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AUSTRALIA**

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Questions

- 1. Please provide a brief overview of the general security situation in Arbil and Khabat.**
- 2. What groups (eg political, armed, religious) are in control in this area? Are there any reports of such groups pressuring athletes, or young men generally? If so why?**
- 3. Are there any reports of the Asso or Party Teams?**

RESPONSE

Location of Arbil/Irbil/Erbil Governorate and Khabat:

For maps showing the location of Arbil (also spelt Irbil or Erbil) Governorate, the Erbil (City District) Area, and the location of Khabat, see maps provided in Attachment 1 and Attachment 2. According to the latter, Khabat is located within the Erbil City District and approximately 60-70 kilometres from the city centre (United Nations 2004, 'Map of Iraq', January <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/iraq.pdf> – Accessed 24 June 2009 – Attachment 1; 'Northern Iraq Erbil Area' 2002, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq website, August http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iraq/maps/362_A3_Erbil_EHS01.pdf – Accessed 24 June 2009 – Attachment 2).

A September 2007 UNHCR Governorate Assessment Report on Erbil provides the following brief data on the religious, ethnic and tribal composition of the area:

b. Demographic Profile

Religion and ethnicity: The predominant religion in the Governorate of Erbil is the Sunni branch of Islam and the predominant ethnic group is Kurd. There are Christian communities,

including Chaldean, Assyrian and Armenian, living in Erbil, mainly in the Ainkawa sub-District, but also in Shaqlawa, Diyana, Harmota and Koysinjaq. Furthermore, the Governorate is home to Kaka'i (Ahl Al-Haq), located mostly in **Khabat sub-District**, and Yazidis. There are also some ethnic Turkmen living in Erbil City, who belong to the Sunni branch of Islam.

Tribal groups: The main tribal groups in Erbil Governorate include Barzani, Zebari, Harki, Khoshnaw, Gardi, Bradusti, Surchi, Mantik, Shwani, Nanakali, Siani, Zirrari, Dizae, Barzinchi, Naqshabandi, Kawani, Siyan, Bilbas, Chiwae and Khailani (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, 'Governorate Assessment Report Erbil Governorate', UNHCR website, September, p.5 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/471f4c9c0.pdf> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 3).

(For information on the Kaka'i (Ahl Al-Haq), see pp. 83-85 of UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, *UNHCR's Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-seekers*, UNHCR website, August www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/46deb05557.html – Accessed 1 July 2009 – Attachment 4).

1. Please provide a brief overview of the general security situation in Arbil and Khabat.

Current levels of violence in Erbil are described as relatively low and security as stable compared to elsewhere in Iraq in two 2009 reports provided below. Violence in the three Kurdish Governorates of Sulymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk is described as “persistent” and “conditions could deteriorate quickly”, with insurgent groups continuing to operate. An escalation in violence occurred in 2007, with several suicide bombings in that year targeting government bodies. Suicide bombings were also reported for 2003-2005.

The U.S Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website provides the following details on security in Northern Iraq in its travel warning dated 3 July 2009:

Northern Iraq

The security situation in Sulymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk Governorates in northern Iraq has been relatively more stable than the rest of Iraq in recent years, but violence persists and conditions could deteriorate quickly. Even though there have been fewer terrorist attacks and lower levels of insurgent violence in Sulymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk than in other parts of Iraq, the security situation throughout the country remains fluid. Violence associated with the status of Kirkuk is likely to continue, at least within Kirkuk. Insurgent groups continue to operate across the north. In 2008, multiple incidents occurred in Sulymaniya, Erbil, and Dohuk involving IEDs, rocket and mortar fire, vehicle bombs, and shootings, though none resulted in U.S. casualties. While many parts of northern Iraq have become more stable, Mosul continues to experience intense violence and instability ('Travel Warning: Iraq' 2009, U.S Department of State: Bureau of Consular Affairs website, 3 July http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_921.html – Accessed 3 July 2009 – Attachment 27).

A 22 April 2009 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) included the following on security in the Erbil area, based on a security survey conducted in October 2008:

Erbil: (Average daily attacks: 12/1/07-2/22/08 = 0.02; 2/23/08-5/31/08= 0.01) As part of the semiautonomous KRG, Erbil has not experienced the violence that affected other regions in Iraq. From February 23, 2008, to May 31, 2008, only one attack was reported against ISF [Iraqi Security Forces], Coalition forces, or civilians. In May 2007, all KRG provinces

achieved Regional Iraqi Control, and violence remains low. Erbil has not experienced an increase in attacks or terrorism resulting from recent ISF and Coalition operations that have pushed al-Qa'ida in Iraq northward (Cordesman, A. H. & Mausner, A. 2009, 'How Soon Is Safe? Iraqi Force Development and "Conditions-Based" Us Withdrawals', Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) website, 20 April <http://www.csis.org/publication/how-soon-safe> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 5).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in an April 2009 Emergency Needs Assessments report on Internally Displaced Persons across Iraq, stated that: "Security remains stable in Erbil governorate" (IOM 2009, 'Iraq Assessments & Statistics Report: Emergency Needs Assessments', IOM-Iraq website, 1 April, p.10 <http://www.iom-iraq.net/Library/IOM%20Iraq%20Displacement%20Assessments%20and%20Statistics%20%20Apr%202009.pdf> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 6).

