



# The al-Nuri Mosque

Since its construction in the second half of the 12th Century CE, the al-Nuri Mosque, with its distinctive Hadba Minaret, has served as Mosul's Great Mosque. As such, it is both an iconic landmark and a symbol of Mosul and its inhabitants.

In 2014, ISIS rushed to hoist its flag atop the mosque, and its leader proclaimed its 'caliphate' from the pulpit. The building now came to symbolize the nightmare of ISIS tyranny. The final blow was dealt in 2017, when ISIS fighters blew up the prayer hall during their retreat. This collapsed the building.

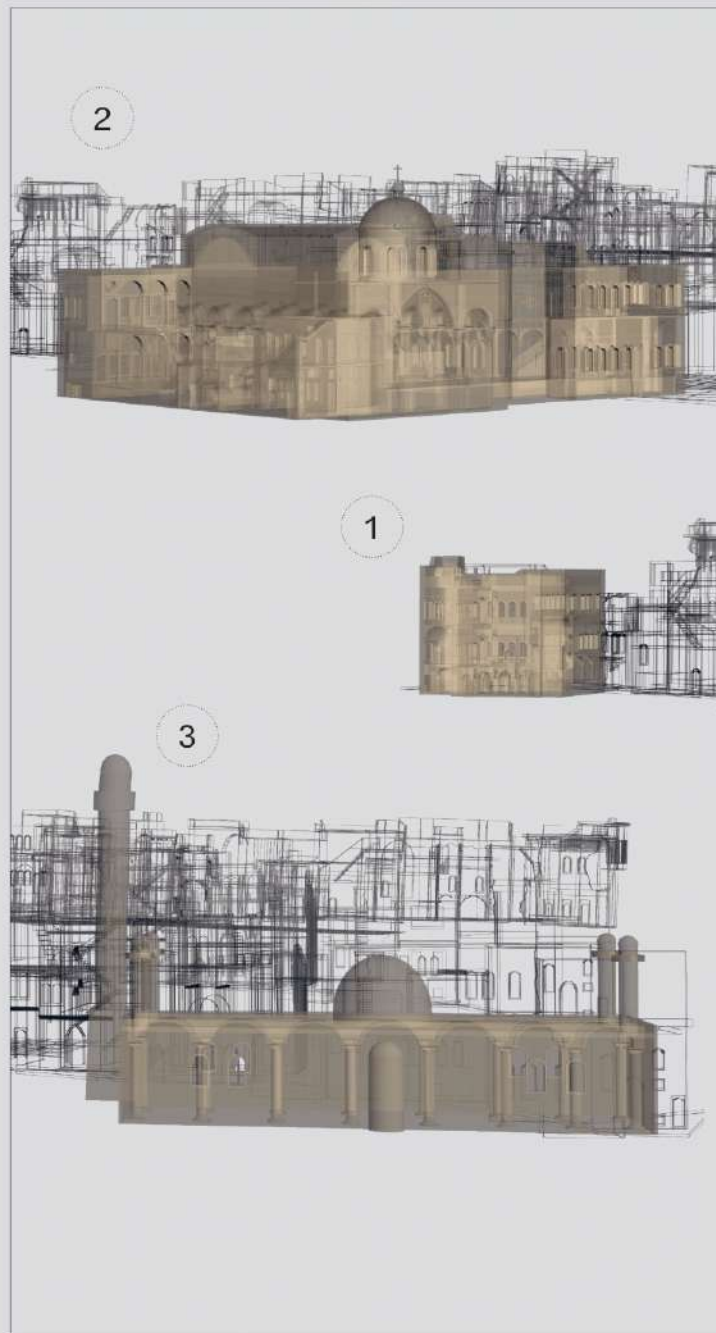
Reinstating the al-Nuri Mosque to its rightful place is not only an architectural challenge, but an essential symbolic act of revival. In February 2018, the Mosque became central to the restorative 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' project. Since then, rubble has been removed from the mosque complex and the remains of the Hadba Minaret and prayer hall have been stabilized.

