: 26/10/1979

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANTS**

Founded in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C., Damascus was an important cultural and commercial center, by virtue of its geographical position at the crossroads of the orient and the occident, between Africa and Asia. The old city of Damascus is considered to be among the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world. Excavations at Tell Ramad on the outskirts of the city have demonstrated that Damascus was inhabited as early as 8,000 to 10,000 BC. However, it is not documented as an important city until the arrival of the Aramaeans. In the Medieval period, it was the center of a flourishing craft industry, with different areas of the city specializing in particular trades or crafts.

The city exhibits outstanding evidence of the civilizations which created it - Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic. In particular, the Umayyad caliphate created Damascus as its capital, setting the scene for the city's ongoing development as a living Muslim, Arab city, upon which each succeeding dynasty has left and continues to leave its mark.

In spite of Islam's prevailing influence, traces of earlier cultures particularly the Roman and Byzantine continue to be seen in the city. Thus the city today is based on a Roman plan and maintains the aspect and the orientation of the Greek city, in that all its streets are oriented north-south or east-west and is a key example of urban planning. The earliest visible physical evidence dates to the Roman period - the extensive remains of the Temple of Jupiter, the remains of various gates and an impressive section of the Roman city walls. The city was the capital of the Umayyad Caliphate. However, apart from the incomparable Great Mosque, built on the site of a Roman temple and over-laying a Christian basilica, there is little visible dating from this important era of the city's history. The present city walls, the Citadel, some mosques and tombs survive from the Middle Ages, but the greatest part of the built heritage of the city dates from after the Ottoman conquest of the early 16th century.

## **THREATS**

Still the old city and its buffer zone has been targeted by fire several times during 2017:

- On July 27/2017, a fire broke out at the shops in BAB AL JABYYA suq, the cause of the fire was the misuse of the electrical welding equipment, which led to the sparks that burned the shoe store at the

first floor, then the fire spread to neighboring shops. Due to the high temperature, the metal ceiling and the metal bearing system were collapsed causing severe damage.

- On September 10/ 2017, a fire broke out in KING FAISAL STREET (western entrance), in the shops located at the south side of the street, between the northern entrance of the SAROUJIEH suq and the North West entrance of AL MANAKHILAH suq. The cause of the fire was the burning of a tank of diesel fuel in one of the shops, then the fire extended to the neighboring shops. The fire caused severe structural damages in 2 shops (completely collapsed in the first floor) and minor damages in 4 shops. It is worth to mention that the shops were a stores for commercial materials
- On September /12/ 2017, a fire broke out in SAROUJIEH (near Al- Hall suq), which caused completely destroyed to some shops.
- On October /1/ 2017, a fire broke out at estate (n 148) in AL-AMARA neighborhood. The fire destroyed the traditional wood ceiling of the first floor, and gulled over the goods inside the shop. The cause of the fire was a short circuit.
- On October 10/2017, a fire broke out at traditional house (estate n 174) in MEZANT AL SHAHM neighborhood, because of the explosion of LED battery, the wood ceiling and windows of the western room were Burned, and parts of the earth walls were collapsed.
- On October 11/2017, a suicide bomber blew himself in AL QANAWAT neighborhood, the explosion caused several structural damages in the neighboring traditional houses (estate n 4/3, 6/4, 5/5). The explosion caused cracks in the earth stones which made the walls, falling the floors of the upper floors, breaking the wooden ceilings, and collapse the stone arch at the entrance of the neighborhood.
- On November 16/ 2017, a fire broke out at estates (1002. 1003. 1004) in AL AMARA AL BRRANYYA neighborhood, near to BAB AL FRADIS and the historical wall of ancient Damascus. The fire destroyed the upper floor of the historical buildings (were built from earthen walls, and wooden ceilings), and damaged the structure of the lower floors, the fire also burned the mortar among the stones of the historical wall, so some these stones were collapsed.

