

Damage Analysis and Assessment of Museums in battle zones of Georgia

A) AFFECTED MUSEUMS IN DETAIL

Situation differs considerably in the various regions. If we consider the situation during the war and the accessibility today, we have to distinguish six zones:

1) Georgian mainland partly affected by war

- **Kaspi Local Museum:** After nearby bombing the roof and windows were damaged, but not the exhibits. Everything is repaired, and museum is open to public.

2) Georgian mainland for some time occupied by Russian and Ossetian separatist's army

All staff has returned safely to the three museums:

- **Sergi Makalatia Gori History- Ethnographical Museum:**
The museum was not damaged by bombs and not touched afterwards; collection is safe. Museum is open to public.
- **Ioseb Stalin State Museum in Gori:**
The museum is slightly damaged (some windows broken), but not touched. Part of the collection had been transferred to Tbilisi , but also the collection left in the museum is safe. Everything is repaired, and museum is open to public.
- **Iakob Gogebashvili House-museum (in Variani near Gori):**
After nearby bombing the roof and windows were broken. Everything is repaired, and museum is open to public.

3) Former so called "buffer zones" around the border of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

- **Dadiani Palaces Historical and Architectural Museum (Zugdidi)**
- **Poti Colchian Culture Museum**
- **Jiuli Shartava Senaki Local Museum**

Meanwhile Russian troops have completely left these zones, and European observers are present. There were no serious damages done to museums during the presence of the Russian "Peacekeeping Forces".

4) The Ksani Valley near the eastern border of South Ossetia

Before the war, the ethnic Georgian villages were under authority of the Georgian government. Since August 15, the Russian and South Ossetian armed forces are present and most of the Georgian population has left, including part of the museum staff. The museums are not damaged, but as they are in a difficult situation, they remain on our “watch list”:

- **Ksani Gorge Historical-Architectural Museum-Reserve in Akhalgori**
- **David and George Eristavi House Museum near Akhalgori**

Recently the European observers aren't in Akhalgori. They aren't allowed by Ossetian separatist's to enter in the city and this makes the situation tense.

5) The Liakhvi Valleys north of Tskhinvali

In the years before the war, the ethnic Georgian villages situated in the centre of South Ossetia have established an own administration in Kurta. Now the villages and the 2 museums are severely destroyed by bombing and burning; Georgian population has left. Last weekend, European observers had a first inspection tour through this area.

- **Ivane Machabeli House Museum in Tamarasheni**

The museum has been bombed at the beginning of the war; the village was bombed as well and burned down later; state of the collections are unknown. Staff had been evacuated; museums director lives now in Tbilisi. Georgian population has left.

- **Didi Liakhvi Gorge Museum-Reserve**

A large area with more than 300 monuments and sites. Some of them are damaged, but most seems to be safe. But the two offices in the villages Kekhvi and Kurta have been bombed at the beginning of the war; the villages were bombed as well and burned down later on. Collections and museums equipment were saved by director, but lost later on due to looting or fire. Staff had been evacuated; museums director lives now in Tbilisi. Georgian population has left.

6) Tshkinvali

We have not yet precise information on the two museums of Tshkinvali. This town was the main battle area during the first days of war; many public buildings in the town centre were damaged or destroyed.

- **South Ossetia Local Museum:** No information available
- **Vasily Abajev House Museum:** This Museum completely burned down on August 7/8, director told. All collection (manuscripts and personal belongings of the famous linguist) was lost.

- **Kosta Khetagurov House Museum:** No information available

Web Links: Full information (including some pictures) on DRFM special website:

<http://drfm.info/georgia/index.html#Museums>, www.georgianmuseums.ge

B) DAMAGE ASSESSMENT IN SOUTH OSSETIA

A first quick assessment of lost heritage in Tskhinvali was compiled by Nelly Tabujewa, the "Head of the Heritage Department of South Ossetian Ministry of Culture", published by mid of August in Russian and international newspapers. It includes "two museums" (the Vasily Abajev House Museum and very likely the South Ossetia Museum).

