

REPORT

DESTRUCTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN LEBANON DUE TO THE ONGOING WAR



HERITAGE
EDUCATION
PROGRAM
برنامج التدريب على التراث



moovto



LEBANON
WITH A
TWIST



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CULTURAL HERITAGE DESTRUCTION LOCATIONS IN LEBANON DUE TO THE ONGOING WAR. UPDATED OCTOBER 2024.

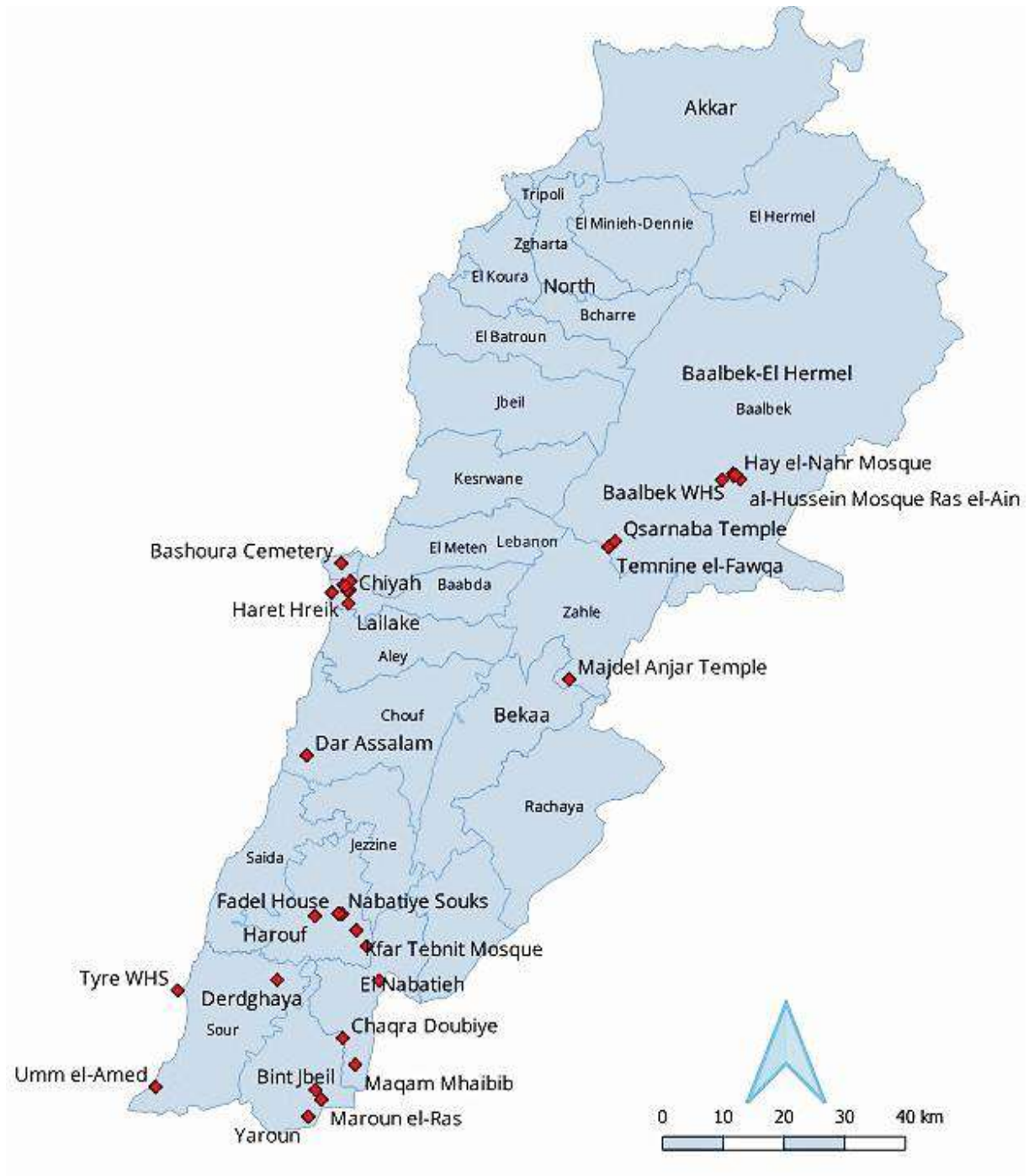




Fig. 1 Dahiye district in Beirut being bombarded. Foto Reuters

This report is an initiative to document the cultural heritage destruction in Lebanon, which is the result of the ongoing war in Lebanon. It is an initiative which was launched by the Heritage Education Program (represented by Alia and Thomas Fares) and Heritage for Peace (represented by Dr. Isber Sabrine).

Contributions to the report were made by various people, including Graziella Nakad (archaeologist, Heritage Education Program), Julia Nador (archaeologist, Baalbek heritage expert), Dr. Siame Ishac (Urban Architect, ICOMOS expert on historical towns), Chady Rizk (Architect Restorer), Maroun Hoshaymeh (Architect Restorer), Dr. Jean Stephan (Agricultural Engineer), Paul Abi Rached (Environmental expert, T.E.R.R.E Liban), Nehme Lebbos (Moovtoo Lebanon digital tourism platform), Aoun Abi Aoun (sustainable and cultural tourism expert) and Shirin Sakr (nature-based and heritage tourism expert).

