



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Iraq

Iraq – IRQ38926 – Basra – Security –
Mahdi Army – Shiite Militant Groups –
State Protection – Westernised Returnees

7 July 2011

Please note that spelling in this response may vary due to transliteration. Spelling is used as per the source document.

1. What is the present security situation in the Basra region? Is the Mahdi Army or similar groups still operating in the region?

It is reported that there has been a new spate of attacks on United States troops in Iraq by Shiite militias. The attacks began in mid-March 2011, after the US government hinted that it would prefer some US troops to stay in Iraq after their scheduled exit date of 31 December 2011. The militia attacks have been “mainly in the Shiite heartland in southern Iraq” and are reported to have involved three separate militias, particularly the Hezbollah Brigades, which is believed to be funded and trained by Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and its special operations wing, the Quds Force. The Promised Day Brigade, which is linked to Muqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army, is also reported to be involved in attacks against US troops. Another Shiite militia is Asaib Ahl al-Haq, or Band of the People of Righteousness, which is a splinter Sadrist group that does not have al-Sadr’s backing and relies on Iran for support.¹ Earlier, in September 2010, Asaib Ahl al Haq claimed responsibility for armed operations against US forces in several locations in Iraq, including Basra.²

Muqtada Al-Sadr is reported to have disarmed his Mahdi Army after its defeat by US and Iraqi forces in Basra in 2008.³ Since then, the Mahdi Army is reported to have ceased major attacks on Iraqi and coalition forces in Iraq. Splinter groups that disagreed with Sadr’s direction continued with attacks. The Promised Day Brigade reportedly continues to follow Sadr’s orders.⁴ According to a US military intelligence official, Al-Sadr “created the Promised Day Brigade to keep a militia on hand to ‘resist the occupier’”.⁵ An earlier report from May 2010 refers to the Promised Day Brigade as the armed wing of the Mahdi Army militia.⁶ In April 2011, Muqtada al-Sadr indicated that he would train newly armed followers and bring his Mahdi Army militia out of retirement if American soldiers remained in Iraq

¹ Jakes, L. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2011, ‘15 US soldiers killed in June by Shiite militias seeking to push American military out of Iraq’, *Associated Press Newswires*, 1 July – Attachment 1

² ‘Fears of Military Coup Surface in Iraq – Sources’ 2010, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 8 October – Attachment 2

³ Jakes, L. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2011, ‘15 US soldiers killed in June by Shiite militias seeking to push American military out of Iraq’, *Associated Press Newswires*, 1 July – Attachment 1

⁴ Riani, G. 2011, ‘Shi’a Militia Claim Responsibility for Attacks on US Troops in Iraq’, *IHS Global Insight Daily Analysis*, 28 June – Attachment 3

⁵ Jakes, L. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2011, ‘15 US soldiers killed in June by Shiite militias seeking to push American military out of Iraq’, *Associated Press Newswires*, 1 July – Attachment 1

⁶ Hendawi, H. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2010, ‘Shiite militia reviving in post-election Iraq’, *Associated Press (AP)*, 4 May – Attachment 4

beyond 2011, after the US offered to keep troops on if they were needed.⁷ On 28 June 2011, it was reported that the Promised Day Brigade had claimed responsibility for ten attacks against US military bases in Iraq between 21 June and 26 June 2011, including in Basra.⁸

Al-Sadr's political party holds 39 seats in Iraq's parliament and he is reported to hold "considerable sway in Iraq's government". His support enabled Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to gain a second term after Iraq's 2010 elections.⁹

Iraqi security forces are recently reported to have commenced a "crackdown on Iranian-backed Shiite militants" responsible for most of the increasing number of attacks on US soldiers, according to American and Iraqi officials. The security forces have increased their activities across Iraq, although operations are concentrated in the south of the country. Around 2,000 Iraqi soldiers and police officers are involved in an offensive in the southern province of Maysan, and Hakim al-Zamili, a Sadrist MP with a seat on the security committee, has said "the military planned to extend the effort from Maysan Province to Basra in the coming days or weeks."¹⁰