On 18 September 2008, Masrur Barzani, director of the KRG's Intelligence Agency, the Parastin, stated the following on security and security procedures in the region of Kurdistan:

Terrorist activities still threaten Kurdistan, "but much less than it does other places in Iraq," said Barzani. "It would have become a real danger if not for our fights against terror in and outside the region. Recently we could cancel a suicide attack ongoing in Erbil." He named the most threatening groups first as al-Qaeda followed by Ansarul Islam and Ansarul Sunna as well as many others.

Barzani confirmed that they are fighting gunmen groups outside the region. "We took part in fighting terrorist operations in Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Mosul. We perform these operations in coordination with Baghdad."

"Within the legal aspect we care for the region's security? Because of the security vacancy in the rest of Iraq's areas, we cooperate and work for the stability and security of all Iraq, and [we] are ready to offer any help if requested to do so," he stated.

...Barzani said that security procedures for Iraqi citizens who enter Kurdistan are strictly to protect security. He denied news claiming that the region asks for visas, bails, and residency licenses on those seeking entrance in order to prevent them from entering Kurdistan Region.

"We are not an independent country to ask for a visa. These [Kurdistan] cities are Iraqi like any other Iraqi city. Nobody has been asked for a visa; these are untrue rumors aimed at defaming the region," he stated. There are security procedures for anyone, either Arab or Kurd, who enters the region, he explained. "The procedures are applied because of the bad security situation in the rest of Iraq and because we want to protect the people in the region. In addition to Kurds, thousands of Iraqi families came because of the stable security situation. We don't want...to open doors in front of terrorists, car bombs, and suicide attackers."

The nature of the procedures is simple, Barzani said. "Anybody who wants to reside in the region has to register his address with the nearest security (Asayish) station, and then he will be allowed a residency license to stay in the region. There is another not-firm procedure that for any person seeking entrance who knows someone in the region, it is better to bail him. We are not strict on this condition, which is exaggerated by the media."

There might be individual treatments by security elements in tightening the procedures. The treatments remain personal and we work to remove them. We hope to soon lift all the procedures when the security situations improve in the rest of Iraq," Barzani added.

“It is important for all people to know that the purpose of these procedures is to protect their security and the security of the region, not to place obstacles in front of those who enter.”
(‘Chief of Intelligence denies CIA/Mossad operations in the Region’ 2008, The Kurdish Globe, 18 September

<http://www.kurdishglobe.net/displayArticle.jsp?id=CBFE147A65F227A8F234EAEBCE07ACB9> – Accessed 3 July 2009 – Attachment 28).

In an August 2008 report on the killing of two civilians on the main road between Arbil and Dabieka district by US forces, the *Aswat al-Iraq* website reported the following on the security in Erbil:

Since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, only isolated, sporadic violence has hit Arbil, unlike many other areas of Iraq. Parallel bomb attacks against the Eid celebrations arranged by the PUK and KDP killed 109 people on February 1, 2004. Responsibility was claimed by the Islamist group Ansar al-Sunnah, and stated to be in solidarity with the Kurdish Islamist faction Ansar al-Islam. Another bombing on May 4, 2005 killed 60 civilians. Despite these bombings the population generally feels safe (‘U.S. force kills 2 civilians near Arbil’ 2008, *Aswat al-Iraq*, 18 August <http://en.aswataliraq.info/?p=89895> - Accessed 3 July 2009 – Attachment 29).