In addition to the main team, we would like to acknowledge the support of various people who have contributed to the overall reporting process with images, videos, news articles, books and other online resources. We are grateful for the aid of local guides, reporters and journalists on the

ground, who are risking their lives to deliver to us the images and stories and trying to shed light and protect our priceless tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Furthermore, this report remains the first preliminary assessment in a series of reports which will follow, as we further investigate the situation. As long as the military conflict in Lebanon continues to pose a threat to and destroy our cultural heritage, we will continue to shed light on and create awareness on the importance of protecting and preserving it.

B. INTRODUCTION

Lebanon has been undergoing an extreme air and ground invasion since September 17th, 2024, after hundreds of pagans were detonated in people's hands and pockets, launching severe airstrikes and bombings in various regions in the country, such as southern Beirut, the borders to the south, its villages all along the blue line, and the Beqaa valley. The airstrike bombings were also followed by ground troops invasion starting October 1st, 2024. Both attacks continue until today, especially in southern Beirut and the bordering villages. This war has led to the displacement of almost a million inhabitants, as they fled the war from targeted villages from the south and in Beirut to other parts of the country and towards Syria.

The target of this project is to write a report, which sheds light on tangible and intangible cultural heritage loss, sites, monuments, cultural heritage spaces and resources in Lebanon considering this present war. The aim is not to reflect on those causing the destruction, but to report on this destruction in as many regions as possible, to address destruction first-hand status quo and suggest recommendations for protection and future preservation mechanisms.

In early October 2024, the Lebanese government, along with national organizations, UNESCO, and ICOMOS International, expressed serious concerns over the threats of both human and cultural loss due to the ongoing conflict. In parallel, local organizations within Lebanon and internationally have stepped up, evolving from civic initiatives into non-governmental and civil society organizations that support the government's efforts to document and highlight the destruction, emphasizing the urgent need to protect cultural heritage in all its forms.

Today, it is increasingly clear that these civil societies and local communities, often operating across borders, are crucial for raising awareness and creating effective schemes for cultural heritage protection and preservation. This report is built on this collaborative narrative and aims to contribute to the dissemination of actionable plans to protect this heritage.

As stated in the Preamble of the 1954 Hague Convention, "...any damage to cultural property, irrespective of the people it belongs to, is a damage to the cultural heritage of all humanity, because every people contribute to the world's culture...". All State Parties worldwide are bound by the convention to protect cultural heritage through strict measures, committing to safeguarding their own heritage and supporting preservation efforts in other nations as well.

This war has ignored all commitments to both human and cultural heritage.



Fig. 2 Dahiye destruction. Foto Getty Images

C. CULTURAL HERITAGE DESTRUCTION BY REGION

The following is a brief report of the destruction, which has been viewed or assumed, due to the ongoing war. The regions include Beirut and its southern suburbs, the Beqaa to the East beyond the Western Mountain range and the South, including all the villages along the separating Blue line, which was established under the UNIFIL.

1. BEIRUT

DAHIYEH

The following is a compact overview on the cultural heritage and urban fabric and identity of that area with regards to the ongoing war. As we are unable to do any on-site assessment of the destruction, it's necessary to briefly shed light on its history and identity, which is under threat of destruction and disappearance.

The Southern territory or Southern suburbs (DAHIYEH) of the City of Beirut suffered massive destruction in September and October 2024. The damage affects all components of the neighborhoods, including religious buildings, cultural mythical spaces, old and recent memory of the place, with an evolutionary narrative. It is a dense, residential territory with the particularity of welcoming displaced people from the South for several generations, including the Beirut airport. It serves as a network space to the south, the cities of Sidon and Tyre and the connection with the Lebanese mountains towards the Northeast.

The heterogeneous district today is a space inhabited by a continuous activity with history, its usage and human emotions. It constitutes an atypical heritage of the recent history of Lebanon.



Fig. 3 Beirut Dahiyeh, as an airplane departs from the airport. Photo M. Yassine OLJ.

The destruction of neighborhoods, whose history is not recent but representative of a major period of earlier periods, was heavily influenced by local and international policies of the 20th c. It reflects remarkable contemporary modern architecture and has placed it in irremediable danger, causing the disappearance of the spirit of these neighborhoods.

The destruction of neighborhoods like Chiyah, whose history dates back to the Arab conquest marked by the afforestation of trees used for the production of silk (a flourishing industry in this village) but which remains to be explored and it as imminent loss. These neighborhoods constitute precious cultural heritage, reflecting the development of the village into a peripheral city.

LAILAKY / GHOUBEIRY

These are dense neighborhoods resulting from the subdivision of agricultural plains in the first half of the 19th century. At the foot of the green hills of the east, juxtaposing the airport area to the west, the districts of laylaki and ghbayri have become dense districts without a precise urban layout.

The housing is heterogeneous, the urban landscape is striking by the great discontinuity of the profiles induced by a construction of necessity of rehousing. These districts are representative of high density ensure a territorial marking specific to the population.

This territory is endowed with some remarkable modern buildings of the period before the war of 1975, individual houses of an older period and new banal constructions. The whole is punctuated by mosques of the Ottoman period

The district is a space of the territorial inscription of the poor popular classes whose social integration is disturbed. Based on the latest destruction status quo, Beirut's southern districts, which include the areas known as Dahiyeh.