Recent reports on the security situation in Basra include the following:

On 30 June 2011, it was reported that during the previous week, Basra's council had approved a resolution demanding that US forces "leave any civilian buildings used as army bases, including the city airport, provincial officials said." Officials said that US soldiers, who were protecting a provincial reconstruction team, had subsequently been asked to leave Basra council's building or to give up their weapons. Moqtada al-Sadr was reportedly "leading a campaign to bar U.S. troops from cities and government buildings to pressure Baghdad and Washington to remove American forces from Iraq by year-end, officials said." About ten provincial councils in central and southern Iraq, including Basra, had been asked by members of Sadr's political movement to pass resolutions to keep US forces out of the cities and Iraqi facilities.¹¹ On 29 June 2011, the pan-Arab daily Asharq Al Awsat is reported to have said that the commander of the US forces in southern Iraq had confirmed in a statement that US forces would leave their base at Basra International Airport in a few months, in accordance with the security agreement signed between the American and Iraqi governments in 2008. The statement also blamed Iranian-backed extremist groups for recent rocket attacks on the airport.¹²

A recent article, which refers to militants having targeted Iraq's oil resources during 2011, indicates that the chief of the south oil police had said that they considered Basra's oil facilities to be "under a constant threat and primary target for saboteurs."¹³

On 26 June 2011, Basra's public relations and media office reported that security operations in different parts of Basra province had resulted in the arrest of 39 wanted men, including one

⁷ Juhi, B. 2011, 'Powerful Shiite cleric threatens to reactivate feared militia if US troops stay past 2011', *Associated Press Newswires*, 10 April – Attachment 5

⁸ Riani, G. 2011, 'Shi'a Militia Claim Responsibility for Attacks on US Troops in Iraq', *IHS Global Insight Daily Analysis*, 28 June – Attachment 3

⁹ Jakes, L. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2011, '15 US soldiers killed in June by Shiite militias seeking to push American military out of Iraq', *Associated Press Newswires*, 1 July – Attachment 1

¹⁰ Schmidt, M. & Arango, T. 2011, 'Iraq Assaults Shiite Militants Linked to Iran', *The New York Times*, 2 July – Attachment 6

¹¹ al-Salhy, S. 2011, 'Iraq cleric pursues US troop ban in strongholds', *Reuters News*, 30 June – Attachment 7

¹² 'Iraq-U.S.' 2011, *The Middle East Reporter (MER)*, 29 June – Attachment 8

¹³ Rasheed, A. 2011, 'Iraq can barely handle oil security in south', *Reuters News*, 30 June – Attachment 9

charged with terrorist acts. Basra police had also confiscated rocket and mortar shells.¹⁴

The US military has recently signed over three joint security stations in southern Iraq to the Iraqis, including Minden, a station located in Basra province, which was signed over on 22 June 2011.¹⁵

On 22 June 2011, police said that a US military convoy had been struck by a bomb blast near Basra. A US military official said that no-one was hurt.¹⁶ Another report dated 22 June 2011 indicates that a security source had said a US soldier had been killed and a military Hummer vehicle damaged when an improvised explosive device exploded near a US military patrol in Altnoma district east of Basra province.¹⁷

On 19 June 2011, security sources said that a bomb explosion targeting a Western security company guarding a client in the Basra region, on a route travelled by the personnel of Western firms and oil companies, had left an Iraqi and a Westerner wounded.¹⁸ Another report, which appears to be about the same incident, refers to an Iraqi and a British citizen being killed in the blast.¹⁹

