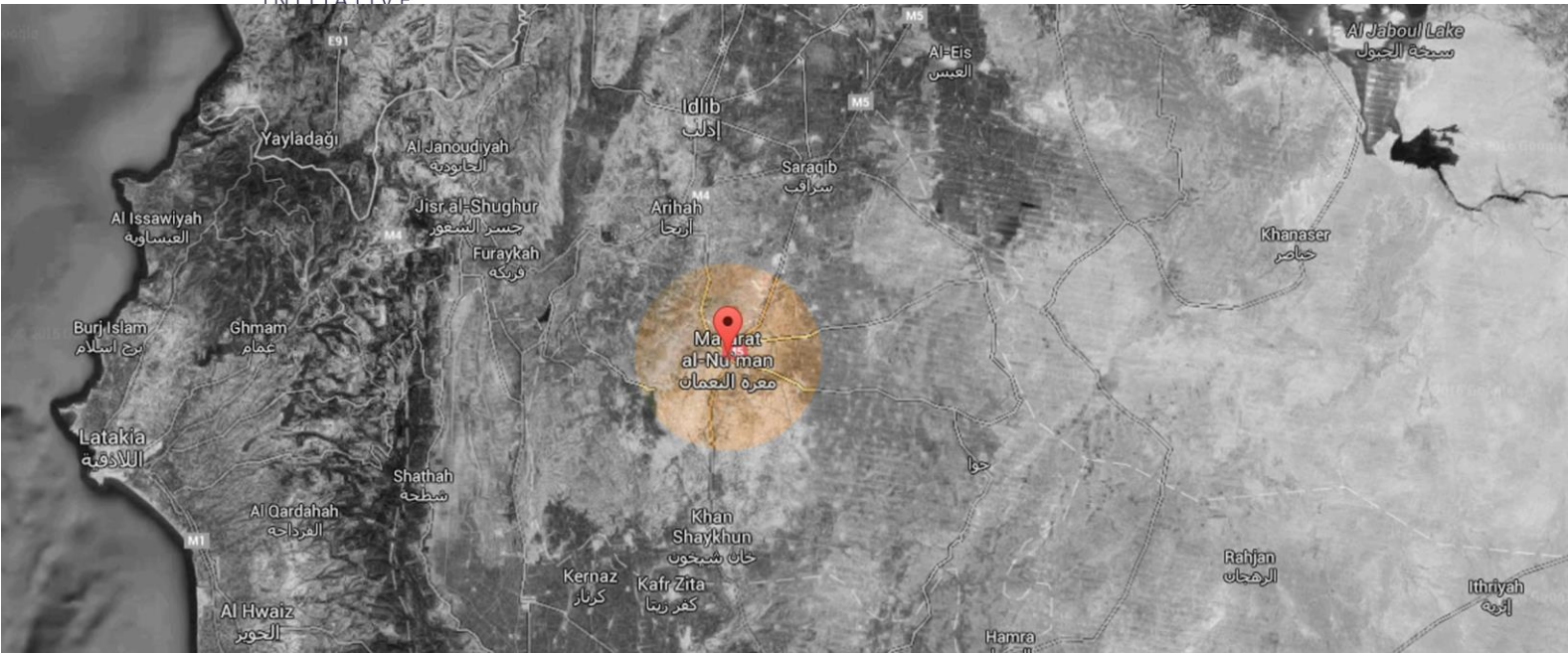


## The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative

### Site Monitors Project

#### Bashmishli (Ras el-Hosn) Damage Report July 2020



## **Bashmishli (Ras el-Hosn)**

The village of Bashmishli is located on Mount Barisha at an altitude of 600 m above sea level in Idlib Governorate.

The village is colloquially referred to as Ras el-Hosn, though its correct name has been disputed, the official one (Bashmishli) is of Syriac origin. A *shamsha*- from the Syriac Aramaic, is the *house of shamsha*, meaning the *house of bishimesh*. This is referring to the house of the sun god, where there was a sun god temple near it dating to the second century. While a number of researchers agree that the name is Turkish and consists of two words: *bash*, which means head or summit, and *mashli*, which means fort. The definition shifted to mean “the head of the fort”, which is the name that it is formally called at present.

Bashmishli’s archaeological structures date back to the third century. There is a basilica in the south, the pillars of its central section are mounted on each side by three arches standing on two pillars. It has a straight apse from which only the lower part of the testimony room remains, with a row of stones attaching it to a well-preserved Baptist church built in the southeastern corner of the basilica. It was struck by an earthquake in 526 or 528 AD and rebuilt in 536-537 CE by the Patriarch John of Antioch according to Greek writing on the western façade.

There are some remains of the baptism chamber with an ornate door and the small cavity that used to decorate the length of the room. There was a portico on the south side made up of four pillars where drawings and signs of crosses drawn by pilgrims used to hang. They were called *Aniana* or *Anidna* in the year 553 AD.

In the northwestern part of the village, there are remains of a villa dating back to the end of the third century AD. In the north, about 200 meters from the most important monuments is the Bashmishli Monastery. Its remaining ruins indicate that it contained the Basilica Church, a hermit tower, two-story monastic housing, a burial chamber, a hotel or guesthouse and a tank. The hermit’s tower walls are gone with the exception of its foundations, also from the monastery. Additionally, there are only foundations of its western room and part of an eastern room connected to the north with a room in which a sarcophagus is buried.

On 11/7/2020, a field tour was carried out by the Site Monitors of the Center for the Protection of Syrian Cultural Heritage - TDA-HPI, where the damage to the site and the construction of the *Deruniya* resulting from sabotage was documented. The damage was due to random unauthorized excavations inflicted by a group of looters. The discovered archaeological artifacts would then be sold for profit.

The building was previously documented by three-dimensional photography, and the damage was represented by the following:

- Illicit excavations around the building
- Illicit excavations inside the building
- Illicit excavations under the walls
- Breaking of ancient masonry



Illicit excavation/looting pits



The tent of illegal looters



Illegal excavations



Damage caused by breaking up masonry



Damage caused by breaking up masonry



Damage and vandalism



Illegal excavations inside the building



Damages and vandalism



Looting pit inside the building



The following recommendations and first aid solutions were suggested by the team of monitors:

- 1- Full documentation of the site and existing structures.
- 2- Topographic and photographic documentation of the damage.
- 3- Contact the authorities to stop illicit activity immediately.
- 4- Refilling the looting pits immediately after documenting them.

**The Site Monitors Team:**

Muhammad al-Batal - Ahmad al-Anan - Akram al-Qassum

Reported by:

Eng. Abdul Rahman Alyehia (Syrian Heritage Centre)

Arch. Khaled Hiatlih

**Site Monitors Project Coordinator**

**Dr. Amr Al-Azm**