HARET HREIK

Haret Hreik is a popular neighborhood in the southern districts Dahiyeh, which is administratively part of the Baabda Caza. This neighborhood arose from the hamlet (Hara) in the so-called agricultural plain located between the airport to the West towards the Mediterranean Sea and the hills of Baabda. The neighborhood is crossed by a major road axis that links Baabda to the sea, corresponding to its northern border. This neighborhood was ignored during the reconstruction of Beirut after 1996. However, it underwent reconstruction after the Israeli invasion in 2006.



Fig. 4 Devastating destruction of various buildings in Dahiyeh. Photo: Aljazeera.

Following the Israeli offensive to the post-2006 reconstruction by residents and political parties, it developed into an irregular urban plan, which has reshaped its identity. Its heritage is rather religious, as there are churches dating from the period before the civil war of 1975, most likely built on the remains of religious spaces like other sites in the Middle East. Culturally, Haret Hreik is the hub of the southern suburbs or the cultural center, such as the Hanger, which evolved into an innovative cultural program to ensure creative industries and life in a densely populated and stigmatized neighborhood. It should be noted that in 2006 about 250 buildings were destroyed, rebuilt in 2007 on the same urban framework but with a stronger densification to meet the rehousing needs of displaced populations.

CHIYYAH

Chiyah was a Christian village in the past, but now is partially inhabited by Shiites, who came to be closer to the capital for socio-economic reasons. Today, it is a dense neighborhood with ca. 60,000 inhabitants. During the Ottoman period, the village was basically agricultural lands and citrus orchards, adjacent to Haret Hreik, Ghobeiry, Hadeth, Hazmieh, Furn el Chebbak and Ain el-Remanneh. It is interpreted by the presence of a particular type of tree necessary to produce silk over time before the great industrialization. The cultural heritage is a heterogeneous one, composed mainly of residential buildings with banal architecture, some religious buildings churches and mosques. Modern buildings that we can describe as remarkable were built during the period of the era of development of Beirut and its economic prosperity. The city in the past extended its orchards to the Mediterranean Sea. Today, it is part of the demographically enormous peripheries of Beirut.



Fig. 5 Destruction the southern suburbs of Beirut. @Photo AFP.

1. Bashoura cemetery

latitude(x,y °): longitude(x,y °):

33.892445 35.502345 0 0

Description

The cemetery is an ancient one, which the people of Beirut used to call "Omar's Grave". The cemetery includes the remains of many celebrities from the time of the Ottoman Caliphate, including the tomb of the

governor of Syria, "Ahmed Hamdi Pasha," which is located next to the wall of the cemetery. Among the Lebanese presidents who were buried there were the former prime minister, Shafiq al-Wazzan, and the former head of the Najada party, Adnan al-Hakim. Its important monuments are unique, with 4 gates, 2 of them located along the western walls. The Bashoura cemetery was in the beginning a large dirt dam but received a wall in 1892 to preserve the sanctity of Muslim graves. After the government decided in the early 20th c. to expand the Bashoura road, the Beirut municipality was forced to move some graves to the inside of the cemetery, including the tomb of "the governor". The images



Reference: Social media/ google images/aathaar.net

2. UMAM D&R (Documentation and Research) under threat in Haret Hreik

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.858516 35.508011 0 0

Description: UMAM Documentation and Research (UMAM D&R) was founded in Dahiyeh, Beirut, in 2004. The space presented the only cultural premises in Dahiyeh. According to their manifesto, UMAM is "guided by the belief that acknowledging Lebanon's relatively recent past requires that important evidence and artifacts of its history be carefully collected, protected, and promoted to the public." Their aim is to avoid the social and national amnesia imposed upon postwar Lebanon by its elites and the government. The Hangar cultural space has been a center of intercultural dialogue, and human collective memory since its inception. It is under threat, as it contains thousands of dossiers also, which talk about the civil war and human loss. It also hosted continuous cultural events, lectures, concerts and exhibitions.



Fig. 6 The Hangar premises with an exhibition Photo: F GM.

2. BEQAA

1. Baalbek World Heritage Site under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.998706 36.216565 0 0



DESCRIPTION

The settlement history of the city of Baalbek can be traced back to the 8th century BC. The city is best known for its imposing Roman ruins from the 1st – 3rd c. AD. Baalbek has been continuously inhabited up to the present day and a few remains from the Middle Ages and the Ottoman period, which are preserved in the old town and in Ras el-Ain, are under great threat from attacks. There is currently no known damage to monuments in Baalbek, but the impacts near the Qalaa may well have caused damage. According to reports, the rockets mainly fell west of the temple ruins and north of Ras el-Ain. The ruins of the Masjid al-Muallaq mosque (11th-13th century AD) in Ras el-Ain are also in danger from the blast waves of the detonations. A detonation in the middle of the old city occurred in the night of 20th/21th of October and also damaged the Al Ajami restaurant, which has been in operation since 1924.