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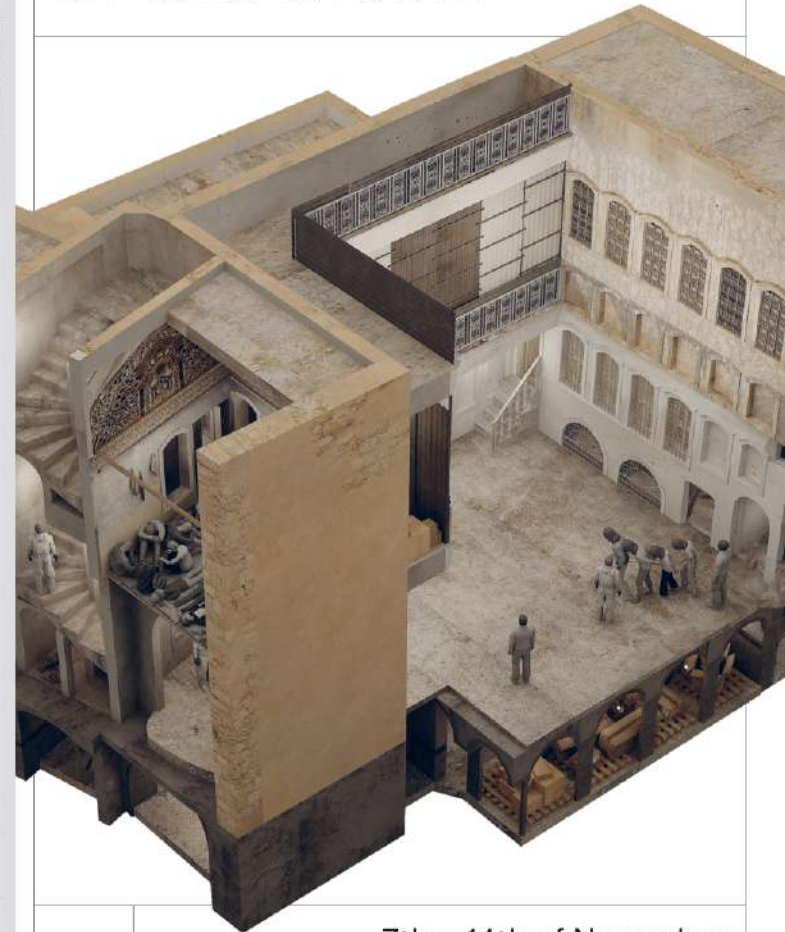
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## Three Walls: Spatial Narratives of Old Mosul



EN

7th – 14th of November  
UNESCO Headquarters  
Paris



# Introduction

The Old City of Mosul was once remarkably well-preserved, and celebrated for its diversity. This changed after ISIS (Daesh) seized Mosul in June 2014. The ISIS occupation and subsequent conflict led to the destruction of many of the Old City's most significant sites and the disappearance of many of its citizens.

This exhibition explores the spatial narratives of Old Mosul by reconstructing its architecture and revealing how ISIS transformed the area into a vast prison. Through digital storytelling, it focuses on three key buildings, each representing a broader category. Virtual tours of these spaces provide insight into their significance, while highlighting the changes imposed by ISIS.

Visitors will also hear from community members. Among them are people once imprisoned for 'crimes' such as shaving or selling cigarettes.

While many of its buildings remain abandoned, this exhibition aims to preserve Old Mosul's collective memory.

VR Tour



## The Meydan House

The Meydan House stands as a prime example of traditional Mosul architecture, featuring domes and vaulted rectangular halls—iwans—adorned with intricate motifs. Once a large family home, ISIS occupied it in 2014, and repurposed it as a prison.

The men detained here had violated ISIS regulations concerning personal behavior, religious practices, and dress codes. The two-story structure includes a large crypt in the basement—common in traditional Mosul homes for food storage. ISIS transformed this crypt into a torture chamber, while the ground floor was used for administration. The upper floor contained two group cells.

A virtual tour offers insights into the building's use during and after ISIS occupation. Witness testimonies, voiceovers, and reconstructions describe prisoner interrogations, their daily life, and the tortures they endured.

The Meydan House illustrates the tragedy of Old Mosul under ISIS: the transformation of a symbol of cultural achievement into a place of terror.



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VR Tour



## The Syriac Church



Known for its majestic size and architecture - this church once hosted important religious and community events. But ISIS seized the building in June, 2014, and converted it into a prison.

The main hall of the church was partitioned into group cells, a guardroom, and a torture area. The basement was transformed into fortified group cells and torture rooms where prisoners had their ribs and fingers broken. After their interrogation, an ISIS judge sentenced them to flogging, compulsory sharia courses, and fines.

The church suffered enormous damage. ISIS broke the three altars and the crosses, defaced the images of saints, destroyed books, and smashed gravestones. It also dug large holes in the walls. A large hole in the main hall was used as an additional entrance to the basement. The upper floor rooms were destroyed by bombardment.

An ISIS Prisons Museum team documented the church as it was left by ISIS. The tour here is based on the team's findings, eight testimonies by former prisoners, and interviews with experts and church officials.

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