

Russian Invasion of Georgia

Damage to Cultural Heritage

8 October, 2008

Regular updates can be found on the Georgia Update website:
<http://georgiaupdate.gov.ge/>

The information below is accurate to the best of our knowledge, but is subject to verification. It is based on reports from local inhabitants and museum staff, data compiled by the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport of Georgia, and UNOSAT satellite-based damage assessment for cultural heritage monuments, available at www.unosat.org/shared/georgia/UNOSAT_Cultural_Monuments_Damages_v1.pdf.
www.unosat.org/shared/unosat/georgia/UNOSAT_Cultural_Monuments_Assessment_UPDATE_v2.pdf
[Update1 UNOSAT Damage Review of Monuments.pdf \(757KB\)](#)

The Ministry of Culture's inventory lists about 500 registered historical monuments and archaeological sites in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia..

A number of monuments in and around the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and in Gori have been damaged by bombings raids, ground attacks, arson and looting carried out by Russian troops and separatist illegal formations. Conducting of a precise survey of the damage is not possible because the experts of the Ministry of Culture are not allowed into the Russian occupation zones.

The following list is therefore highly provisional.

Archangel church (19th century)

This church located in the village of Kheiti, was damaged following shelling on 12 August. Severe damage has been confirmed by the UN's UNOSAT Damage Assessment chart, based on WorldView-1 satellite imagery recorded on 19 August 2008.

Ikorta Church (12th century)

The church located in the village of Ikorta was damaged by shelling on the 9 and 10 of August.

Ivane Machabeli Museum (19th)

The museum located in the village of Tamarasheni, north of Tskhinvali was heavily bombed and damaged. UN's UNOSAT Damage Assessment chart confirms possible damage to roof of northern section, 8 adjacent buildings destroyed/severely.

Archbishop's Palace (10th/11th centuries)

One of the most important examples of palace architecture from the late medieval period located in the village of Nikozi. It was recently restored, and has now been burned and destroyed. The Archbishop's residence and the monastery adjacent to palace were bombed on 9 August. The resulting fire engulfed the Palace, too, according to eyewitnesses.

Wooden Church of St. George (19th century)

A rare example of wooden architecture located in the village of Sveri. The church was completely burnt. UNOSAT lists the building as “confirmed severe damages/destroyed”.

Kemerti St. George Church (9th-10th centuries)

This church was bombed on 10 August. Satellite images do not reveal direct damage, but the building is located within 100m of buildings whose damage is visible from satellite (see UNOSAT chart). Local inhabitants report that the grounds of the church have been mined.

Ksani Gorge Museum Reserve (Eristavi Palace)

The museum located in Akhlagori, is being occupied by separatist illegal formations. Sporadic looting attempts have been reported.

The Kurta and the Kekhi offices of Didi Liakhvi Gorge Museum Reserve

About 1500 exhibits of bronze and medieval age where preserved, are looted. According to UNOSAT satellite imagery Kurta office is “destroyed, arson probable”. Kekhi office is likely “severely damaged, with possible impact crater in roof”.

According to staff and Georgian ICOM National Committee, the museum was looted in 10 August.

Monuments located within 100m from bombing or shelling

According to preservationist experts and architects, an explosion within 100 meters of an ancient building risks inflicting significant damages to the structure. UNOSAT satellite imagery lists the following monuments as being less than 100 meters from shelled or bombed areas:

- **Church of St. George in the village of Kekhi (17th century)**
- **Church of St. George in the village of Kurta (9th century)**
- **Fortress in the village of Achabeti (16th century)**
- **Church of St. Nicolas in the village of Achabeti (18th century)**
- **Giorgi Machabeli Palace in the village Kurta (19th century)**
- **St. George in village of Dzarcemi (9th century)**
- **St. Estate Church in the village of Achabeti. (8-9th century)**