

# Beirut

## The Greek Orthodox Church of Mar Elias Btina in Beirut

Today the church dedicated to the prophet Elijah is part of a school which occupies monastery buildings raised in the latter half of the 19th century. Nonetheless, the small presbytery of the present-day church is much earlier and hewn directly into solid rock. A fragment of exterior paint which had flaked off one of the presbytery walls revealed the outline of an underlying composition. In 2010 conservators uncovered a number of severely damaged though historically and iconographically significant medieval paintings. Two scenes appear on the north wall: the prophet Elijah seated outside a cave and Elijah being taken to heaven in a chariot. The identification of these scenes is corroborated by a well-preserved Greek inscription. The opposite wall is also adorned by a poorly preserved mural featuring fragments of standing figures with halos.



These paintings, provisionally dated to the 12th–13th century, are the first depictions of the prophet Elijah in Lebanon to be positively identified by an inscription. They also testify to the lengthy tradition of his worship at this site, his name having survived in the church's dedication.

Conservators carrying out various procedures: hacking away secondary cement accretions, securing the paint layer and working on areas of putty filling.

Conch-shaped apse. Condition after removal of multiple secondary layers, filling of losses with putty and colour reintegration.