

SYRIA

Escalating violence in Syria since 2011 has had a devastating effect on the country's cultural heritage. From the ancient souk, or marketplace in Aleppo, to the iconic Crac des Chevaliers; and the ancient city of Palmyra, the destruction of Syria's most significant and symbolic sites is of urgent and primary concern, with irreversible implications for the country's and humanity's cultural legacy.



Standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, the art and architecture of **Palmyra** from the 1st to the 2nd century married Graeco-Roman techniques with local traditions and Persian influences. Palmyra was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1980 and, threatened by the conflict in Syria, was added on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2013. Three of the greatest and best-preserved examples of this exceptional blending of styles were intentionally destroyed by ISIL/Daesh in 2015:

- The **Baalshamin Temple** was built nearly 2,000 years ago, and bore witness to the depth of the pre-Islamic history of the country. Its structure dated to the Roman era, erected in the 1st century AD, and was further enlarged by Roman emperor Hadrian.
- The **Temple of Ba'al** represented a remarkable fusion of the architectural styles of the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman tradition, visible in its sculptured ceilings, monumental podium and friezes, which told the story of the city and featured camel caravans and the constellations. It was one of the most important religious edifices of the 1st century in the Orient. Only the cement-reinforced portico survived the act of destruction.
- The **Arch of Triumph**, built by Septimius Severus between 193 and 211 AD, marked the junction between an immense colonnade more than one kilometer in length and the Temple of Bel. A masterpiece of civil architecture and urban planning, the Arch was topped by geometric and floral ornaments. The treatment of sculptures and engravings was an outstanding example of Palmyran art.

On 13 May 2015, ISIL/Daesh launched an attack on the modern town of Tadmur, sparking fears that the group would destroy some of the many heritage sites in the adjacent ancient site of Palmyra (see QR Code). On 23 August 2015 ISIL/Daesh militants reportedly detonated a large quantity of explosives inside the Baalshamin Temple. Using a 25 August 2015 satellite collected image compared to a 26 June 2015 satellite image, UNOSAT assessed the extent of the damage and reported the complete destruction of the temple, which is estimated to have occurred between the 25 and 27 August 2015 (see page 11).

Shortly after, on 30 August 2015, ISIL/Daesh reportedly destroyed the Temple of Ba'al. Using a satellite image collected on 31 August 2014 compared with a satellite image collected on 27 August 2015, UNOSAT confirmed the destruction of the main temple inside the temple grounds. On 5 October 2015 ISIL/Daesh destroyed the Arch of Triumph at the entrance of the Great Colonnade of Palmyra. Using a satellite image collected on 18 October 2015 and comparing it to a 14 February 2014 satellite image, UNOSAT assessed the extent of the damage and reported the complete destruction of the Arch (see page 11).



Near real-time imagery was received from UrtheCast permitting timely information to UNESCO and its partners. This image was acquired on 31 August 2015. It was analyzed and distributed to UNESCO that same day, and immediately featured in numerous international media reports following initial dissemination by UNOSAT on Twitter. **Scan the QR code to read the article and watch the video** (Satellite images show Palmyra temple destruction, 1 September 2015. BBC News)



Damaged Locations in Palmyra - Between 23 August 2015 and 5 October 2015 (43 days) ISIL/Daesh destroyed a total of three Cultural Heritage Sites in Palmyra, Syria. (Source: Airbus Defense and Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016. Satellite imagery analysis by UNITAR-UNOSAT.)



1 Arch of Triumph

Scan QR Code for the UNOSAT Arch of Triumph Damage Assessment (18 October 2015). Photo credit: UNESCO, Degeorges, G.



3 Temple of Ba'al

Scan QR Code for the UNOSAT Damage Assessment of Temple of Ba'al (31 August 2015). Photo credit: Bernard Gagnon, Wikimedia Commons.



2 Baalshamin Temple

Scan QR Code for the UNOSAT Damage Assessment of Baal Shamin Temple (25 August 2015). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons.