On 16 June 2011, the US military said that an American army helicopter had fired on insurgents who fired seven rockets at Basra airport, killing one attacker and wounding two.²⁰ The local Iraqi media reported that a civilian had been killed and three others wounded in the US operation, and the US military said it was investigating whether civilian casualties had occurred. An unidentified senior Iraqi security official is also reported to have said that the US forces in Basra had become frustrated with the response of the Iraqi military to recent attacks on their base, with the Americans complaining that Iraqi security forces were not doing enough to stop rocket and bomb attacks targeting their base and ground troops.²¹

On 13 June 2011, police and officials said that a suicide bomber had blown up an explosives-filled vehicle at the entrance to a police unit in Basra, killing five people and wounding 15. A *Reuters News* report of the bombing indicates that:

Basra, which handles the bulk of Iraq's oil exports, has generally seen less attacks this year than other cities in the country following an overall decline in levels of violence since the peak of sectarian conflict in Iraq in 2006-2007.

Earlier this month, a bomb attack on an oil storage depot near the Zubair oilfield in Basra set one oil storage tank ablaze, but caused no casualties.

The last major attack in Basra occurred in March, when a roadside bomb targeting a U.S. military convoy exploded near a civilian bus, killing six people and wounding a dozen.²²

¹⁴ 'About 40 wanted men arrested, rockets, ammunition confiscated in Basra' 2011, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 26 June – Attachment 10

¹⁵ 'U.S. turns joint security stations over to Iraqis' 2011, *Department of Defense Documents*, 30 June – Attachment 11

¹⁶ al-Badrani, J. 2011, 'Four dead, dozens hurt in attacks on Iraqi police', *Reuters News*, 22 June – Attachment 12

¹⁷ 'U.S. soldier killed, IED geos [sic] off in Basra' 2011, *National Iraqi News Agency*, 22 June – Attachment 13

¹⁸ 'Iraq bombing leaves 27 dead; The attack takes place near the home of a provincial governor, who was not hurt' 2011, *Los Angeles Times*, 22 June – Attachment 14

¹⁹ 'Iraqi, Briton killed by roadside bomb west of Basra' 2011, *National Iraqi News Agency*, 19 June – Attachment 15

²⁰ 'US helicopter fire kills Iraq insurgent: military' 2011, *Agence France-Presse*, 16 June – Attachment 16

²¹ Markey, P. & Mohammed, A. 2011, 'US helicopters fire on attackers in Iraq oil hub –military', *Reuters News*, 16 June – Attachment 17

²² 'Suicide bomber kills 5 in Iraq's southern Basra port' 2011, *Reuters News*, 13 June – Attachment 18

2. Is their evidence of a resurgence of Shi'ite militant groups in the region? If so, do such groups enforce strict Islamic codes of conduct and appearance on both men and women in the province?

As previously mentioned, it is reported that there has been a new spate of attacks on United States troops in Iraq by Shiite militias. Fifteen US soldiers were killed in June 2011, the highest number of military deaths in Iraq since June 2009. The attacks began in mid-March 2011, after the US government hinted that it would prefer some US troops to stay in Iraq after their scheduled exit date of 31 December 2011. The militia attacks have been “mainly in the Shiite heartland in southern Iraq” and are reported to have involved the three militias referred to in the previous question, the Promised Day Brigade, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and in particular, the Hezbollah Brigades.²³ The Promised Day Brigade has recently claimed responsibility for ten attacks against US military bases in Iraq, including in Basra.²⁴ Earlier, in September 2010, Asaib Ahl al Haq claimed responsibility for armed operations against US forces in several locations, including Basra.²⁵

Iraqi security forces are recently reported to have commenced a “crackdown on Iranian-backed Shiite militants” responsible for most of the increasing number of attacks on US soldiers, according to American and Iraqi officials. Hakim al-Zamili, a Sadrist MP with a seat on the security committee, has said the military planned to extend an operation against Shiite militants in the southern province of Maysan to Basra in the coming days or weeks.²⁶