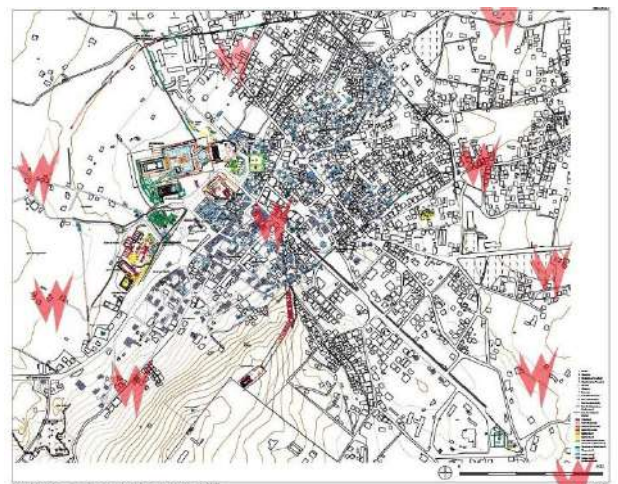


Fig. 7 City map of Baalbek with archaeological features. (H. Lehmann 2015). Red markers are areas of targeted rockets



Close-ups of the rocket clouds that hit the slopes of Ras el-Ain

References: DAI/H. Lehmann/J. Nador/Social media

2. Baalbeck Traditional House

latitude(x,y °): longitude(x,y °):

34.003668

36.204779 0 0



DESCRIPTION

This typical house middle class residential building is located in the “Christian quarter” in Baalbek. Made up of 3 floors, with archades and 3 typical arched hall and balcony, it was destroyed end of September 2024 by its owner. The destruction of the house was published by the governor of Baalbeck and the Minister of Culture, who issued a warrant to arrest the owner, and legally require him to rebuild the house.



Reference: Ministry of Culture and local source/Julia Nador

3. Qubbat Douris

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33585999 361060.00

DESCRIPTION



Douris is located around 3 km south of Baalbek. The Qubbat Douris, which was probably built in the 13th c., is located along the main Baalbek main highway. Several Roman sarcophagi were excavated in Douris at the end of the 1990s and part of a Bronze Age settlement mound was discovered in 2018,

excavated by the German Archaeological Institute. Qubbat Douris was badly damaged by the blast wave from an airstrike on October 14th/15th. The extent to which the missile attacks destroyed archaeological monuments such as the Bronze Age settlement mound can only be clarified after onsite investigations are possible. Many houses were also hit and destroyed in its vicinity in later strikes.



Reference: Municipality of Douris social media channel

4. Baalbeck Ras el-Ain – El-Hussein Mosque under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.998341 3621722 00

DESCRIPTION

This mosque lies in Ras el-Ein, Baableck and is a pilgrimage mosque for many Shiite Muslims. It was built using the blocks from the neighboring roman Nymphaeum temple of the water source of Ras el-Ain. It might have been damaged due to neighboring strikes in Ras el-Ain, but this is yet to be investigated on site.



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Reference: Online/A.Fares

5. Ajami Restaurant, Baalbeck

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

34.005104 36.208187 0 0

DESCRIPTION

Ajami Restaurant from 1924, is a historic intangible heritage space, which was hit due to a rocket that targeted Qard el-Hasan building adjacent to it. The restaurant was linked to the Baalbeck festival, as it used to deliver all the catering for the festival before 1975.

Reference: Social media account Ajami Restaurant – Baalbeck Mayor page



6. Hay el-Nahr Mosque under threat

latitude(x.y °): **Longitude(x.y °):**

34.004953 36.20875 0 0

DESCRIPTION

Hay el-Nahr Mosque is in front of the Ajami restaurant. Built in the Ottoman period, it boasts a historic minaret and serves its surrounding community. It has reused spolia columns inside. It has possibly been damaged due to the rocket that hit the building with Qard el-Hasan in front of it. However, additional on-site confirmation is required..

Reference: Google images



7. Temnine el-Fawqa and Temnine el-Tahta

Latitude(x.y °): **longitude(x.y °):**

33.903926 35.979142 0 0

DESCRIPTION

The village of Temnine has been heavily hit in many strikes, especially Tamnine el-Fawqa (upper Temnine). The nympheum / temple is in Temnine el-Fawqa and has been possibly damaged. This is yet to be confirmed on site.

Towards Temnine el-Tahta, another temple existed, which has been reused into the village mosque. The mosque might have damaged as well, but this is also yet to be confirmed on site.



Reference: Social media/LBCI news

8. Majdel Anjar temple under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.712428 35.901963 0 0

DESCRIPTION

Next to the modern settlement of Anjar are the remains of Umayyad city (called Anjar Citadel on the map), which was founded by Al-Walid I. at the beginning of the 8th century.

Majdal Anjar is located south of Anjar and 5 km from the Syrian border - the Masnaa border station is located directly behind the town. On a settlement hill west of the town are the remains of a Roman temple.



Majdal Anjar as a village, was in particular the focus of rocket attacks; however, the remains of the Roman sanctuary appear to be at a safe distance from the city.

Reference: www.vici.org

9. Ksar Naba or Qasr Naba Roman temple under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.5453 35.5926



DESCRIPTION

This temple is located close to Baalbeck in the western mountain range in the village center of Qsarnaba. The village has been heavily bombarded, so there is a good chance that it might have been damaged.



