Damascus دمشق

Damascus Governorate

Damascus Mosque/Photo: Wikipedia, Creative Commons.
Satellite-based Damage Assessment to Historical Sites in Syria

Site Description

The area covers the UNESCO’s World Heritage Property of the Ancient City of Damascus (inscribed in 1979 and added to the list of World Heritage in Danger by UNESCO in 2013).

Damascus is one of the (if not the) oldest continuously occupied cities in the world with 7,000 years of known occupation. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as one of the oldest cities in the Arab region, with a flourishing craft industry and monuments dating from throughout its long history:

Damage Level

DESTROYED  SEVERE DAMAGE  MODERATE DAMAGE  POSSIBLE DAMAGE

0  4  11  14

FIGURE 36. Overview of Damascus and locations where damage has occurred and is visible.
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“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.”[1]

Status Overview

This analysis examined 261 key buildings/locations within the World Heritage Property. These include the citadel, city walls and gates, 89 historic buildings, 156 religious buildings (mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, shrines and churches) and the souqs/markets (comprising 6 sections). Sites examined are listed in Annex 2.

Of these locations, 15 have sustained damage, a majority with moderate damage, and some severe, however none are completely destroyed. An additional 12 are reported as damaged or potentially damaged, but cannot be confirmed via satellite imagery.[2] For example, the mosaic façade of the Umayyad Mosque was struck by a shell, but this cannot be visually verified with satellite imagery.[3] Three quarters of damaged or potentially damaged sites are located in or near the Old City. Due to the large number of sites observed as damaged (see figure 36), only a selection of key damaged sites will be discussed in this section. It should be noted that due to the limitations of the imagery available for Damascus, minor damage was difficult to identify in some cases. However, the damage assessment conducted here matches the levels of damage reported in other sources.[4]

### Damascus Damage Assessment Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location Name</th>
<th>Damage Level</th>
<th>Location Name</th>
<th>Damage Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beit Al-Aqqad</td>
<td>Possible damage Possible structural damage visible on satellite imagery</td>
<td>Khan Al-Zait</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beit Shirazi</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
<td>Khan Muridiye (Warehouse)</td>
<td>Possible damage Possible structural damage visible on satellite imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citadel</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
<td>Khan Suleiman Pasha (Warehouse)</td>
<td>Possible damage Possible damage to the roof visible on satellite imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Gate: Bab Al-Salaam</td>
<td>Possible damage Damage is visible on satellite imagery, but the size of the building is uncertain, so the damage may not affect it.</td>
<td>Madrasa Adiliye</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Gate: Bab Sharqui</td>
<td>Possible damage Possible structural damage visible on satellite imagery</td>
<td>Madrasa Qahiriye</td>
<td>Possible damage Possible structural damage visible with satellite imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Gate: Bab Tuna</td>
<td>Severe damage</td>
<td>Maktab Al-Sabuniye</td>
<td>Possible damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadith Al-Qalanisiye</td>
<td>Possible damage Possible structural damage visible on satellite imagery</td>
<td>Maristan Al-Qaimaniye</td>
<td>Severe damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammam Bakri (Public Bath)</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
<td>Martyr Zidan Cultural Center</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammam Khanji (Public Bath)</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
<td>Mosque Khankiye</td>
<td>Severe damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammam Nawfara (Public Bath)</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
<td>Mosque of Hisham</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hijaz Railway Terminus</td>
<td>Possible damage Damage reported but not visible on satellite imagery</td>
<td>Mosque of Manjak</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khan Al-Haramein (Warehouse)</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
<td>Mosque Samadiye</td>
<td>Moderate damage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suq Midhat Pasha, Market</td>
<td>Possible damage Imagery shows that the buildings around it have been severely damaged. Damage to this building was not visible, but is possible</td>
<td>Suq Mihdhat Pasha, Market</td>
<td>Possible damage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE**

This report provides a detailed analysis of significant changes to the cultural heritage of this site resulting from the ongoing conflict in Syria. Pleiades, World View 1 and 2 satellite imagery acquired on 04 June 2010, 27 August 2014 and 03 November 2014 was used for this report.

[1] Shelling damage reported in a BBC news article, November 2013 [6].
THE CHRISTIAN QUARTER: BAB TOUMA AND BAB SHARQI

Description

This section of the Old City contains many ancient and important religious buildings. For example, the street that runs through the centre of this area—Straight Street—has been a major east-west thoroughfare since the Hellenistic period (333 - 64 BC). Bab Sharqi is one of the original Roman gates and is the oldest known monument in Damascus (approximately 2000 years old). The Bab Touma gate is a 1227 AD reconstruction of the Roman original. This area also contains the Chapel of Ananias, reputed to be the Biblical house Saul stayed in after God blinded him on the road to Damascus.

Damage Assessment

Imagery analysis indicates the Bab Sharqi gate has potentially sustained damage, perhaps resulting from a reported explosion(v) that affected the Armenian Orthodox Church—the neighbouring building—but damage to that building was not detectable via the satellite imagery. In addition, the Bab Touma gate has sustained severe structural damage presumable from the explosions reported in this area.(vi) The south-eastern part of the roof is gone, and rubble, indicative of major structural damage, is visible around it. Damage has also been reported at several other sites (for example, the Greek Orthodox Church), but due to the limitations of the imagery, not much damage was visible in this neighbourhood. It is possible the damage is focused primarily on the façades of buildings or is mostly internal damage.

MADRASA ADILIYE

Description

This building dates back to the twelfth through thirteenth century AD and has particularly fine architecture. It houses the burial of Salah El-Din’s brother.

Damage Assessment

Imagery analysis has detected damage to a small section of the eastern part of the roof, potentially caused by shelling reported on 05 May 2014.(vii) Additional damage was reported to the façade, but cannot be confirmed via imagery.(viii)

DAMASCUS CITADEL

Description

A vast Islamic fortress, largely dating back to the eleventh century AD, heavily used during the Turkish, French and independence periods.

Damage Assessment

Imagery analysis detected minor impact damage in the centre of the courtyard and to the north-facing side of the south wall. Minor damage has also been reported to the western façade of the eastern gate and the northern wall of the Royal Hall,(ix) however, no damage was observable in the imagery, so may likely be isolated to the façade and interior of the structure.

(i) UNESCO Ancient City of Damascus World Heritage Inscription. Available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/20
(ii) These are listed in the Annex
(vii) Report on the Facebook page of the group Eyes on Heritage on 05 May 2014 [5]. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/eyesonheritage