An overview of the security situation in Erbil Governorate provided in a September 2007 UNHCR Governorate Assessment Report, states that: “the security situation remains tenuous and unpredictable in Erbil”. This assessment followed an increase in security incidents in 2007, including two high-profile attacks targeting Kurdish Government and Party” institutions:

C. Security and Public Order

1. General Security Situation

Although Erbil Governorate has escaped the escalation in roadside bombs and sectarian violence that are widespread in many parts of the Central and Southern regions, there have been an increasing number of incidents during 2007 and the political offices of KDP and PUK, Multinational Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) installations together with the area of Ainkawa, where foreign contractors and US diplomatic staff live, have been identified as potential targets of possible vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED) and suicide bomber attacks in Erbil by local authorities and the MNF-I. Consequently, the security situation remains tenuous and unpredictable in Erbil.¹² **During 2007, two high-profile attacks targeting Kurdish Government and Party institutions have taken place, including a truck bombing which targeted the Interior Ministry and the Security Headquarter, killing 15 people and wounding more than 80 on 9 May 2007 and a bombing targeting local administration offices and a KDP Office in Makhmour, a predominantly Kurdish town 50 km southwest of Erbil, in which at least 50 people were killed.**¹³ **Increasing threats from Al-Qa’eda and Ansar Al-Islam have prompted the authorities in Erbil to implement increased security measures,** including by constructing a tunnel and security barricades segregating Erbil from Kirkuk and Ninewa Governorates and the deployment of 1,000 Peshmerga soldiers to the border with Iran in an attempt to stop possible infiltrations.

The reported presence of some 5,000 PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and 1,000 PJAK (Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan) fighters in Northern Iraq, including in the Governorate of Erbil, has prompted Turkey and Iran to mass troops along the border with Iraq, threatening military retaliation. In August and September 2007, Iranian troops shelled villages in the Governorate of Erbil, causing damages to livestock, orchards and villages.¹⁵ By early September, UNHCR was aware of 850 families displaced in the areas of Haji Omaran, Choman and Sidakan, in the

north-east of Erbil Governorate. Areas of Erbil Governorate have also in the past been subjected to Turkish artillery shells. For example, in June 2007, several villages in the Sidikan area, where the borders of Turkey, Iran and Iraq converge, were hit, reportedly causing considerable damage.

Civil unrest due to public impatience in the shortfalls in public service provisions and the administration's ability to deliver improvements has occurred in the Governorate, including protests over late public sector payments and calls for pay increases.

Criminality is an ongoing problem in the Governorate of Erbil with petty crime, smuggling and corruption.¹⁸ High unemployment, particularly in rural areas has exacerbated the problem of smuggling, as the only source of income for many villagers living close to the Iranian border. Alcohol, cigarettes, food items, medical supplies and machine spare parts are regularly smuggled into Iran, whilst fuel and drugs are smuggled into Iraq.

Consumption of drugs such as opium and heroine is increasing, reportedly in particular among returnees from Iran. Crimes against women, in particular rape and "honour crimes", are common (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, 'Governorate Assessment Report Erbil Governorate', UNHCR website, September, pp.7-8

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/471f4c9c0.pdf> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 3).

A *Reuters* news report on the May 2007 truck bomb attack near the Kurdish government's Interior Ministry in Erbil, referred to the event as "one of the few bomb attacks in the relatively peaceful Kurdish region since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003", and as "a rare event in the autonomous oil-producing Kurdish region":

Residents who were wounded in a bomb attack receive treatment in a hospital in Arbil, about 350 km (220 miles) north of Baghdad, May 9, 2007. A truck bomb killed 12 people and wounded 53 in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil on Wednesday in one of the few bomb attacks in the relatively peaceful Kurdish region since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

...Unlike the almost daily bombings in the rest of the country, Wednesday's bomb attack, which police said was from a truck packed with 800 kg (1,700 lb) of explosives covered with kitchen cleaning products, was a rare event in the autonomous oil-producing Kurdish region.

Kareem Sinjari, minister of internal affairs in Kurdistan, said the blast near the Kurdish government's interior ministry in the capital Arbil killed 14 and wounded 87 ('U.S. VP Cheney in Baghdad, bomb in Arbil kills 14' 2007, AlertNet website, source: *Reuters*, 9 May <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L09372381.htm> – Accessed 24 June 2009 – Attachment 7).

Other news reports on suicide bomb attacks in Erbil were found for 2003-2005:

- In May 2005, a suicide bomber caused an explosion outside a police recruiting site in Erbil killing at least 60 people (Marwan, A. & Murphy, C. 2005, 'Bombing in Kurdish City In Northern Iraq Kills 60', *The Washington Post*, 5 May <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/04/AR2005050400429.html> – Accessed 24 June 2009 – Attachment 8).
- Twin suicide bombings blamed by Kurds on local Islamist militant groups killed approximately 101 people in Erbil in February 2004 ('Irbil bombings toll reaches 101'

2004, *BBC News*, 3 February http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3457065.stm – Accessed 24 June 2009 – Attachment 9).

- In September 2003, a suicide car bomber attacked the US intelligence headquarters in Erbil, killing 3 people and injuring 41 ('Three killed in Irbil suicide bombing' 2003, *The Guardian*, source: *Associated Press*, 10 September <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/sep/10/usa.iraq1> – Accessed 24 June 2009 – Attachment 10).

