



## **ICOMOS**

### **E-Learning Course for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Idlib Governorate, Syria**

**In Collaboration with Syrian DGAM and ICCROM**

**21<sup>st</sup> August 2013**

Led by the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness- **ICORP**



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In Collaboration with Syrian **DGAM** and **ICCROM**

<b>ICOMOS Course Organizing Team</b>	
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John Hurd	Chairman of ICOMOS Advisory Committee
Gaia Jungblodt	Director of ICOMOS- International Secretariat
Bijan Rouhani	ICOMOS-ICORP- Coordinator of the course
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<b>ICCROM</b>	
Aparna Tandon	Project Specialist, Collections Unit
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<b>DGAM- Syria</b>	
Lina Kutifan	Director of Site Management Department
Abdulsalam Almidani	Manager of ICT
Eng. Hazem Jarkass	Manager of Antique Villages Office in Idlib
Eng. Muad Ghanem	Site Management Department

### Course structure:

The training course for Idlib Governorate of Syria responds to the immediate and urgent needs of heritage professionals and volunteers, who are actively in charge of protecting heritage sites and collections. The course is focused on how to protect cultural heritage during a conflict situation, and how to provide first aid and emergency responses to damaged and endangered heritage. The goal of the training is to rescue cultural heritage and prevent further damage to them until protection and restoration works can be started. Delivering the training sessions is possible by using distance learning and video-conferencing technologies.

### Course Programme:

Subject	Time	Trainer	Organization
Opening and Introduction	9:30-9:40	Samir Abdulac	ICOMOS
First response to damaged monuments and sites	9:40-10:40	John Hurd & Bijan Rouhani	ICOMOS
Documentation in Emergency for Monuments/Sites	10:40-11:40	Ana Almagro Vidal	ICOMOS
Damage Assessment in Cultural Heritage Sites	12:00-13:00	Rohit Jigyasu	ICOMOS
First Aid to Cultural Collections	13:00-14:00	Aparna Tandon	ICCROM
Network Building	14-14:20	Zaki Aslan	ICCROM
Question/Answer	14:20-15	All trainers	ICOMOS-ICCROM

Note: All times in the programme are **Syria Local Time**.

### Contacts:

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## **Introduction:**

Since March 2011, violence in Syria has caused thousands of deaths and displacements. The number of casualties, most of them believed to be civilians, is growing rapidly. The UN's report in May 2013 estimated that more than 80,000 have been killed until that time, but this number has been risen since then.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has registered more than a million refugees now living in camps in neighbouring countries. The continuing conflict situation in Syria has also led to the destruction of cultural heritage and historic sites, and has put all its six World Heritage properties in the UNESCO's List on Danger.

In response to the threats of this conflict to Syria's cultural heritage, ICOMOS, with the help of its scientific committee on risk preparedness (ICORP), has established a task force for monitoring Syrian cultural heritage, evaluating damage, and providing technical recommendations for the protection of Syrian heritage.

In January 2013, ICOMOS in a close collaboration with International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and Syria Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) organized a distance learning course for cultural heritage professionals in Damascus. The training materials, which have been developed thorough ICCROM's international courses on First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Times of Armed Conflict, provided knowledge and built capacity for emergency responses. The course was welcomed by Syrian professionals, and the training was followed by a video-conferencing session at the National Museum of Damascus. The teaching and technical materials have been translated into Arabic by the DGAM, and are now available online.

After this, ICOMOS continued to seek other opportunities for delivering knowledge, raising awareness, and building capacity for the protection of Syria's cultural heritage. ICOMOS has set up its programmes on voluntary basis, and needs international support to continue its activities for Syria.

Now, as a follow-up activity, this new distance training workshop has been organized by ICOMOS and its partners, ICCROM and DGAM to engage with cultural heritage professionals of DGAM and NGOs in Idlib Governorate.

Idlib Governorate is home of some of the most significant ancient sites of the country, including the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria, inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger.

Bringing together professionals of the DGAM and volunteers from NGOs, will strengthen the network of experts for the protection of heritage, and could help with improving the capacity of Syrian cultural heritage organizations. Any programmes for the protection and recovery of Syrian heritage would rely on collaboration between the competent authorities and civil society organizations.

ICOMOS, the global NGO for heritage, is committed to support the reinforcing of Syrian cultural heritage organizations.

### **Idlib Governorate**

Idlib Governorate, situated in north-western Syria, covers an area of about 6000 km<sup>2</sup>. In 2010, its population was estimated around 1,464,000. The governorate shares a border with the Republic of Turkey, and is divided into five main districts: Ariha, Harem, Idlib, Jisr ash-Shugur, and Maraat al-Numan. The capital city of Idlib Governorate is Idlib city, with a 98,800 population according to its 2004 census. The city is located at 59 Km west of Aleppo.