## MEASURES TAKEN

- Damage Assessment: resulting from the fire, the location is directly inspected, the damage is documented through photographs, and cooperation is carried out with the damage assessment committees in Damascus Governorate and the owners of the damaged real property.
- The damaged shops have been reconstructed with the intention of recreating the historical and traditional image but in fact, in a certain places, building materials and techniques have been adopted which conflict with the traditional ones.
- The Directorate of the Old City (MAKTAB ANBAR OFFICE) undertook a project to execute all the electrical cables buried in the ground floor.
- DGAM finalized the first phase of the Anqa project which focuses on measurable 3D models of the landmark monuments within Damascus ancient City such as: AL-AZEM PALACE , AL-MADRASSA AL-JAQMAQIA ,THE Umayyad Mosque, AL-TKEIH AL-SULAIMANEIH, AL-BIMARISTAN AL-NOURI , HANANYA CHURCH, KHAN ASAAD BASHA and some of the artifacts of the national museum of Damascus.
- With regards of OTTOMAN BANK: Based on the report submitted by UNESCO, and the available plans in the Department of Antiquities of Old Damascus, the structural study which was provided by the owners of the shops has been modified according to the documents. So metal columns will be used with square sections to be placed instead of the burnt columns with the same numbers, and the pitched roof will be built on it.