In May 2007, a report in *The New York Times* referred to Khabat in Erbil as a place of refuge for Kurds fleeing attacks by Sunni Arab militants in Mosul (Nineveh province), 30 miles to the west of Khabat:

The letter tossed into Mustafa Abu Bakr Muhammad's front yard got right to the point.

"You will be killed," it read, for collaborating with the Kurdish militias. Then came the bullet through a window at night.

A cousin had already been gunned down. So Mr. Muhammad and three generations of his family joined tens of thousands of other Kurds who have fled growing ethnic violence by Sunni Arab insurgents here and moved east, to the safety of Iraqi Kurdistan.

"We had our home in Mosul and it was good there, but things are now very bad between Arabs and Kurds," said Mr. Muhammad, 70, standing outside his new, scorpion-infested cinderblock house in the nearby town of Khabat.

...Sanaa Saadan and her husband are known as "Mosulis." They were born and raised there, but they could be the last in their families to lay claim to that title.

Last year, Ms. Saadan and her husband moved with their three sons into the home of her older sister in Khabat, 30 miles to the east. The two said they knew at least seven Kurds who had been murdered in Mosul.

Khabat, just inside Iraqi Kurdistan, has become a place of refuge. Rents have skyrocketed, said the mayor, Rizgar Mustafa Muhammad. At least 1,300 families have moved there from Mosul. More than 120 came in April alone, the most of any month, he said. Soon, he said, tent camps will be needed.

"We were unhappy to leave Mosul," said Ms. Saadan, 28, as she watched over her youngest son in his crib. Her husband, a wedding singer, finds work scarce in Iraqi Kurdistan. Their two oldest sons had a tough time adjusting to school lessons in Kurdish rather than Arabic.

The highway from Khabat to Mosul runs past Ms. Saadan's home and through a checkpoint a mile to the west, on a concrete bridge spanning a river that marks the border with Nineveh. Kurdish soldiers check the identification cards of people driving in. They say Kurds arrive regularly in cars packed with furniture and household goods.

"If we're ordered to go protect residents of Mosul, we'll do it," said the commander, Maj. Ghafour Ahmed Hussein. He stared out at the green hills to the west. Beyond lay the city and its newly emptied houses (Wong, E. 2007, 'Sectarian Strife Grips North Iraq As Sunni Arabs Drive Out Kurds', *The New York Times*, 30 May

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A06E0D91430F933A05756C0A9619C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=3> – Accessed 30 June 2009 – Attachment 11).

2. What groups (e.g. political, armed, religious) are in control in this area? Are there any reports of such groups pressuring athletes, or young men generally? If so why?

Reports are provided below on the main political, armed, and religious groups that have some control, influence, or presence in the Erbil and/or Kurdistan area. No reports were found of political, armed or religious groups in the Erbil area pressuring athletes, or young men generally.

Main political parties in Erbil:

The two principal political parties in the northern Kurdistan region of Iraq and within the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The KDP is stronger in the northern areas bordering Turkey, including Erbil (Katzman, K. 2009, 'The Kurds in Post-Saddam Iraq', Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) website, 6 April, p.1 <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22079.pdf> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 30; UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, 'Governorate Assessment Report Erbil Governorate', UNHCR website, September, p.5 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/471f4c9c0.pdf> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 3; Gunter, M. 2007, 'Intra-Kurdish Disputes in Northern Iraq', *Terrorism Monitor Volume*, vol. 5, iss. 9, The Jamestown Foundation website, 10 May http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4148 – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 31).

The September 2007 UNHCR Governorate Assessment Report for Erbil provides the following on political parties active in the Erbil area, with the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] said to be the predominant party:

The Governorate of Erbil is part of the area administered by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The KRG has constitutionally recognized authority over the Governorates of Erbil, Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah, as well as de facto authority over parts of Diyala, Ninewa and Kirkuk Governorates. On 29 May 2005, Massoud Barzani, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), was appointed President of the KRG.

The predominant political party in the Governorate of Erbil is the KDP. Other political parties active in Erbil include the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), the Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party, the Toilers' Party, the Conservative Party, the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), the Kurdistan Islamic Movement and the Kurdistan Communist Party. In addition, minority groups such as the Turkmen and the Christians also have their own political parties.