After the war, Russian Experts in protecting monuments were sent to South Ossetia for a two stage damage assessment. After the first stage on August 28, Mikhail Shvydkoy (the Russian President's special envoy on international cultural cooperation) declared in an interview "that 11 out of 29 monuments they studied were completely destroyed". Museums were not mentioned in this interview. We are waiting on the promised full report.

ICOM and ICOMOS are co-operating closely in the Caucasian conflict. This applies to the Georgian National Committees as well as to the international level.

- ICOM Georgia has finished its damage assessment - as far as we have access to the museums. Our results you have read in the first part of this message.
- ICOMOS Georgia is preparing its report; they deplore a serious amount of war damages.
- ICOM and ICOMOS have no members in South Ossetia ; therefore (as well as for other reasons) it is quite difficult to get direct information from there.
- ICOM DRFM Task Force has tried hard to find a way to send an assessment team to the South Ossetian Museums. But neither the ICOM National Committees of adjacent countries nor International Committees could help.

The European Council has included two representatives of the "Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage" to its mission in Georgia. The "Cultural Heritage Sites Group" of the European observers was visiting not only the former buffer zones but also parts of South Ossetia . The European observers group will make the report of the situation later.

Web Links:

Full and regularly updated information you will find on DRFM special website:

<http://drfm.info/georgia/georgia-report3>

C) UNOSAT DAMAGE ASSESSMENT IN SOUTH OSSETIA

The Georgian Cultural Heritage: Abkhazeti and Shida Kartli
February 3, 2009, Tbilisi

UNOSAT (part of UNITAR, the UN Institute for Training and Research) has published extremely useful maps of the Georgian war. (UNOSAT comments: "Please note, this is an initial damage assessment and has not yet been independently validated on the ground.")

On August 29, UNOSAT published an initial damage assessment - based on satellite imagery acquired on August 19 - of Didi Liakhvi valley in South Ossetia . It comprehends the South Ossetian capital Tskhinvali and the ethnic Georgian villages from Tamarasheni to Kekhvi and offers a basic atlas of the region and the following three special maps.

1) Damaged Buildings

--> In Tskhinvali 5.4 % of the buildings are visibly affected - in contrast to the Tskhinvali mayor: "Up to 70% of the municipal buildings have been damaged or completely destroyed," Robert Guliyev said on August 12. "The situation is almost the same in the private housing sector."

--> In the eight ethnic Georgian villages north of Tskhinvali 37 % of the buildings are visibly affected. UNOSAT comments: "An important preliminary finding of this satellite damage analysis is the observed heavy concentration of damages within clearly defined residential areas."

2) A day by day analysis of active fires in the eight villages

This map enables us to distinguish:

- Between damages due to the fighting between the armies during the first days of the war: 1 fire from August 8 to 11
- And the fires (e.g. by arson) in subsequent days: 11 fires on August 12 and 13; 11 fires on August 19 and 22.

3) Cultural Heritage

This map was an initiative of UNESCO Georgia, supported by ICOM Georgia and ICOMOS Georgia.

"Damage Summary Findings:

- 3 sites have buildings which are either severely damaged or destroyed;
- 1 site has possible damage to the roof;
- 11 sites have no visible damages, however 6 are located within 100 meters of buildings which were damaged in the conflict and thus may have less-severe damages."

We are very grateful to UNOSAT that a highly professional analysis of satellite imagery is made available for finding out the truth on war damages and on quickly identifying damaged heritage sites situated in areas difficult or impossible to access. This is a level of quality in post-war damage assessment never reached before: Less than a month after the hostile activities ended, everybody has access to a first aerial assessment of heritage damage on an UN website.

Web Links:

Full information on DRFM special website: <<http://drfm.info/georgia/georgia-report3#UNOSAT>>

UNOSAT index on Georgian maps: <http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/asp/prod_free.asp?id=101>

UNOSAT cultural heritage map:

http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/freeproducts/Georgia/Russia_ConflictAug08/UNOSAT_GEO_Cultural_Monuments_Damage_Assessment_A2_Lowres_v1.pdf

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www.georgianmuseums.ge (in process)