*The metal ceiling which was damaged by the BAB AL JABYYA fire*



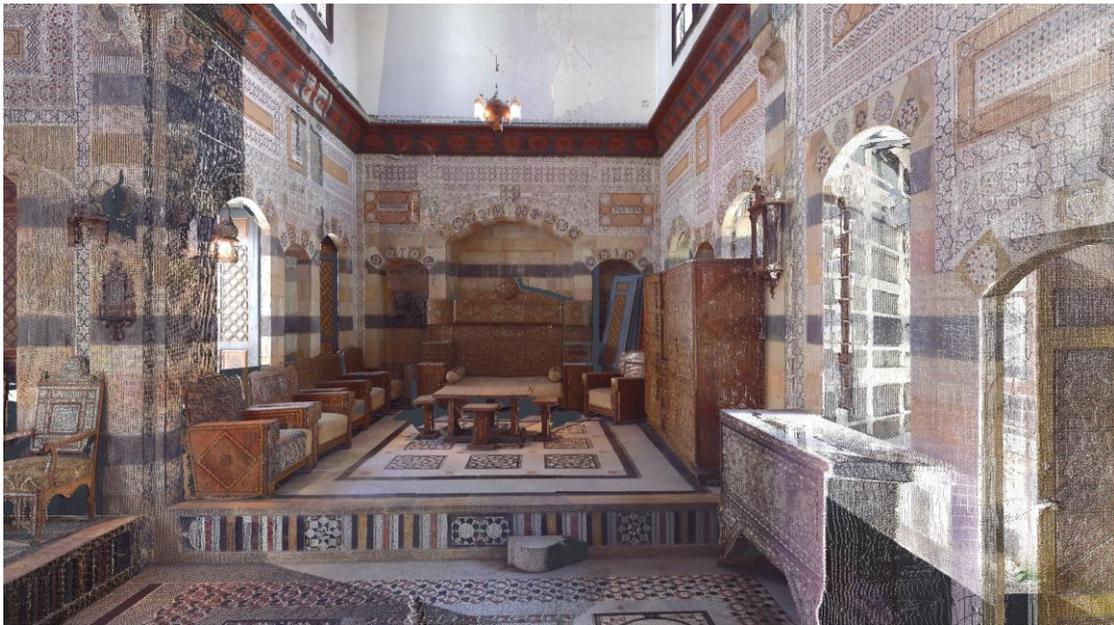
*The damages in King Faisal street*



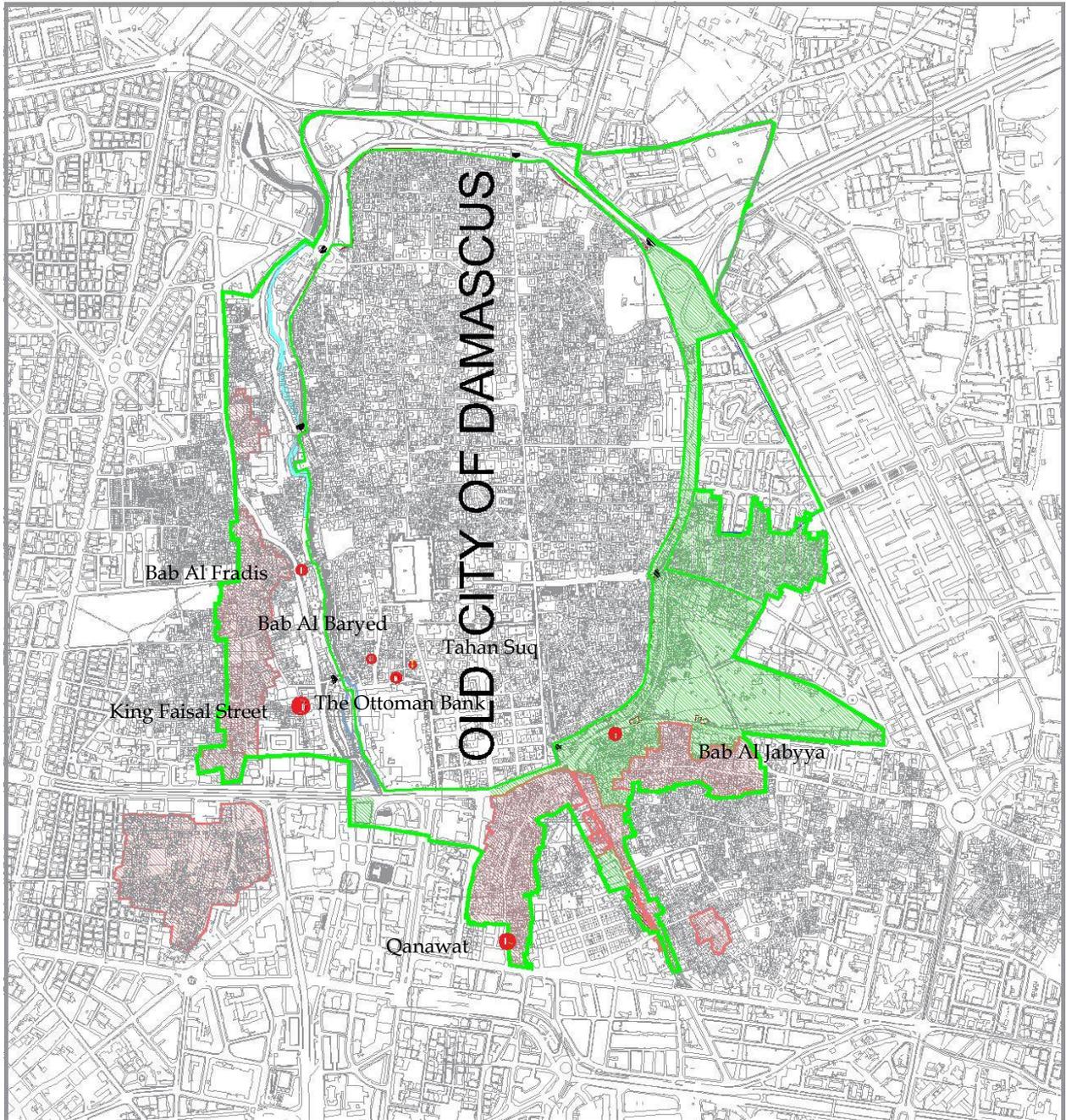
*The damages in AL AMARA  
ALBRRANYYA  
neighborhood*



*The damages in AL AMARA ALBRRANYYA neighborhood*



*Al Azem Palace, 3D photo taken by FARO, cooperation project of documenting old Damascus by a using 3D techniques in cooperation with Anqa.*



*A map of the Ancient city of Damascus shoe the location of the damaged areas by fire which indicates by red color*

Name of World Heritage property: **ANCIENT CITY OF BOSRA**  
Date of inscription on World Heritage List: 1980

#### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANTS:**

The name of Bosra occurs in the precious Tell el-Amarna tablets in Egypt, which date from the 14th century B.C. and represent royal correspondence between the Pharaohs and the Phoenician and Amorite kings. It became the northern capital of the Nabataean kingdom. In the year of 106 A.D, a new era began for Bosra when it was incorporated into the Roman Empire.

Alexander Severus gave it the title Colonia Bosra and Philip the Arab minted currency especially for it. During Byzantine times, Bosra was a major frontier market where Arab caravans came to stock up and its bishops took part in the Council of Antioch. Bosra was the first Byzantine city, which the Arabs entered in 634 in the phase of Islamic expansion.