Idlib is a very fertile area, and the city itself is a centre for agricultural products. The main industries of the city are textile manufacturing, olive pressing, and fig drying.

### **Cultural Heritage of Idlib Governorate**

Historically, Idlib has been a gate to Anatolia and Europe, and had a strategic importance in the region. The area has been a home of many great civilizations, and thus there is a significant number of ancient sites from Hittite, Aramaic, Assyrian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic periods. There are about 400 historic sites in Idlib Governorate, of which 200 are archaeological tells or hills.

### **World Heritage Sites**

- Five out of the eight parks that make up the World Heritage property of Ancient Villages of Northern Syria are located in Idlib Governorate. The parks contain villages that 'provide remarkable testimony to rural life in late Antiquity and during the Byzantine period' (UNESCO). In June 2013, at the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the World Heritage Committee inscribed these villages together with other Syria World Heritage Sites were inscribed on the List in Danger, because of the threat of the continuing armed conflict in Syria.

- Bara or Al-Bara is one of the most impressive of the Ancient Villages in northern Syria, located in Jebel Riha (Mount Riha). The site is about 6 km<sup>2</sup> and contains at least five churches from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, three monasteries (Deir Sobat, Deir Debbane, and al-Deir), and also two pyramidal tombs.

- Serjilia or Sergella, in Jebel Riha, is another significant and well-preserved Byzantine site, with the remains of ancient houses, one Church, tombs and sarcophagi.

Qalb Lezeh or Lawzah (heart of almond), is a village in north Syria near to the border with Turkey, in the A'la Mount. The village is well-known for its 5<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine church. It is the first example of the Syrian model of the broad-aisled basilica church (Burns, 2010, 245).

Other important sites in this area are:

- Baqirha Roman/Byzantine remains, Deir Mishmish, Barisha, Shinan, Tell Afis, and Turmanin.

### **UNESCO Tentative List<sup>1</sup>**

- Ebla or Tell Mardikh is a 56-hectare site of third millennium BC in Idlib Governorate, and is located 51 km south of Aleppo. The site is one of the most important Bronze Age sites in the country, and has been described as the 'first capital of Syria'. The excavation in Ebla was started in 1964 by La Sapienza, the University of Rome. In 1975 a major archive with more than 17,000 cuneiform clay tablets was discovered in the city. Temple of Ishtar, Temple of Shamash (the sun god), citadel and Royal Palace, Lion Terrace, ceremonial palace, Crown Prince Palace, burial area, and Aleppo Gate are the excavated parts of the ancient walled-city (Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria- Ebla, 2012). Ebla is submitted on the World Heritage Tentative List.

### **Cultural Heritage in the city of Maarat al-Numan**

Maarat al-Numan, with its 58,000 population (2004 census), is located near the ancient sites of Bara and Serjilia, on the highway between Aleppo and Hama. Some of the significant monuments of the city are:

- Jami' Maarat Al-Numan al-Kabir or the Great Mosque of Maarat al-Numan, a 12<sup>th</sup> century mosque.
- Madrasa Abu al-Fawaris, located in Maarat Al-Numan, a religious school, built in 1199 by the same architect who designed the nearby Great Mosque, Hassan Ben Mukri al-Sarman.
- Tomb of Abul 'Ala Al-Maari, the great poet and philosopher of 10-11th century in Maarat Al-Numan.
- Al Madrassa Al Nourieh and Tomb of Caliph Omar bin Abdul Aziz in Maarat Al Numan.
- The Medieval Citadel of Maarat Al-Numan.

### **Cultural heritage in other cities of Idlib Governorate**

The Great Mosque of Ariha city (Jami Ariha al-Kabir), a 13th century mosque.-

The Great Mosque of the city of Kafr Takharim

- The Great Mosque of Sarmin

- Darkush village, located in northwest of Idlib along the Syrian-Turkish border on the Orontes River, is one of the historic villages of the region. It is one of the most picturesque places in the area, and has the remains of historic buildings from different periods.

### **Museums:**

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<sup>1</sup> A Tentative List is an inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination.

- Idlib Museum: The museum, located in the East part of the city, is about 5000 m<sup>2</sup>. Built in 1978, it is surrounded by a garden, which is a place for displaying some ancient artefacts. The museum has five sections. Most of the tablets of Ebla ancient city are kept here..

- Maarat Al-Numan Museum: This museum is located in the city of Maarat Al Numan. The museum has a valuable collection of Byzantine mosaics from the Ancient Villages in Northern Syria. It contains two of the largest mosaic panels in Syria, one of them is more than 1,600 m<sup>2</sup>, while the other one is more than 400 m. Mosaics are displayed in the central courtyard, and in the arcades and large vaulted halls around it. The building itself is a huge 16<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Khan (caravanserai) built by Murad Pasha.