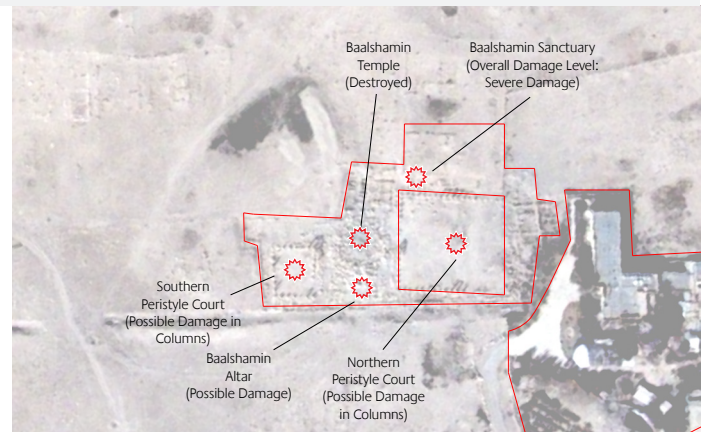
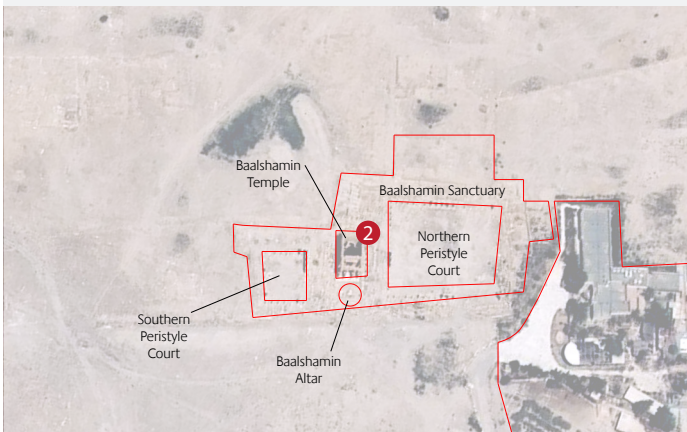
4 Ancient City of Palmyra

Scan QR Code for the UNOSAT Satellite-based Damage Assessment to Cultural Heritage Sites in Palmyra (30 March 2016). Photo credit: Bernard Gagnon, Wikimedia Commons.

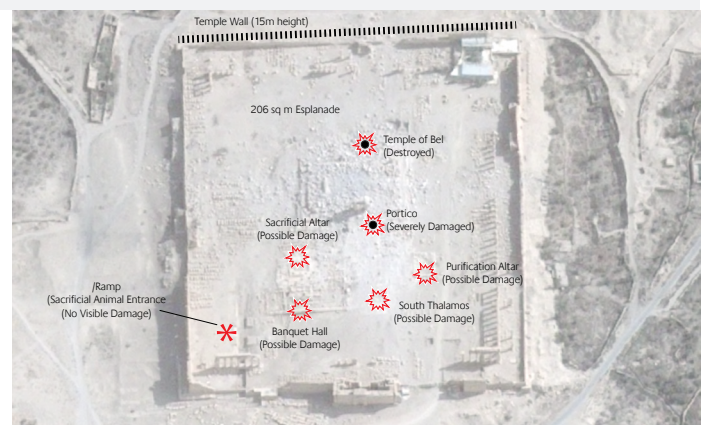
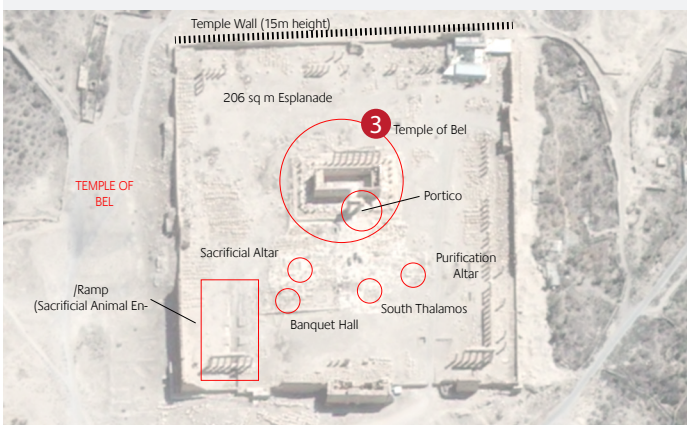




Arch of Triumph - The damage caused by the alleged explosive devices placed at the Arch of Triumph in Palmyra, Syria, destroyed the arch and most likely damaged many of the adjacent columns of the colonnade. (Source: Before image (left) - Airbus Defense & Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016, 26 June 2016. After imagery (right) - Airbus Defense & Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016, 18 October 2016. Satellite imagery analysis by UNITAR-UNOSAT.)



Baalshamin Temple - The damage caused by the detonation of a large quantity of explosives placed inside the Baalshamin Temple destroyed the temple and the Baalshamin Altar inside the sanctuary grounds. The expansive explosion possibly damaged all the other surrounding columns and structures that are within the sanctuary. (Source: Before image (left) - Airbus Defense & Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016, 26 June 2015. After image (right) - Airbus Defense & Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016, 18 October 2016. Satellite imagery analysis by UNITAR-UNOSAT.)



Temple of Ba'al - The damage caused by the alleged explosive devices placed inside the Temple of Ba'al in Palmyra, Syria, destroyed the Temple of Ba'al at the centre of the esplanade, severely damaged the portico and possibly damaged all the other surrounding structures that are within the temple walls. (Source: Before image (left) - Airbus Defense & Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016, 27 August 2015. After image (right) - Airbus Defense & Space Pléiades Imagery ©2016, 18 October 2016. Satellite imagery analysis by UNITAR-UNOSAT.)