Today, Bosra is a major archaeological site, containing ruins from Roman, Byzantine, and Muslim times. Further, Nabataean and Roman monuments, Christian churches, mosques and Madrasas are present within the city.

Its main feature is the second century Roman Theatre, constructed probably under Trajan, which has been integrally preserved. It was fortified between 481 and 1251 AD. Al-Omari Mosque is one of the oldest surviving mosques in Islamic history, and the Madrasah Mabrak al-Naqua is one of the oldest and most celebrated of Islam. The Cathedral of Bosra is also a building of considerable importance in the annals of early Christian architecture.

Bosra survived about 2500 years inhabited and almost intact. The Nabataeans, Romans, Byzantines and Umayyad, all left traces in the city, which is an open museum associated with significant episodes in the history of ideas and beliefs.

#### **THREATS**

- No damage recorded during this year.

Name of World Heritage property: **SITE OF PALMYRA**

Date of inscription on World Heritage List: 1980

#### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANTS:**

An oasis in the Syrian Desert, northeast of Damascus, Palmyra contains the monumental ruins of a great city that was one of the most important cultural centers of the ancient world. From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the art and architecture of Palmyra, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, married Graeco-Roman techniques with local traditions and Persian influences.

First mentioned in the archives of Mari in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, Palmyra was an established caravan oasis when it came under Roman control in the mid-first century AD as part of the Roman province of Syria. It grew steadily in importance as a city on the trade route linking Persia, India and China with the Roman Empire, marking the crossroads of several civilizations in the ancient world. A grand, colonnaded street of 1100 metres' length forms the monumental axis of the city, which together with secondary colonnaded cross streets links the major public monuments including the Temple of Ba'al, Diocletian's Camp, the Agora, Theatre, other temples and urban quarters. Architectural ornament including unique examples of funerary sculpture unites the forms of Greco-Roman art with indigenous elements and Persian influences in a strongly original style. Outside the city's walls are remains of a Roman aqueduct and immense necropolises.

Discovery of the ruined city by travelers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries resulted in its subsequent influence on architectural styles.

#### **THREATS:**

The city was occupied twice by ISIS, first on May 21, 2015 and liberated on March 27, 2016 and reoccupied on December 11, 2016 and liberated on March 2, 2017

#### **MEASURES TAKEN**

- After the 2<sup>nd</sup> liberation of the site, a team from the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums visited Palmyra to conduct a new assessment of the damages. The new assessment shows that the damage is limited to the central part of the facade of the theatre and columns of the TETRAPHYLON, these two monuments had previously been restored. Notably 15 columns of the TETRAPHYLON are copies, counter to the original ceiling, which has been destroyed, while the bases of the columns are intact and four of the columns are still standing in place.

- A joint team of DGAM, UNESCO experts and the Rev. BARTOSZ MARKOWSKI, a member of the Polish Archaeological Mission, which was explored the statue In 1977, finalized the restoration of the Palmyrian LION ALLAT sculpture (which was financed by UNESCO Beirut office). The statue was made available for public visit after unveiling it by Dr. MAHMOUD HAMMOUD, Director-General of Antiquities and Museums, and it was placed in the southeastern corner of the National Museum in Damascus.



*The damages on the façade of the theater due to the second occupation by ISIS*



*The columns of the TETRAPHYLON which were destroyed due to the second occupation by ISIS*

Name of World Heritage property. **ANCIENT CITY OF ALEPPO**

Date of inscription on World Heritage List: 1986

### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANTS**

Located at the crossroads of several trade routes since the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., Aleppo was ruled successively by the Hittites, Assyrians, Akkadians, Greeks, Romans, Umayyads, Ayyubids, Mameluks and Ottomans who left their stamp on the city. The Citadel, the 12th-century Great Mosque and various 16th and 17th-centuries madrasas, residences, khans and public baths, all form part of the city's cohesive, unique urban fabric.

