Conservation Works at Tell Mozan / Urkesh – 2025

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Introduction

This report presents all the works carried out at the site during 2025. Following my assumption of responsibility for supervising the workers' activities in August 2025, I consider it important for this report to focus particularly on the works carried out under my supervision, especially those classified as necessary interventions for the preservation of the site's structure and overall appearance, as well as emergency and urgent interventions. It should also be noted that an individual report was prepared for each of the works carried out, documenting the details of the work and the procedures undertaken. These reports have been published on UGR. For further information on each work, the relevant reports can be consulted at the following link: https://urkesh.org/MZ/A/MCV/TEXTS/C2/reports.htm.

These works differ from the routine activities that are continuously carried out at the site, such as cleaning, maintenance of the burlap used to protect the palace walls (Fig. 1), preparation of the annual general report on the condition of the walls, as well as removal of weeds (Fig. 2), and other routine maintenance activities. In addition to these daily routine activities, a number of maintenance, rehabilitation, and intervention works on the protective systems and metal elements were carried out at the site during 2025. These works aimed to preserve the archaeological remains, enhance visitor safety, ensure the continued efficiency and effectiveness of the protective systems surrounding the archaeological structures and walls, and reduce the impact of factors that could lead to their deterioration or put them at risk.

Blacksmithing and Metal Maintenance Works

Due to the lack of electricity at the site, the blacksmithing works were carried out with the assistance of a local blacksmith equipped with a mobile electric generator. This allowed the works to be carried out in different areas of the site, while also helping to reduce costs and support the involvement of local suppliers in maintenance and implementation works. For further information on this aspect, please refer to the detailed report https://urkesh.org/MZ/A/MCV/TEXTS/C2/reports/ZJy11%20Blacksmithing.htm.

The works included the repair of the iron fence by straightening the bent sections, welding the broken parts, and replacing the missing elements, particularly in the temple and palace areas (Fig. 3). The metal panorama in the temple area was also repaired by treating the broken section and the cracks in its cover (Fig. 4). In addition, the tannur cover in the palace area was repaired, with the damaged rings replaced.

The maintenance works also included the repair of one of the doors that could not be opened due to the accumulation of soil and debris. The door was raised and re-secured without carrying out any additional excavation works (Fig. 5). The palace panorama cover was also modified to ensure that it opened properly, and the metal canopy covering it was repaired (Fig. 6).

In the drainage system in Iwan C5, a new mesh was installed on the iron frames to protect the drainage openings from the accumulation of debris (Fig. 7). The metal protective sheets (Tutiya) above walls D1-1 and E1 were also secured (Fig. 8), and one of the missing bolts on the Abi dome was reinstalled to reduce the possibility of water leakage.

The maintenance works also included the rehabilitation of the protective barbed wire attached to the iron fence by reinstalling the intact sections and replacing the deteriorated or missing sections (Fig. 9). In addition, additional screws were installed on the Abi panel cover to improve its stability and ensure that it remained stable when opened and in use (Fig. 10).

Plastering of the Protective System of the Palace Walls

As part of the conservation program for the palace walls, comprehensive works were carried out to rehabilitate the mud plaster layers used as part of the protective system for the walls. This system is an important element in protecting the palace walls, which are constructed of mud-brick and stone, from the effects of rain, wind, and various climatic factors, while at the same time allowing the walls to remain visible and understandable to visitors. For further information on the plastering works and the wall protective system, please refer to the detailed report https://urkesh.org/MZ/A/MCV/TEXTS/C2/reports/Zjy22%20Plastering.htm.

The works began with the complete removal of the old and deteriorated mud plaster layers (Fig. 11), particularly in Sector H and the service wing sectors. The debris resulting from the removal process was collected and transported away from the excavation areas. Subsequently, some areas were reinforced with metal wires (Fig. 12), followed by the installation of layers of plastic sheet and cardboard (Fig. 13). The surfaces were then prepared and moistened before the application of the new mud plaster layers.

Some protective systems covered with metal sheets (tutiya) were treated differently. It was decided not to apply mud plaster directly over the metal sheets due to poor adhesion and the possibility of moisture retention, which could result in the corrosion and rusting of the metal elements. Instead, a layer of nylon was adopted as a protective measure, and the gaps and holes between the sheets were sealed with silicone to prevent water leakage (Fig. 14).

The implementation of these works faced several challenges, most notably the limited number of workers, difficulties in transporting materials and water, the distance between the water source and the palace area, and the lack of electricity at the site. Part of these difficulties was overcome through local support for supplying the water, soil, and straw required for preparing the mud plaster.

Overall, the works carried out during 2025 contribute to improve the efficiency of the protective systems, treating deteriorated sections, enhancing visitor safety, reducing the impact of weather conditions on the archaeological remains, and improving the overall appearance of the site and the clarity of its presentation to visitors. These interventions also form part of the ongoing efforts to conserve the site and ensure the sustainability of its protective systems, thereby achieving a balance between the requirements of conserving the archaeological remains and making them accessible and understandable to visitors.

Figures

Fig. 1: Stitching of the Burlap in the Palace Area

Fig. 2: Weeds Removal

Figure 3: welding of the rods

Fig. 4: welding of minor cracks in the temple panorama

Fig. 5: The door during the raising process

Fig. 6: The cutting of the iron rod that prevented the cover from lying flat

Fig. 7: The installation of the new mesh on the drainage frames

Fig. 8: The securing of the tutiya sheets on Wall E1

Fig. 9: The reinstalling of the new protective barbed wire

Fig. 10: The re-installation of a missing bolt on the Abi dome

Fig. 11: Removal of the fragile and deteriorated mud plaster

Fig. 12: Metal wires installation

Fig. 13: Adding plastic sheet and cardboard

Fig. 14: Sealing gaps and existing holes in sheet metal (tutiya) with silicone