In relation to whether Shiite militant groups enforce strict Islamic codes of conduct and appearance on men and women in Basra province, it is reported that by the time of its defeat in Baghdad and southern cities in 2008, the Mahdi Army’s neighbourhood vigilantes “enforced a strict interpretation of Islamic law on Shiite residents, shutting down music stores, hair dressers, bombing liquor shops and forcing women to cover up head-to-toe in public.”²⁷ According to an article in *The Christian Science Monitor*, despite there being strong political support for the Sadrists in Basra, particularly among the poor, “few would welcome a return to militia rule, which banned music, cigarette smoking, and women walking in the street in many of its strongholds. Hundreds of those who broke those bans were killed or tortured.”²⁸ In May 2010, it was reported that there had “been a series of recent attacks on liquor stores” in Basra and a number of unresolved murders of security officers believed to have been involved in the ill-treatment of Mahdi Army members in detention. Security officials said the attacks had the hallmarks of the Mahdi Army.²⁹

Information provided by UNHCR in April 2009 indicates that following the military operation in Basra in 2008, “[t]he grip Shi’ite extremist groups held on the local population seems to have eased and ‘Un-Islamic’ behaviour is no longer systematically punished with death, though occasional incidents continue to occur.” In Iraq, there continued “to be

²³ Jakes, L. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2011, ‘15 US soldiers killed in June by Shiite militias seeking to push American military out of Iraq’, *Associated Press Newswires*, 1 July – Attachment 1

²⁴ Riani, G. 2011, ‘Shi’a Militia Claim Responsibility for Attacks on US Troops in Iraq’, *IHS Global Insight Daily Analysis*, 28 June – Attachment 3

²⁵ ‘Fears of Military Coup Surface in Iraq – Sources’ 2010, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 8 October – Attachment 2

²⁶ Schmidt, M. & Arango, T. 2011, ‘Iraq Assaults Shiite Militants Linked to Iran’, *The New York Times*, 2 July – Attachment 6

²⁷ Hendawi, H. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2010, ‘Shiite militia reviving in post-election Iraq’, *Associated Press (AP)*, 4 May – Attachment 4

²⁸ Arraf, J. 2010, ‘Are Sadr militias rearming in Iraq’s south?’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 May – Attachment 19

²⁹ Hendawi, H. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2010, ‘Shiite militia reviving in post-election Iraq’, *Associated Press (AP)*, 4 May – Attachment 4

occasional attacks on music stores, hairdresser saloons and alcohol shops in areas where extremist groups still have a presence, in particular in Mosul, Baghdad, Kirkuk and Basrah.”³⁰

Human Rights Watch reports that in early 2009, there was a killing campaign against men suspected of being gay or of not being sufficiently masculine, with armed gangs kidnapping victims. The campaign was most intense in Baghdad, but extended to other cities including Basra. Most survivors and witnesses reportedly “pointed to Moqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi army, the largest Shia militia, as the driving force behind the killings.”³¹

3. Do local state authorities provide protection to persons at risk of harm by such groups?

As previously mentioned, it was reported in June 2011 that an unidentified senior Iraqi security official had said that the US forces in Basra had become frustrated with the response of the Iraqi military to recent attacks on their base, with the Americans complaining that Iraqi security forces were not doing enough to stop rocket and bomb attacks targeting their base and ground troops.³²

According to an August 2010 report, many parts of Iraq were already operating in post-US mode. In Basra, “[i]ts security forces have been operating largely independently of the US since the defeat of Moqtada al-Sadr’s forces in the region in March 2008. Its security forces are well organised, highly visible and often heavy handed, but this reflects the importance of the area to country”, with almost 80% of Iraq’s oil produced in the province.³³

Information provided by UNHCR in April 2009 indicates that the security situation in the Southern Governorates of Iraq had largely stabilised following military operations in 2008, although the situation varied from area to area. There were still serious concerns regarding the sustainability of the security improvements, as they were largely based on fragile or temporary security arrangements. Political parties linked to militias continued to be in power, and “[t]argeted, often politically motivated killings, in particular of security officials, local government or party officials, religious and tribal leaders, journalists and certain professionals continue to occur.”³⁴