The monumental Citadel of Aleppo, rising above the suqs, mosques and madrasas of the old walled city, is testament to Arab military might from the 12th to the 14th centuries. With evidence of past occupation by civilizations dating back to the 10th century B.C., the citadel contains the remains of mosques, palace and bath buildings. The walled city that grew up around the citadel bears evidence of the early Graeco-Roman street layout and contains remnants of 6th century Christian buildings, medieval walls and gates, mosques and madrasas relating to the Ayyubid and Mameluke development of the city, and later mosques and palaces of the Ottoman period. Outside the walls, the BAB AL-FARAJ quarter to the North-West, the Jdeide area to the north and other areas to the south and west, contemporary with these periods of occupation of the walled city contain important religious buildings and residences. Fundamental changes to parts of the city took place in the 30 years before inscription, including the destruction of buildings, and the development of tall new buildings and widened roads. Nonetheless the surviving ensemble of major buildings as well as the coherence of the urban character of the suqs and residential streets and lanes all contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value.

### **THREATS:**

The Syrian army retaken Aleppo on December, 2016. After the liberation, and because of the pressing desire of the residents to return to their city. Some of the encroachments were spread in using the building materials in the restoration and rehabilitation residential houses and shops within their properties, that is due to the high prices of the traditional materials, or it is not available in the market, and the lack of craftsmen. The DGAM unable to control all the restoration and rehabilitation works in the property because the lack of field cadres, teams, and the weak coordination between the other stakeholders.

### **MEASURES TAKEN**

- A joint UNESCO Beirut office "emergency safeguarding to the Syrian Cultural Heritage project" and the DGAM Team, went in emergency mission, to the world heritage city of Aleppo from 16 to 19 January

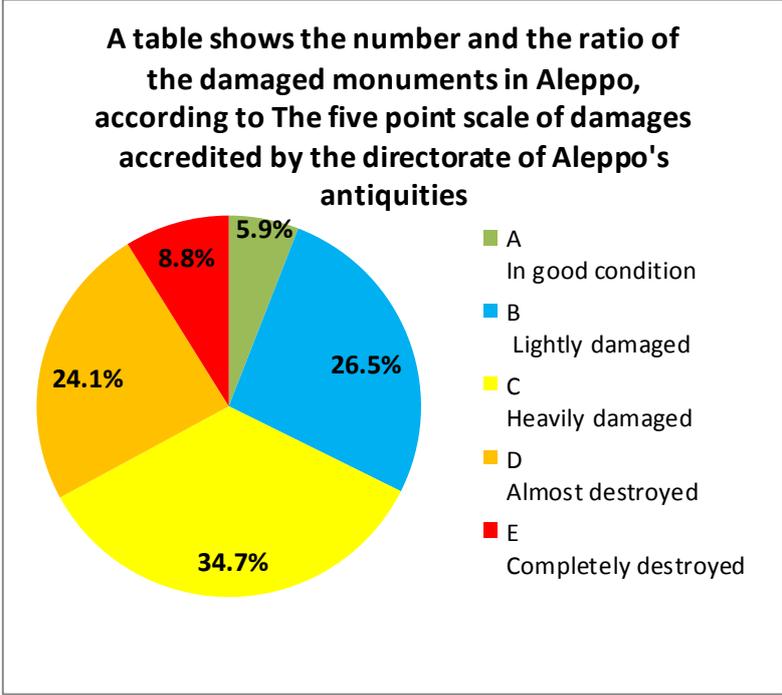
2017, to undertake a preliminary assessment of the extent of damages at the World Heritage site. Discussed Emergency measures during a number of working meetings with the DGAM and NGOs, in order to identify adequate proposals and coordinate action for the recovery phase.