### **Threats and Damage:**

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, ICOMOS has been monitoring Syria's cultural heritage and its state of conservation. The security condition has not permitted ICOMOS to do an assessment mission, so it has relied on different sources, including the official reports of the DGAM, the reports of Syrian NGOs, the reports of Syrian and international experts and academics to ICOMOS, and media and social networks. Although in many cases the images taken from the sites can provide a general view of their condition, ICOMOS is not able to independently confirm the state of conservation, threats and the degree of damage to the sites.

#### 1- Ancient Villages of Northern Syria

The report from the State Party indicates the following: "The impact of the crises from the beginning in Ancient Villages was complex, the 4 parks (1-2-5-6) in (Jabal Zawiye and Jabal Simeon Sanctuary) face serious conservation issues, including illegal excavation, inappropriate development such as: illegal buildings, soil erosion. The lack of security has allowed illegal construction works to be undertaken inside the parks (Bara, Simeon and Rweha). In the rural of Aleppo, the gunmen have taken strategic places, including ancient hilltop as Saint Simeon Sanctuary and they spread also in some of the parks (Bara and Rweha parks). Gunfire damage has been seen at several areas in particular in al-Bara, (Deir Sunbel, Qal'at Abu Sifian, Pyramidal tombs, Monastery monks). The parts known to have been damaged are: In Deir Sunbel, Al-Bara, 3 tombs were damaged inside the pyramid tomb and 4 decorated crown stones have been stolen. Clandestine excavations have found in several villages (Bara, Kafer Aqab), antiquities authority didn't find any archaeological evident in the mentioned digging areas. In Sergilla, Shinshrah, Rabia, Majlia, Deir Loza and Jaradeh refugees have re-inhabited buildings and rock shelters and digging latrines amongst the Ancient Villages. Theft and vandalism had shown in Sergilla, the new equipment's in the visitor bathroom had broken with many panels inside the archaeological site and the stone coffin at the entrance of the site had broken also." (UNESCO, 2013).

#### 2- Ancient Site of Ebla

A report published by the DGAM in June 2013 indicates that illegal digging in Ebla is started again in December 2012. Holes are everywhere in the Acropolis and the Royal Palace. A basalt staircase has been partially destroyed by thieves and illegal excavators. The Great Temple of Ishtar and the Northern Palace have also been the subject of illegal excavations, but damage is minor. The Temple of the Rock has been also excavated illegally. The Southern Palace, located in the slope of the Acropolis, suffered from vandalism and minor diggings. The modern facilities at the site, including the visitor centre, have damaged badly by thieves. The site has been also affected by neglect and weather conditions in winter (DGAM, 2013).

A report published by the New York Times in April 2013 says that the site has been used by the members of some armed groups for watching and reporting on military activity. There had been also the threat of looting with heavy earth-moving equipment.

3- Archaeological site of Bara: Some parts of the site, including the façades of one church and the Monastery, and two pyramidal burial chambers have been damaged because of the clashes. In one burial chamber, three sarcophagi have been broken. Illegal dwelling in 15 ancient caves has been also reported. This has put rock engraved Byzantine tombs in danger.

4- Sergella or Serjilia: According to the DGAM's report of June 2013, one sarcophagus is broken. Some villagers have occupied 10 ancient houses in the site, and the entrance centre of the site and its offices have been broken into.

5- Illegal dwelling and occupation has been reported in other sites in this area, such as Wadi Martahun, Magelya, Batirsa, Bshilla, Baoudeh, and DeLozeh.

6- Al-Tekkiyeh Mosque, City of Ariha: The minaret of the mosque has been hit.

7- Mosque of Sermin: a video broadcasted in 2012, shows some damage to the minaret of the mosque.

8- Harem Citadel: The historic castle of Harem has seen clashes between different armed groups. The castle originally was built in Byzantine times and developed later, in the Arab and Seljuk periods.

9- The Great Mosque of Maraat Al-Numan: The minaret and some parts of the mosque have been partially damaged.

### **Museums:**

1- Maraat Al-Numan Museum: The home of valuable Byzantine mosaics of the Ancient Villages has sustained damages from clashes nearby. In a video published in November 2012, the museum was controlled by an armed group. The DGAM's report confirms that the halls of the museums are intact and the collection is safe. However, the same report confirms some damage to the



building. The loss of some antiquities from the museum has been reported by media, but it has not been possible for DGAM to confirm the loss, without conducting an inspection.

2- The Museum of Idlib: The collection is intact. A recently published photo on social networks shows a minor damage to the entrance of the museum.