In relation to Basrah Governorate, UNHCR notes that in the aftermath of the military operation in Basrah in 2008, the situation had significantly stabilised. UNHCR also reports that 1,300 soldiers and policemen, who had deserted or refused to fight during the operation, were dismissed by the Iraqi government. The local police was “known to be heavily infiltrated by militias despite some purges.” It is stated in the report that:

217. On the surface, the situation has significantly stabilized as a result of the military offensive and the extensive presence of the Iraq Army. The grip Shi’ite extremist groups held on the local population seems to have eased and “Un-Islamic” behaviour is no longer systematically punished with death, though occasional incidents continue to occur. The local police is known to be heavily infiltrated by militias despite some purges. Reviving the economy and reducing high unemployment are also seen as key to achieve lasting security as militias find it easy to attract young, unemployed and disillusioned men. Despite the allocation of funds for reconstruction and

³⁰ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp. 122 & 191-192 – Attachment 20

³¹ Human Rights Watch 2010, *World Report 2010 – Iraq*, January – Attachment 21

³² Markey, P. & Mohammed, A. 2011, ‘US helicopters fire on attackers in Iraq oil hub –military’, *Reuters News*, 16 June – Attachment 17

³³ ‘Political tensions threaten security’ 2010, *Middle East Economic Digest*, 27 August – Attachment 22

³⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, p. 24 – Attachment 20

humanitarian aid in Basrah by the PM, spending has been slow. These delays coupled with rising intra-Shi'ite tensions among ISCI [Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq] and Dawa, “create favorable conditions for an increase in violence.”

218. Despite the fact that overall levels of violence have decreased after the military operation in 2008 and the continued heavy presence of the IA [Iraqi Army], targeted, often politically motivated killings, in particular of security officials, local government or party officials, religious and tribal leaders as well as professionals continue to occur.³⁵

In relation to Iraq's National Police, UNHCR indicated in April 2009 that the National Police, which had “acted as a largely Shi'ite force and was deeply implicated in sectarian violence, has undergone considerable reforms, including vetting, training and purges since 2007, reducing Shi'ite dominance and incidents of abuse. However, it reportedly continues to be seen as a largely sectarian institution by many Iraqis and the process of turning the National Police into a truly non-sectarian organization has not yet been completed.”³⁶ Another report from February 2009 indicates that the police were “often unapologetically sympathetic to the Mahdi Army in areas where Sadr retains major influence or control.”³⁷

A September 2010 Danish Immigration Service report on security and human rights in South/Central Iraq indicates that a reliable source in Iraq had stated that Iraqis in South/Central Iraq could not turn to the authorities for protection from non-state actors. It is stated in the report that:

A reliable source [in] Iraq stated that Iraqis in S/C Iraq cannot turn to the authorities for protection from non-state actors. There is little real police activity in Iraq when it comes to protecting people making claims. A person can file a case, however very little investigation would be made into the case. The police are ill-trained and ill-equipped to take on such duties and efforts are especially needed to strengthen police capacity to this end. Structurally, the police are still “miles away” from being able to address reports that are filed.

It must be considered in the current situation in Iraq that crime also plays a major part in the volatile security situation. Gangs are looking to make money any way possible. It is fundamental to realize that in the current situation, the Iraqi authorities are unable to provide protection to its citizens and seeking the state's protection really isn't an option.³⁸

In relation to Iraq generally, the US Department of State 2010 report on human rights practices in Iraq indicates that the country's security forces reported to civilian authorities, but ongoing violence, organisational dysfunction, and corruption “undermined the government's ability to protect human rights.” Extremist violence, along with “weak government performance in upholding the rule of law, resulted in widespread and severe human rights abuses.” During 2010, “despite some reconciliation and easing of tensions in several

³⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp. 122-123 – Attachment 20

³⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp. 83-84 – Attachment 20

³⁷ Cordesman, A. H. and Mausner, A. 2009, ‘How Soon Is Safe? Iraqi Force Development and “Conditions-Based” US Withdrawals’, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) website, 5 February, pp. 93-94

http://www.csis.org/component/option.com_csis_pubs/task.view/id,5420/ – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 23

³⁸ Danish Immigration Service 2010, *Security and Human Rights in South/Central Iraq: Report from Danish Immigration Service's fact-finding mission to Amman, Jordan and Baghdad, Iraq 25 February to 9 March and 6 to 16 April 2010*, September, p. 33 http://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/7F24EA1B-1DC7-48AE-81C4-C097ADAB34FD/0/Rapport_Security_and_HR_in_South_Central_Iraq.pdf - Accessed 22 December 2010 – Attachment 24

provinces, the government's human rights performance consistently fell short of according citizens the protections the law provides."³⁹

4. Is there evidence that persons are imputed with pro-US coalition forces views for having travelled to or lived in the west? If so, have such people been harmed?

Specific recent information was not located on whether persons are imputed with pro-US coalition forces views for having travelled to or lived in the West, and whether such people have been harmed.

In February 2011, a UNHCR representative in Iraq, who said that UNHCR would review its returnee policies after all government ministers were in place and trends in the security situation had developed, indicated that "UNHCR made an effort to track returnees, including failed asylum seekers returned from countries such as Sweden. There were initial interviews, but many were not willing to participate in follow-up processes." UNHCR had a policy of not returning people to the five provinces of Ninewa, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din and Baghdad, in which there were disproportionately high numbers of security incidents.⁴⁰

In November 2010, Amnesty International called on European governments to immediately stop forcible returns to the provinces of Ninewa (Mosul), Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, Baghdad, and to other particularly dangerous areas in Iraq such as parts of Al Anbar province, where there were serious risks arising from violence or events seriously disturbing public order. Amnesty considered that when European countries were envisaging removing Iraqis to other areas of Iraq, an individual assessment should be carried out indicating that it would be safe to return the individual in question. Amnesty and the UNHCR had spoken to a number of Iraqis after they had been forcibly returned from European states to Iraq and who feared for their safety.⁴¹

In March 2011, *The Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom reported that deportations of asylum seekers to Iraq had been resumed after being temporarily suspended in October 2010, when the European court of human rights ruled that a surge in sectarian violence and suicide bombings had made Baghdad and the surrounding area too dangerous.⁴² An earlier article from June 2010 indicates that a solicitor for a deported failed asylum-seeker who claimed his Ba'ath Party membership made him vulnerable to attack, had said that "[t]he high profile of someone returning from the West could make him an easy target."⁴³

The US Department of State 2010 report on human rights practices in Iraq indicates that the UNHCR reported that 61% of refugees surveyed who had returned to Baghdad in the previous four years had "regretted their return because of terrorism and insecurity". Of those

³⁹ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Iraq*, April, Introduction – Attachment 25

⁴⁰ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2011, *UNHCR views on security and returnees*, 3 February – Attachment 26

⁴¹ Amnesty International 2010, *European states must stop forced returns to Iraq*, 10 November, EUR 01/028/2010 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR01/028/2010/en/6044e775-b35e-4572-adfc-7a1835fbbac4/eur010282010en.pdf> - Accessed 6 July 2011 – Attachment 27

⁴² Bowcott, O. 2011, 'Deportation flights to Iraq resume despite UN warning', *Guardian (Unlimited) (UK)*, 9 March – Attachment 28

⁴³ Morris, N. 2010, 'Anger as asylum seekers forcibly returned to Iraq', *The Independent*, 9 June <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/anger-as-asylum-seekers-forcibly-returned-to-iraq-1995018.html> - Accessed 6 July 2011 – Attachment 29

returning, 77% of refugees “did not return to their original residences because of insecurity or a fear of being targeted.”⁴⁴