- After the liberation of the Ancient city of Aleppo, nine crews of DGAM in Aleppo Antiquities were able to enter the Ancient city of Aleppo, these crews include engineers, archaeologists and observers technicians. The crews distributed according to the importance of the damage areas, in cooperation with the City Council of Aleppo, Directorate of Religious Endowments, Directorate of Tourism under the supervision of the province of Aleppo. The tasks of the crews were to not allow the deportation of historical and archaeological elements in the old city, and carry out systematic documentation of the damage, which affected the city with evaluation forms.
- From 01-03 March 2017 under the patronage of UNESCO, the technical coordination meeting of the Ancient city of Aleppo was concluded at UNESCO office in Beirut. The meeting discussed ways of enhancing the coordination of existing international and national efforts as well as the necessary need to consolidate the strategy of the recovery phase that will improve these efforts. The meeting also stressed about the strengthening of the partnership through sharing experiences and documents and enable them to the service of the efforts of the recent phase.
- By a decision of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, The National Higher Steering Committee for the Restoration of the Ancient city of Aleppo was formed, which headed by the Ministry of Culture and represented by the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, The Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Housing , Ministry of Tourism, experts in the field of archeology and restoration, the Aga Khan Foundation for Culture, the Syrian Trust for Development and the local community. During its first meeting held at the Ministry of Culture building, the committee discussed logistical and financial details related to the restoration work and identified its needs and obligations. The Committee continue meeting periodically to discuss the status of work and developments related to its mandate.
- From 10 to 11 August 2017, UNESCO organized a meeting on traditional building materials and techniques in Aleppo with the aim to estimate, based on available damage assessments and analyses, the needs of the World Heritage site of the Ancient City of Aleppo in terms of traditional building materials and techniques and to take stock of the remaining craftsmen. The meeting, which took place in the framework of the “Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian cultural Heritage”

project, also aimed at setting the bases for a vocational school on traditional building crafts and skills in Aleppo that UNESCO could fund in the near future. The initiative gathered 30 relevant stakeholders from governmental institutions, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, local and international experts, as well as 14 traditional craftsmen from the local community.

- DGAM in cooperation with AGH KHAN Foundation implemented the workshop of (the art of dealing with stones), the workshop targeted builders and stonemasons, with the aim of preserving and developing the local cadres which will contribute to the recovery and reconstruction phase. The program included field lessons focusing on the restoration and maintenance the archeological stones.
- AGA KHAN Foundation in Coordination with DGAM choose AL SAKTYYA suq, to implement the restoration and rehabilitation works, this suq is located on the principal axis of the markets which extended from BAB ANTAKYA to AL ZERB suq. Within this framework, these following points were finished:
  - Cleaning the suq in cooperation with the Directorate of the Ancient city of Aleppo.
  - The 3D documentation for the suq was carried out by French experts under the supervision of the DGAM.
  - Gathering the plans of Infrastructure (water, electricity, phone, sanitation ...). The next step will be to prepare the required studies and plans for the restoration and rehabilitation works.
- DGAM in cooperation with UNESCO finished the project for providing urgent interventions the character-defining elements of the damaged Entrance Bridge Stairs of the Aleppo Citadel.
- A project of documenting and assessing damage in 170 historical buildings in the Ancient city of Aleppo was completed by DGAM in cooperation with UNESCO. A forms of assessing damages of buildings were prepared.

The following chart appears the results of the damage assessment:



- DGAM studies and prepares a minor boundary modification for the property, and it will be previewed and discussed with the other stakeholders for adoption soon. Also, preparing the Master plan file is in progress and it will be previewed and discussed with UNESCO and stakeholders during the next months.



*The rehabilitation works in AL SAKTYYA suq*

Name of World Heritage property: **CRAC DES CHEVALIERS & QAL'AT SALAH EL-DIN**

Date of inscription on World Heritage List: 2006

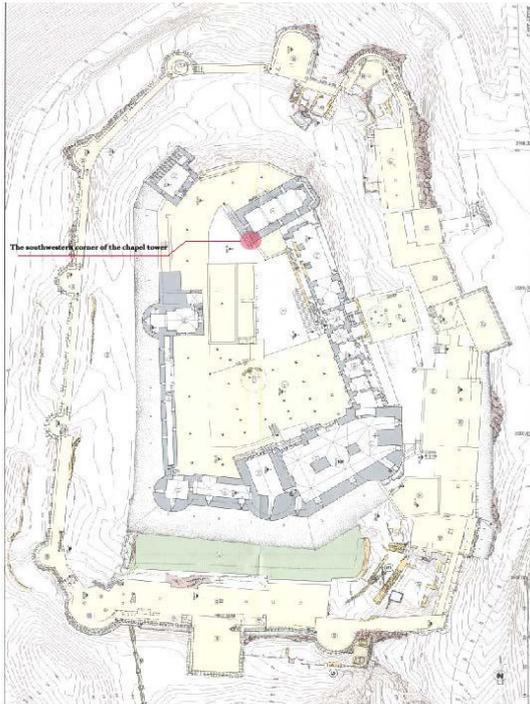
#### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANTS:**