Until January 2006, the Governorates of Dahuk and Erbil were governed by a KDP-led administration, while the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah was led by a PUK-led administration. An agreement between the PUK and the KDP on the joint administration of the KRG was reached on 21 January 2006 and the joint Kurdistan Regional Government assumed office on 7 May 2006.¹¹ The governing body of the Governorate of Erbil is the Governorate Council, elected on 30 January 2005. Its 41 seats are divided among four parties: the Kurdish Democratic List (alliance between the KDP and the Kurdistan Communist Party), holding 23 seats; the PUK with 16 seats; the KIU with one seat, and the Islamic Group (Komali Islami)

with one seat. The elections also led to the appointment of Governor Nawzad Hadi and Deputy Governor Tahir Abdullah (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, ‘Governorate Assessment Report Erbil Governorate’, UNHCR website, September, pp.6-7 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/471f4c9c0.pdf> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 3).

Voting results from the 2005 elections for the Governorate Council of Erbil is provided in a 2008 report by The Washington Institute:

Arbil

Governor: Ali Nikzad, a member of KDP

PARTY	VOTES	SEATS
Democratic Voice of Kurdistan List (KDP)	347,772	23
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	244343	16
Kurdistan Islamic Union	22523	1
Islamic Group of Kurdistan	18781	1
TOTAL VALID BALLOT	647,994	41
INVALID BALLOT	16,622	

(Source: The Washington Institute 2008, ‘Provincial Politics in Iraq: Fragmentation or new Awakening – Annexes’, April, p.15

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/newsletterImages/PF81Annexes.pdf> – Accessed 18 June 2009 – Attachment 12).

Information on the Kurdish government’s armed security forces and police in Erbil is summarised in the September 2007 UNHCR Governorate Assessment Report for Erbil:

2. Security Forces

In the Governorate of Erbil, the provision of security, including law enforcement and basic police functions, remains the responsibility of the local police, local security and intelligence agencies and the armed forces, the Peshmerga.

Police: The local police force in Erbil Governorate is institutionalized and reports to the KRG Erbil Ministry of Interior (MoI). It has a General Directorate in Erbil City and departments in all other districts. Most sub-districts also have a police office.

Peshmerga: Security in the Governorates of Erbil and Dahuk is under the authority of the Peshmerga.²⁵ The KDP continues to run its own Ministry of Peshmerga, which is to be merged with the respective PUK-run Ministry of Peshmerga under the Unification Agreement and will be headed by the KDP. Under the unification agreement reached by the KDP and the PUK on 21 January 2006, a Supreme Commission will be established to institutionalize the police and security agencies of the Kurdistan Region. The agreement also states that “(T)he united agencies are to be removed from political considerations.” Furthermore, the agreement foresees the introduction of a special programme for university graduates with the aim of recruiting new candidates to the unified security services.

...**Asayish and Parastin:** The Asayish is the KDP’s internal security agency. By law it has jurisdiction over economic and political crimes such as smuggling, espionage, acts of sabotage and terrorism.³¹ The Parastin is the party’s domestic intelligence agency. These local security and intelligence services and the Peshmerga monitor villages, towns and regional checkpoints. In addition, these agencies run detention centres in the Governorate.

Multi-National Forces in Iraq: Since June 2003, the MNF-I had a limited presence in Erbil. South Korea sent 3,600 troops in September 2004 to help with peacekeeping and reconstruction tasks at the request of the US Government. Since April 2007, their presence was reduced to 1,200 troops. The South Korean Army, also known as Zaytun Division, includes mainly engineers and medics. They have paved roads, constructed schools and health centres and repaired water supply facilities. The unit also treated up to 25,000 local residents in its hospital and offered industrial and systematic training to residents as well as government employees. The South Korean Government has not yet taken a final decision to withdraw its troops from Iraq later in 2007 as announced earlier.³² Security responsibility in the Kurdistan Region was formally transferred from the MNF-I to the KRG on 30 May 2007 (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2007, 'Governorate Assessment Report Erbil Governorate', UNHCR website, September, pp.6-7 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/471f4c9c0.pdf> – Accessed 17 June 2009 – Attachment 3).

For further information on the Kurdish Regional Government's security forces, the Peshmerga, police and *Asayish*, see the reports collated in the recent UK Home Office report on the KRG area (UK Home Office 2009, *Kurdistan Regional Government Area of Iraq*, 21 May, 'Security Forces', paras 9.01-9.23, pp. 35-40 <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/iraq-kurdistan-220509.doc> – Accessed 22 June 2009 – Attachment 13).

In a recent (June 2009) working paper for The Saban Center titled, *Stability in Iraqi Kurdistan: Reality or Mirage*, Lydia Khalil points out that the Peshmerga forces of the KDP and PUK remain separate to date (p.22). She has also emphasised the extent of control over security maintained by the KRG administration:

As it stands there is only a token presence in the KRG leadership of independents, minorities, and Islamist parties. As a result, the two organizations [KDP and PUK] monopolize the political space and agenda, as well as its resources. The KDP and PUK have become less like the political parties they espouse to be and more like patronage and parochial networks, doling out favors and serving as mechanisms for the Barzani and Talabani families and associates to get ahead.