3. SOUTH LEBANON

1. Tyre World Heritage Site under threat

latitude(x.y °):

33.269483

longitude(x.y °):

35.195153 0 0



DESCRIPTION

The UNESCO world heritage site is a Located on the southern coast of Lebanon, 83 km south of Beirut, the antique town of Tyre was the great Phoenician city that reigned over the seas and founded prosperous colonies such as Cadiz and Carthage and according to legend, was the place of the discovery of purple pigment. From the 5th century B.C., when Herodotus of Halicarnassus visited Tyre, it was built for the most part on an island reportedly impregnable, considered one of the oldest metropolises of the world, and according to tradition founded in 2750 B.C. Tyre succumbed to the attack of Alexander of Macedonia who had blocked the straits by a dike. First a Greek city, and then a Roman city were



constructed on this site, which is now a promontory. Tyre was directly associated with several stages in the history of humanity, including the production of purple pigment reserved for royalty and nobility, the construction in Jerusalem of the Temple of Solomon, thanks to the material and architect sent by the King Hiram of Tyre; and the exploration of the seas by hardy navigators who founded prosperous trading centres as far away as the western Mediterranean, that ultimately assured a quasi-monopoly of the important maritime commerce for the Phoenician city. The historic role of Tyre declined at the end of the period of the Crusades.



In the modern town of Soûr, the property consists of two distinct sites: the one of the town, on the headland, and the one of the Necropolis of



El Bass, on the continent. The site of the town comprises important archaeological vestiges, a great part of which is submerged. The most noteworthy structures are the vestiges of the Roman baths, the two palaestrae, the arena, the Roman colonnaded road, the residential quarter, as well as the remains of the cathedral built in 1127 by the Venetians and some of the walls of the ancient Crusader castle. The sector of Tyre El Bass, constituting the principal entrance of the town in antique times, comprises the remains of the necropolis, on either side of a wide monumental causeway dominated by a Roman triumphal arch dating from the 2nd century AD. Among the other vestiges are an aqueduct and the hippodrome of the 2nd century, one of the largest of the Roman world. The main touristic zone is densely populated with touristic facilities and has been a hub for tourists for several decades, coming to visit the archaeological ruins and enjoy the beautiful beaches close by. It has been a main source of income for hundreds of families.

DESTRUCTION

The area marked red is found in densely urban area in Tyre has been targeted several times, when the IDF sent a warning on October 23rd, as can be seen on the map.

Additionally, the coastal area, both touristic and residential, lies between the 2 archaeological districts (el-Bass and the city site) and includes many zones in between, which have archaeological and historical structures and buildings. Its high rise buildings, shops, restaurants and facilities have been hit, including the main connecting roads between various city zones.



Reference: LBCI news/UNESCO WHS page/social media

2. Nabatiyeh: Ottoman souks

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.377206

35.482997 0 0

DESCRIPTION

Old main square souks, which includes 12 historic residential buildings and 40 shops from the late 19th. Ottoman architecture, important square for local economy and trade since 150 years, was known as “Souk Al-Ithnain Al-Shaabi,” the market served as a hub for agricultural and artisanal products, providing essential goods for farmers and standing as a testament to



Nabatiyeh's economic and social history. Each shop in the market tells a story of the community's past. However, the recent Israeli

destruction of parts of the market signifies more than just an attack on physical structures; it represents an assault on cultural heritage and a vital component of collective memory. Historic shops, such as Falafel Arnaout, Kunafat Al-Sultan, Dimassi Sweet were destroyed completely.

References: LBCI news/Beirut.com



3. Chahine house - Nabatiyeh

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.376149 35.489004 0 0



Description: The Chahine house is a 150-year-old traditional rural house, which became a cultural center in Nabatiyeh. Many local inhabitants identify with the house and its memory of space. The rockets have led to its complete destruction, as can be seen in this image.



Reference: Social media

4. Fadel house:

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.377206 35.482997 0 0

Description: This traditional house is located in Nabatiyeh and has undergone some damages to its roof and side walls due to a neighboring rocket.

Reference: Social media



5. Harouf heritage house and historic quarter

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.37442 35.440721 0 0

DESCRIPTION

Vernacular house and its surrounding traditional rural quarter were heavily hit, as can be seen in the images. The house is more than 150 years old, including typical stone arcades and vernacular features.

Reference: LBCI news



6. Derdghaya St. Georges Church

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.281697 35.371655 0 0

DESCRIPTION

This church was built 150 years ago, dedicated to St George for the Melike catholic community living in Derdghaya. It was newly restored. The parish building was heavily hit, with civil defense and civilians having been killed while taking refuge inside. The church had been hit several times before and restored in 1990.



Reference: Social media/LBCI news

7. Kfar Tebnit Mosque

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.351738 35.513449 0 0



DESCRIPTION

This mosque is from the Ottoman period, with a minaret, and various prayer halls. The destruction hit the minaret and its building, as well as various buildings in its premises, destroying its minaret completely and causing huge historical loss.

Reference: social media/LBCI new



8. Maqam Mhaibib

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.154409 35.505674 0 0

DESCRIPTION: In the village of Mhaibib, there is a maqam, built for the biblical figure of Benjamin, last child of the patriarch Jacob, himself the grandson of Abraham according to the Old Testament.



Reference: Google images.