The two castles represent the most significant examples illustrating the exchange of influences and documenting the evolution of fortified architecture in the Near East during the Byzantine, Crusader and Islamic periods. The Crac des Chevaliers was built by the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem from 1142 to 1271. With further construction by the Mamluks in the late 13th century, it ranks among the best-preserved examples of the Crusader castles. The Qal'at Salah El-Din, even though partly in ruins, retains features from its Byzantine beginnings in the 10th century, the Frankish transformations in the late 12th century and fortifications added by the Ayyubid dynasty (late 12th to mid-13th century). Both castles are located on high ridges that were key defensive positions.

Dominating their surrounding landscapes, the two castles of Crac des Chevaliers and Qal'at Salah El-Din are outstanding examples of fortified architecture relating to the Crusader period. Their quality of construction and the survival of historical stratigraphy demonstrate the interchange of defensive technology through features of each phase of military occupation.

#### **MEASURES TAKEN**

- A joint Syro-Hungarian archaeological mission SHAM mission had implemented several works focusing on the chapel and the adjacent courtyard in Crac des Chevaliers, which were:
  - A new isolation layer on the roof of the chapel was executed, after the removing of the old one which was damaged by the shells, also the concrete layer had removed and documentation of the stone roof had conducted.
  - A study was conducted for the water drainage system of the chapel roof.
  - Excavation works in the courtyard west to the chapel was conducted to study the original water drainage system in this area
  - The fresco were documented and photographed.
- DGAM conducted a project to restore and consolidate the southwestern corner of the chapel tower in Crac des Chevaliers which was damaged during the crisis.
- Only prevention works were done at Qal'at Salah El-Din.



*A plan show the location of the southwestern corner of the chapel tower in Crac des Chevaliers*



*The restoration project at the southwestern corner of the chapel tower in Crac des Chevaliers*



*Preparing the roof before executing the isolation layer corner of the chapel tower in Crac des Chevaliers*

Name of World Heritage property: **ANCIENT VILLAGES IN NORTHERN SYRIA**

Date of inscription on World Heritage List: 2011

#### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANTS:**

Located in a vast Limestone Massif, in the northwest of Syria, some forty ancient villages provide a coherent and exceptionally broad insight into rural and village lifestyles in late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period. Abandoned in the 8th-10th centuries, they still retain a large part of their original monuments and buildings, in a remarkable state of preservation: dwellings, pagan temples, churches and Christian sanctuaries, funerary monuments, bathhouses, public buildings, buildings with economic or artisanal purposes, etc. It is also an exceptional illustration of the development of Christianity in the East, in village communities. Grouped in eight archaeological parks, the ensemble forms a series of unique and exceptional relict cultural landscapes.

#### **THREATS**

##### **RURAL IDLEB**

The experts of DGAM is still unable to access the sites, because the area still occupied by armed groups. Infringements in the villages of JABAL AL-ZAWIA in Idlib province still exists at: BARA, MAGLIA, BASHILA, BOUDA, SYRGILLA, etc., in the form of breaking the archaeological stones and selling them for use in modern construction, as well as encroachment on modern buildings on the campus of archaeological sites and illegal excavations.

DGAM received information from the ancient city of BAKIRHA in DJEBEL BARISHA in Rural IDLEB, Was Exposed to crushing its stone intent to modern construction as well as indicates to attempts of illegal excavation.

According to media, the terrorists gangs demolished the SIMBOL monastery in DJEBEL BARISHA, as well as destroying many monasteries, churches and other famous archaeological buildings in the area.

#### **MEASURES TAKEN**

- Damage monitoring to the parks by photos, maps, reports and sometimes when available and field visit (when possible). Most of the information obtained from the cooperation of the local community. The DGAM still paid salaries to the guard at Aleppo countryside with monitoring of Antiquities of Aleppo.

- DGAM continue to cooperate with members of the local community in this region to protect the archaeological sites from destruction and illegal excavation.



*Crushing ancient stone to be used for modern construction, Djebel Al Zawia , Rural Idleb*