...Kurdistan: A Police State?

In a country beset by constant security concerns, Kurdistan is a haven from violence. **Despite rare terrorist incidents, the administration's grip on security is impressive. However, this level of security has come at a price.** While it is a price that most are willing to pay, citizens living in the KRG are finding themselves increasingly constricted as security control continues to tighten.

The authority of the peshmerga and asayeesh (Kurdistan's domestic security and intelligence service that is split between the KDP and PUK) is largely unquestioned. As a result, they have often acted with impunity. Anecdotes regarding the abuse of their free reign and immunity from reprimand abound due to the complete lack of oversight of either party's asayeesh forces.

Human Rights Watch reported in 2007 that the Kurdish security services use prolonged detention in solitary confinement, hold prisoners in unhygienic facilities, and employ coercive methods such as beatings and stress positions (Khalil, L. 2009, *Stability in Iraqi Kurdistan: Reality or Mirage?*, Working Paper no.2, The Brookings Institution website, June, pp.23-24,

26 http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2009/06_kurdistan_khalil.aspx – Accessed 30 June 2009 – Attachment 14).

For further background discussion on the extent of control maintained by the KDP and PUK in Kurdistan Regional Government Area, see Andrew Lee Butter's piece for *Time* magazine in March 2006 (Butter, A. L. 2006, 'Trouble in Kurdistan', *Time*, 17 March <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1174457,00.html> – Accessed 1 July 2009 – Attachment 15).

Militant Islamist groups in Erbil:

Historical background on militant Islamist groups and political parties is provided by the academic David Romano in his September 2007 report *An Outline of Kurdish Islamist Groups in Iraq*. Although this report contains mainly historical analysis of these groups, it does contain the following information which may be relevant:

The religious pluralism of Iraqi Kurdistan, with its population of Christians, Jews (until the 1950s), Sunnis, Shiites, Yezidis, Ahl-al-Haq, Sarlus, Shakak and a plethora of Sufi orders, would seem to discourage the creation of Islamist groups in the area. Such religious pluralism led many Kurds and scholars to declare Iraqi Kurdistan infertile ground for conservative political Islam [14]. Sami Shourush, for instance, argues that "the Islamic fundamentalist movement among Iraq's Kurds is not very influential as a political movement..." [15]. Many Kurdish nationalists are also extremely critical of Islamic politics, feeling that opponents of the Kurds used Islam to oppress them and stymie their national ambitions [16]. Indeed, Islamist politics never attracted nearly as much support in Iraqi Kurdistan as Kurdish nationalism did. In the contest that emerged between the Iraqi state and Kurdish nationalists, the state also frequently turned to cooperative imams to have Kurdish nationalist rebels branded as heretics and tools of the enemies of the Islamic world [17].

Nonetheless, a large number of Islamist groups eventually emerged in Iraqi Kurdistan, particularly since the 1980s. Four different factors may provide some explanation for their emergence: 1) Saddam's attempt to undercut Kurdish nationalists by supporting and using nascent Islamists; 2) Neighboring Iran's influence in Iraqi Kurdistan, particularly since it became autonomous in 1991; 3) The widespread despair in Kurdistan in the wake of the chemical attacks on towns such as Halabja and ethnic cleansing pursued by Baghdad, both of which Kurdish nationalist and leftist parties proved powerless to stop; and 4) Links with a generalized, global Islamist movement, particularly after the retreat of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. One or several of these factors play a role in the formation of each of the Kurdish Islamist groups discussed below. **One must remember that none of the Kurdish Islamist groups ever developed a huge following, however.** This includes the two largest groups, the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan and the Islamic Unity Movement of Kurdistan, both of which ran in various Iraqi Kurdistan elections but placed well behind the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), despite being described as the main vehicle for protest votes against these two ruling nationalist parties. (p.7)

...The Islamic Group

Many of the sources interviewed described Ali Bapir and his Islamic Group as being just as radical as the most Wahabi and violent of his peers, but more practical, patient and cautious [34]. The Islamic Group describes itself as a non-violent Salafi movement, and strongly protested when Ali Bapir was arrested by U.S. Forces on July 10, 2003. Many prominent Kurdish personalities and groups, including the PUK, signed an Islamic Group statement demanding Ali Bapir's release [35]. U.S. officers, speaking off the record, insisted that Ali