9. Umm el-Amed under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.128326 35.152563 0 0

DESCRIPTION

Umm el-Amed or Umm el-Awamid is an archaeological site near the south borders of Lebanon before Al-Naqoura. Its ruins go back at least to the Iron Age, if not older. With highly precious Phoenician heritage, studied already since the days of Ernest Renan in the mid of the 19th c., many of its Phoenician inscriptions and stelae were transferred to the Louvre. The site boasts important vestiges reflecting Lebanon's ancient Phoenician heritage and is listed with the cultural landscape of the area, under the name Iskandarouna.

Reference: World Monument Watch.



10. Beaufort or al-Scha'if Arnun under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.128326 35.152563 0 0

DESCRIPTION

Beaufort or al-Scha'if Arnun was built by the King of Jerusalem around 1137 A.D. With further construction by Ayyubid, the Mamluks and Al Saabi, the local feudal governors. In the meantime, it is one of the best-preserved examples of the medieval castles of the near east. Qalaat Al Chakif (Beaufort castle) was built by the King of Jerusalem around 1137 A.D. With further construction by Ayyubid, the Mamluks and Al Saabi, the local feudal governors. In the meantime, it is one of the best-preserved examples of the medieval castles of the near east. Qalaat Al Chakif (Beaufort castle) dominates its surrounding landscape that extends over three states, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. The castle suffered from destruction, mainly during the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon. A major conservation and presentation project was planned and conducted since the liberation of the castle in the year 2000; the project took into consideration the authenticity and integrity of the castle. The castle is also part of the tentative list of UNESCO WHS Castles of Mount Amel in Lebanon.

Reference: UNESCO WHS website.



11. Doubieh – Chaqra Citadel under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.128326 35.152563 0 0

DESCRIPTION

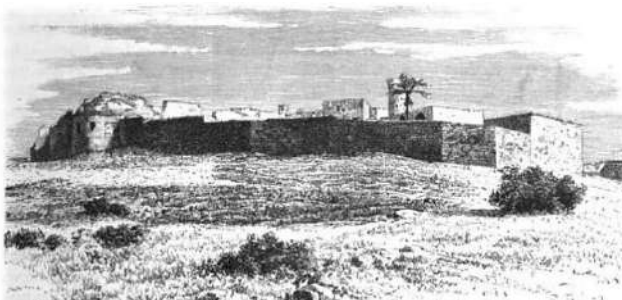
This citadel is in the Nabatiye governorate. Doubiye Castle, also known Qalaat Chaqra, is a Crusader era castle located in the village of Chaqra. It was built in the 12th c. and was later restored during the Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman eras. It is equally part of the tentative list of UNESCO WHS Castles of Moun Amel.



12. Chamaa Castle under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.145966 35.209307 00



Shamaa is a Crusader castle located in the town of Shamaa in the Tyre district of Jabal Amel (southern Lebanon). The castle was built by the Crusaders in 1116 AD, even though inside the castle, remnants of Roman and Byzantine remains were identified. It is located on a mountain range that ends in the extreme south with Ras Al-Abyad, overlooking the city of Tyre

and its plains. In the eastern courtyard, which is beautifully symmetrical, there are some doors made of white and black marble. At one end of the fortress there is a beautiful double-arched window with two Gothic domes, indicating Arabic architecture.

Reference: Lortet 1884 / Google images/ Wikipedia / <https://klessing-hoffschildt-architects.com>



13. Tebnine Crusader castle under threat

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.19543

35.412279



DESCRIPTION

The Tibnine Castle or Toron of the Knights was a Crusader castle, built in the mountains of Lebanon on the road connecting Tyre to Damascus. The castle was at the center of the Toron lordship. French archaeologist and academic Victor Guérin believed that the town where the castle is located has always been a fortified city: "...everything leads us to believe that, in the Judaic era and perhaps even in the Canaanite era, Tibnin, due to its advantageous position in the heart of the country, was already a fortified city," he said. Its position had indeed many advantages (Toron means "isolated hill" in Old French), and the castle was coveted by many armies, such as that of Saladin at the end of the 12th century. It was destroyed and rebuilt several times: its current remains probably do not correspond to its original construction.



Reference: Wikipedia / <https://arar-co.com>

14. Qana village

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.123047

35.180072

DESCRIPTION

Ancient upper Galilea village, with a strong link to the biblical village of Qana, with archaeological remains in its center, known as "maaser Qana".

Village has been heavily hit and the center, with its archaeological remains is probably damaged. This must be confirmed on site.

Reference: Social media/LBCI news/AP news





15. Dar es-Salam

latitude(x.y °): longitude(x.y °):

33.3639

35.2553

DESCRIPTION



The meeting place DAR ASSALAM (House of Peace) in Wardaniyeh, Iqlim al-Kharoub, lies 35 km south of Beirut and was established in 1994 with the aim to be a "House of Peace". It was built by Mr. Said Arnaout and his wife, as well as with a group of friends, including the pastor couple Friederike and Uwe Weltzien from the German Community in Beirut. The meeting center was a space of cultural exchange between Germany and Lebanon. Many tour groups met here, training courses and trauma seminars were held regularly, conferences, interfaith meetings, exhibitions and church services

took place here, and women in need found refuge here. The German community in Beirut was also repeatedly involved in the activities of this cultural space.