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported in April 2010 that there were “limited reports of targeting of returnees, mostly in urban areas where families return individually.”⁴⁵ IOM also informed a Danish Immigration Service fact-finding mission in 2010 that it “had received ‘limited and anecdotal reports’ of returnees being targeted”. It “did not have any information on why such targeting had occurred or who the perpetrators were.” An international NGO in Amman told the Danish Immigration Service that it was hard to verify if returnees were at risk of being especially targeted, but it had “heard of returnees from Europe and Canada being considered well-off and therefore perhaps prone to attacks from criminal gangs. However, there are no confirmed reports of this being the case.”⁴⁶ In April 2009, UNHCR reported that “returns of Sunnis to Shi’ite-dominated areas and Shi’ites to Sunni-dominated areas are very limited and there have been reports of targeted attacks on returnees belonging to the opposite sect.”⁴⁷

UNHCR also refers to groups within Iraq who have been targeted in part for their perceived support for ‘Western’ or ‘infidel’ ideas in general. In April 2009, UNHCR indicated that since 2003, professionals such as academics, doctors and other medical personnel, judges and lawyers, and athletes had “been a prime target for various extremist groups.” The motives for these attacks were multilayered, including “their (perceived) support for the Iraqi Government, the US military intervention or ‘Western’ or ‘infidel’ ideas in general, or their open criticism of extremist groups or groups in power.” Aid and human rights workers and their families had also “been targeted by extremist groups for their (perceived) collaboration with the MNF-I [Multi-National Forces in Iraq], the Iraqi Government or the ‘West’ and ‘Western ideas’ in general.”⁴⁸

Further information provided by UNHCR in July 2010 indicates that those targeted in Iraq continued to include academics, judges and lawyers, doctors, human rights activists and Iraqis working for non-governmental organisations, the USF-I (United States Forces – Iraq) or foreign companies.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ US Department of State 2011, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2010 – Iraq*, April, Section 2(d) – Attachment 25

⁴⁵ International Organisation for Migration (IOM) 2010, ‘IOM Emergency Needs Assessments: Four Years of Post-Samarra Displacement in Iraq’, 13 April, p. 8
http://www.iomiraq.net/library/IOM_displacement_monitoring_reports/yearly_and_mid_year_reviews/2010/IOM_Displacement_Reports_Four_Years_of_Post-Samarra_Displacement.pdf – Accessed 25 May 2010 – Attachment 30

⁴⁶ Danish Immigration Service 2010, *Security and Human Rights in South/Central Iraq: Report from Danish Immigration Service’s fact-finding mission to Amman, Jordan and Baghdad, Iraq 25 February to 9 March and 6 to 16 April 2010*, September, p. 18 http://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/ronlyres/7F24EA1B-1DC7-48AE-81C4-C097ADAB34FD/0/Rapport_Security_and_HR_in_South_Central_Iraq.pdf - Accessed 22 December 2010 – Attachment 24

⁴⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, p. 92 – Attachment 20

⁴⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, pp. 179-180 & 190 – Attachment 20

⁴⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2010, *Note on the Continued Applicability of the April 2009 UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, July, p. 4 – Attachment 31

Attachments

1. Jakes, L. & Abdul-Zahra, Q. 2011, '15 US soldiers killed in June by Shiite militias seeking to push American military out of Iraq', *Associated Press Newswires*, 1 July. (FACTIVA)
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6. Schmidt, M. & Arango, T. 2011, 'Iraq Assaults Shiite Militants Linked to Iran', *The New York Times*, 2 July. (FACTIVA)
7. al-Salhy, S. 2011, 'Iraq cleric pursues US troop ban in strongholds', *Reuters News*, 30 June. (FACTIVA)
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17. Markey, P. & Mohammed, A. 2011, 'US helicopters fire on attackers in Iraq oil hub – military', *Reuters News*, 16 June. (FACTIVA)
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20. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April.
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