Bapir cooperated closely with and assisted Ansar al-Islam [36]. The Islamic Group is a legal, albeit closely watched, party in the PUK-run part of Iraqi Kurdistan. In the KDP region, the party is not legal but it is tolerated and allowed to meet inside the small office granted to the IMK [Islamic Movement of Kurdistan] [37]. After its founding in June 2001 (see graph), the Islamic Group controlled the market town of Khormal and a few other villages adjacent to Ansar al-Islam controlled territory. Ansar al-Islam militants had to pass through Islamic Group territory in order to travel deeper into Iraqi Kurdistan, which they did on many occasions. The two group's armed militias also clashed at times, however, making it difficult to evaluate the true nature of their relations. (pp.10-11)

...Kurdistan Islamic Union

...The KIU insists that it pursues a moderate platform of peacefully working from within the Kurdish political system. The party receives support from the Gulf countries – most of the local workers and officials of aid organizations active in Iraqi Kurdistan, such as World Islamic Relief, are from the KIU, and the Islamic relief organizations provide the KIU with funds [53]. In the Spring of 2004, the KIU already owned ten local radio stations in Kurdistan (Erbil, Dohuk, Halabja, Kifri, Soran, Suli, Rania, Kalar, Debundihan, Kirkuk) and six television stations (Dohuk, Suli, Rania, Halabja, Erbil, Kirkuk and Garmany) [54]. Party leaders state that:

We have a reformist message in every aspect, starting with politics. We believe in multi-party politics. We believe in the right of parties to alternate in power. We reject dictatorships, repression, monopoly of authority and torture. Instead of these we believe in democracy, toleration and alternation of different parties. It is because of the Ba'ath party that we are against repression and torture. This still exists now of the Ba'ath party that we are against repression and torture. This still exists now but not to the same extent. There is still social injustice, meaning preference. No, it is not dictatorial but it gives too much preference (money, jobs, etc.) to party members [55].

The KIU in general stresses its moderate nature, and the fact that it has no militia or armed forces. On December 6, 2005 (shortly before the December 2005 Iraqi elections), the KIU offices in Dohuk (one of the three governorates that make up the KRG region) were attacked by a local in Dohuk, as KDP police looked on. Four KIU members were killed, including a high ranking official of the party [56]. The KIU had recently withdrawn from the Kurdistan Alliance, which combined all the major Kurdish political parties into one electoral list for the December 2005 legislative. Particularly after their withdrawal from the list, KIU officials complained of a general elections of harassment and intimidation by the ruling Kurdish parties. Nonetheless, the KIU took 7.1% of the vote in Dohuk Governorate, 3.6% in Erbil, and 10.8% in Suleimaniya [57]. This gave the group four provincial seats and one seat in the Iraqi National Assembly. (pp.13-14)

...According to many local Iraqi observers I spoke to, organizations such as Ali Bapir's Islamic Group and the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan also possessed a strong tendency towards jihadist extremism and violence, but presented a somewhat more moderate image for practical reasons. Other commentators went still further, stating that even the Islamic Party of Iraq and the Kurdistan Islamic Union would both display their 'true extremist nature' and resort to violence as soon as they felt strong enough to do so. (p.15)

Even if one rejects the contention that non-violent Islamist groups such as the Islamic Party of Iraq and the Kurdistan Islamic Union plan to change their 'moderate tune' once they grow in power, the history and linkages between Islamist groups outlined above presents us with some troubling questions. According to both KDP Interior Minister Karim Sinjari and PUK Chief of Security Dana Majid, the moderate Islamist groups act like a 'kindergarten,' introducing people to the Islamist perspective and allowing them to make the first necessary steps towards

becoming committed jihadists [58]. Minister Sinjari adds that “Ninety-five per cent of Ansar al-Islam members had been part of the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan, the Islamic Group, or the Kurdistan Islamic Union. The way to stop the radicals involves devising strategies to stop the ‘kindergartens’” [59]. How can we stop the ‘kindergartens,’ however, if they play by the democratic rules of the game? Banning avowedly peaceful and moderate Islamist organizations does not appear to be an option for societies that value freedom and democracy. Such tactics might just as easily lead to the very extremist violence they seek to prevent. (p.15) (Romano, D. 2007, ‘An Outline of Kurdish Islamist Groups in Iraq’ The Jamestown Foundation website, September http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/Jamestown-RomanoIraqiKurds_01.pdf – Accessed 1 July 2009 – Attachment 16).