This house, which the official Lebanese news agency falsely described as a "hotel", made it under suspicion for a while, on false claims. It was always a space of peace and freedom and the refugees who were attacked in the process

References: Dar Assalam page/ Frederike Weltzien

4. DESTRUCTION TO THE URBAN FABRIC AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

In addition to the destruction of cultural heritage buildings, sites, religious monuments, features and intangible heritage elements, the targeted destruction of entire villages, with their infrastructure can also be confirmed. The destruction and devastation inflicted on many villages in Lebanon along the Blue Line and beyond is shocking. Villages, such as Bint Jbeil, Khiam, Maroun el-Ras, Kfarkela, Yaroun, Rmeich, Ayta el-Shaab, Aytaroun, Blida, Ein Ibel, Mays el-Jabal, Adaiseh, Naqoura, and others, were partially or entirely raised to the ground.



Fig. 8 Yaroun raised to the ground. Photo: Social media.

Their urban fabric, their cultural and natural landscape, as well as their entire infrastructure, has been heavily hit, if not completely demolished. Their economic, social and cultural sectors have been destroyed and it remains to be seen how much has been spared in due time.



Fig. 9 Ayta Shaab, with heavy destruction visible around the water tank. Photo: Social media.

Even before the ground invasion, months of rocket strikes had damaged the village, of Yaroun, as satellite imagery from the summer had revealed. However, with the new satellite imagery in October, additional destruction was attempted, with a whole section of Yaroun flattened after military vehicles razed the area.

D. IMPACT OF LOSS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS

The destruction of architectural heritage due to bombardment results in an irrevocable loss of cultural identity. These structures are vital to community cohesion, collective memory, and the preservation of craftsmanship and traditions. The destruction of heritage sites compromises the tangible links to a society's past, affecting both local communities and the global heritage landscape. Technically, such destruction disrupts the structural integrity and authenticity of historically significant sites, causing irreversible damage to original materials, construction techniques, and architectural features. In heavily damaged cases, restoration becomes challenging, as fewer original elements remain to guide accurate conservation, often leading to speculative or partial reconstructions that results in diminishing authenticity and other heritage values. Additionally, the impact extends beyond visible damage; foundational elements, like load-bearing walls and original traditional materials, due to heavy vibrations and harmful pollutants, become increasingly vulnerable to deterioration, compromising stability and hindering future conservation efforts for the remaining structures.

We have previously seen the consequences of adjacent explosives and the shockwaves caused by those explosions in Lebanon; the Beirut port explosion on August 4, 2020, was maybe the most recent, but certainly not the least. These blasts and shockwaves have a significant effect on built heritage, particularly on adjacent structures. They can result in minor to deep cracks, the loss of roofing components, such as red brick roof tiles, wooden structures, or Baghdadi ceilings and decorations, and we can also say that the shockwaves will harm the foundation of these historic buildings.



Fig. 10 The colorful façade of Ouzai Ouzville port. Photo: Getty Images.

Furthermore, the region of Beirut and its southern suburbs is home to many contemporary heritage buildings that would also be impacted by these devastating incidents, particularly because some of them are already in poor condition, lacking maintenance, or both. The Ouzai district also became a center of creativity and a cultural scene with the inspiring works of various NGO's, who started painting the walls and creating graffiti masterpieces on the walls of the illegal cement houses along the beach. One such example is the well-known Raja Saab's chalet in the

Ouzaii neighborhood from 1953, located along the traditional fishing harbor, which was hit by several rockets.



Fig. 11 Raja Saab Chalet in Ouzaii, as it was built along the seashores in the 50s of the last century. Photo: ACA

E. IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

The ongoing war in Lebanon has tremendously impacted both natural ecosystems and the agriculture sector. Missiles and phosphoric bombs not only burned large, wooded areas but also affected grasslands and croplands. Unfortunately, as the war continues, accessibility to damaged areas is impossible. Any assessment can only be conducted after the end of the war. To capture the entire impact, the assessment should be conducted at least by the end of the spring /rainy season, to assess whether the natural regeneration of plants is compromised or not, and what would be the future composition in terms of plant species and quantify it. The linkage with natural heritage, should focus on the required time for recovery, the period to reach the same level of resources before the war, and suggest what are the actions required to restore those habitats and boost their recovery.

Moreover, in croplands, soil samples to assess the concentration of phosphorus and the eventual presence of radioactive elements should be conducted. Surveys should estimate the production levels before the war, as well as the losses until we reach full recovery. Need assessment should follow, to support farmers with the lost infrastructure necessary for their production (farms, greenhouses, water reservoirs, irrigation systems, machinery, storage and processing plants...). Heritage products are not only a matter of local natural ingredients, soil, or climate, but also a specific long-inherited know-how leading to the preparation of specific recipes or processing

ways to deliver the best product. Hence, the migration or the annihilation of a qualified labor force will lead to a difficult recovery of some agriculture and culinary heritage. The impact is not only direct in areas damaged by war but affects the whole country, as the prices of commodities are rising, while the large number of displaced people into other regions is putting pressure on natural resources and impacting the natural environment (water, fuelwood being the most common). Consequently, a comprehensive assessment should be conducted at least 3 to 6 months after the end of the war. The disruption of value chains and the loss of production like olive oil, avocado, legumes, tobacco or others are just a sample of the damage. Land abandonment may lead to an irreversible loss of natural heritage and desertification.



