

Russia, Syria Agree to Restore Ancient Palmyra

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Russian and Syrian state museums have signed two agreements to begin restoring the ancient city of Palmyra after it was heavily damaged by the Islamic State, the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg has [said](#).

Aided by Russian airstrikes, the Syrian army captured Palmyra from the Islamic State twice in March 2016 and March 2017. The terrorist group had [destroyed](#) several centuries-old monuments in Palmyra, including the facade of its Roman Theater, the Temple of Bel, the Tetrapylon and the Monumental Arch, during its occupation of the site.

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The UNESCO world heritage site's revival will begin with a restoration of the National Museum of Palmyra, The Art Newspaper [quoted](#) Hermitage director Mikhail Piotrovsky as saying Tuesday.

“We are preparing for the day after tomorrow, it’s not yet possible to do anything tomorrow,” Piotrovsky was quoted as saying about the project’s timeline at a signing ceremony in Damascus.

The agreements’ long-term goals entail restoring 20 Syrian antiquities primarily from Palmyra and launching an international campaign to restore the ancient city, the art news website [reported](#) Wednesday.

One was signed between the Hermitage and Syria’s authority for museums and antiquities, and the other between Syria’s museums authority and the Russian Academy of Sciences’ history of material culture institute.

Piotrovsky had [said](#) in August that it would take around two years to restore the National Museum of Palmyra. He vowed that Russia would help restore the Palmyra museum but not the damaged ancient monuments.

In 2017, Piotrovsky [presented](#) a 3D model detailing a 20,000-square-meter area of Palmyra to Syria to help restore the ancient city. Russian experts [created](#) the 3D model in about a year using photographs taken on the ground after Palmyra’s initial liberation.

Russia organized an international press tour of Palmyra in April 2016, which included a concert [performance](#) featuring Sergei Roldugin, a close friend and confidante of President Vladimir Putin.

This year, two Russian tour operators began offering travel packages to Syrian cities including Palmyra, though they noted that demand is not high.

Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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