Fig. 12 Environmentally sensitive areas and conflict map due to the direct and indirect bombing. Notice all the blue circles, indicating targeted locations. @Terreliban.

Furthermore, the war is severely damaging the country's natural heritage, particularly affecting environmentally sensitive areas and key natural reserves such as Wadi al-Hjeir, Ramieh, Beit Lif, Jabal Rihan, Al Mansouri, and the Tyre Natural Reserve. These areas face significant risks from military operations, fires, and pollution, which threaten their ecological integrity. The Tyre Natural Reserve, crucial for marine life, suffers from contamination and habitat destruction due to artillery shelling and nearby military activities. Similarly, Al Mansouri and Jabal Rihan reserves are experiencing collateral damage that disrupts their biodiversity. Lebanon's forests are also under threat, with fires from military actions exacerbating deforestation and increasing carbon emissions. In addition, the use of incendiary materials, including white phosphorus, poses a general threat across southern Lebanon, leaving toxic residues that further impact soil and water quality, endangering local ecosystems for years to come. The conflict also leads to substantial water pollution and noise disturbances, affecting local wildlife and forcing migratory birds to alter their routes, putting further strain on the country's already vulnerable ecosystems. Protecting these vital Natural Reserves is essential for preserving Lebanon's biodiversity and ensuring the sustainability of its natural resources amidst the ongoing turmoil.

F. IMPACT ON CULTURAL TOURISM

Lebanon has faced relentless challenges for over five decades. Tourism has long been a cornerstone of Lebanon's economy. Alongside Syria and Jordan, Lebanon has historically been at the heart of Middle Eastern tourism, attracting visitors from around the world and fostering trade, cultural exchange, and economic cooperation. The sector's contribution to Lebanon's economy has been vital, especially during times when other industries struggled due to political conflicts, economic crises, and the impact of the recent pandemic. Alongside immense human suffering, the consequences of this war extend far beyond the present, affecting the future of many generations and millions of Lebanese in the global diaspora. The current conflict has resulted in significant setbacks, with Lebanon now facing an estimated annual tourism revenue loss of \$5.4 billion, down from \$8.6 billion annually before the pandemic (according to figures released by Banque du Liban, which refer to revenues generated from tourism activities classified as 'travel services,' as cited in a Byblos Bank report). Compounded losses in agriculture, commerce, construction, infrastructure, and other vital industries illustrate the depth of the crisis, especially in a country already grappling with economic challenges. The estimated loss in olive oil exports from southern Lebanon alone has reached \$8 million, according to local reports.

The costs of rebuilding damaged areas, along with the time required to restore tourism to pre-conflict levels, further complicate the recovery process. The tourism industry relies on the land, the people, the culture, local produce, and infrastructure, among other factors. The tourism supply chain has been heavily disrupted and will require huge sums of financial and management planning to recover, as mentioned above. The destruction of cultural and natural heritage sites, which feed into the tourism chain, along with the damage to infrastructure, agricultural, and rural sectors, severely threatens domestic tourism's potential as a catalyst for economic revival. The compounded losses emphasize the depth of the crisis in a country already facing economic hardship.

The World Tourism Organization emphasizes that tourism is a dynamic force driven by and for people. With conflicts affecting various Lebanon add to this year's World Tourism Day theme motto, "Tourism and Peace," highlighting tourism's role in protecting Lebanon's cultural heritage as a pillar in promoting peace in the region. As long as the country is in danger, the entire tourism sector, with all its supply chain, is disrupted and will require decades for recovery.

G. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lebanon has played the role of an epicenter in numerous conflicts throughout the last 50 decades or so, often being forced to go through a *tabula rasa*, to rise again, after traumatic experiences to both human and cultural loss. Its built heritage, however, has always been there, witnessing the rise and fall of governments and political developments, observing change, often leading to very strategic and cross-border results.

Lebanon's heritage is of immense cultural, historical, and artistic value, reflecting a diverse blend of civilizations, including Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, and Ottoman influences. Historic landmarks like the temples of Baalbek, the ancient city of Tyre, and the Crusader citadels of Mount Amel, offer invaluable insights into ancient Mediterranean cultures and the evolution of trade, art, and architecture across centuries. This heritage is integral not only to Lebanon's national identity but also to the broader cultural landscape of the Middle East, attracting tourism and fostering a sense of continuity with the past.

Lebanon's uniqueness lies in the multiplicity of its heritage remains, spread around the country, multifaceted and sharing the land with its various ethnic minorities and local communities. In the 21st c., almost every village, town and

The present war threatens this diversity, with all the remarkable sites and monuments which represent it. The conflict has already started to wound the country deeply in its identity, radically erasing some of its cultural pillars, which are the basis of pride, peace and stability among the people. It is therefore of utmost importance to preserve what unites these communities, their historic sites, cultural landscapes, symbolic monuments and ancient traces, which have endured over the centuries and must continue to do so.

Cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible, is a catalyst for peace and reconciliation in a nation like Lebanon, which has suffered way too long. Therefore, protecting Lebanon's natural and cultural heritage is crucial for preserving the nation's identity, as it plays a critical role for the future of this unique nation.