An October 2007 *Voice of America* news article stated that “The most popular alternative to the ruling parties [KDP and PUK] is the Islamic Union of Kurdistan. It has no militia, only a local television station to present its vision of a moderate, Islamic democracy” (Padden, B. 2007, ‘Islamic Party in Kurdish Iraq Growing in Popularity, Voice of America News website, 19 October <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-10/2007-10-19-voa48.cfm?CFID=248190638&CFTOKEN=68821677&jsessionid=de30773e432476e2d6404068a74194949737> – Accessed 30 June 2009 – Attachment 21).

A July 2006 article from *The Christian Science Monitor* indicated that “Kurdish Islamic parties have courted controversy by calling for a greater role for sharia or Islamic law...the demands for Islamic law reflect the growing popularity of Islamic parties like the KIU and its smaller radical rival Komala” (Brandon, J. 2006, ‘Pro-US Kurds eye nascent Islamic parties’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 6 July <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0706/p07s02-woiq.html> – Accessed 1 July 2009 – Attachment 17).

Recently in a May 2009 interview with the Rudaw news agency, David Romano provided the following opinion on the Islamic parties contesting the upcoming July elections:

Rudaw: the Kurdish Islamic party, i.e. Islamic union and Kurdistan Islamic Komal, and along with two other Kurdish party who are close to Iran, is participating in the next election on one list. The Islamic party didn’t want to the Model of RAFA party in Turkey and the model of Algeria happens in Kurdistan and was afraid that the west will be against them. How do you see the Islamic parties’ chances in Kurdistan region, if they respect west’s view?

David Romano: If the KDP and PUK maintain an electoral alliance, even in Kurdistan parliamentary elections, this may have a tendency to strengthen the Islamic parties, who will claim that they represent the only real possibility for change or reform. However, Nawshirwan Mustafa’s List of Change may help this situation, as another significant option for voters. Obviously, the KDP and PUK need to work hard to improve their image amongst the voters, and show that they are committed to fighting corruption and delivering services to the people. This is what elections are for – to make political leaders perform in the service of their people.

I myself would be concerned if the Islamic Kurdish parties close to Iran do well in the elections. Iran does not have Iraqi Kurdistan’s interests at heart, of course. I also do not believe in paying poor women to wear the hijab, or condoning female circumcision, and these parties do these things. I am a liberal from the West, of course, so naturally I do not have the same values as Komal or Ali Bapir. The only thing I can probably agree with them about is that democracy means they be allowed to compete in elections for political power.

Rudaw: Duo to your knowledge and expiates about Kurdistan Islamic union, if in the future they take control of KRG, how they will administrate the region and what will their policy will be?

David Romano: I am pessimistic. When I met leaders of the KIU, they were very nice people of course, and I like them fine on an individual level. Their politics are not liberal, however, and I simply do not believe that mixing religion with politics is ever a good thing. Religion is a deeply personal, important part of people's identity, while politics is often a dirty game of competition, power, and Machiavellian strategies. Why would we want to mix these two, especially when not everyone is of the same religion? Many people of the same religion do not even practice or see their religion in the same way ('PDK and PUK alliance may strengthen the Islamic parties', 2009, Wadinet website, source: Rudaw.net, 20 May <http://www.wadinet.de/news/iraq/newsarticle.php?id=5362> – Accessed 1 July 2009 – Attachment 18).

Ansar al-Islam:

There are reports that Islamic armed groups are active in Erbil, though the extent of their influence in the Erbil governorate is not made specific. In May 2007 the Kurdish Ansar al-Islam linked group the Kurdistan Brigade of al-Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack in Erbil which killed approximately 19 people; and on 13 May 2007 a suicide car bomb targeted the headquarters on the KDP in Makhmour city in Kurdistan. In the aftermath of the February 2004 suicide bombings in Erbil, Iraqi security agents reported that "as many as 200 members of Ansar al-Islam have congregated in Erbil, where they receive support from guerrilla cells in other parts of the country". More recent reports also exist on religious minorities being threatened by unidentified Muslim groups in Erbil ('Ansar al-Islam terrorist group lead by Mullah Krekar linked to bomb attack in Kurdish city' 2007, Ekurd.net website, 15 November <http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2007/11/islamterror190.htm> - Accessed 3 July 2009 – Attachment 32; 'Kurdish Arm Of Al-Qaeda Claim Erbil Blast' 2007, Kurdish Aspect website, 10 May <http://www.kurdishaspect.com/doc051009AKI.html> – Accessed 3 July 2009 – Attachment 33; Hiel, B. 2007, 'Religious sect fears extinction in Iraq, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, 4 November http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/s_536229.html – Accessed 25 June 2009 – Attachment 19; Gettleman, J. & Wong, E. 2004, 'The Struggle for Iraq: Atrocity's Aftermath; Grief and Anger Overwhelm The Kurds of Northern Iraq', *The New York Times*, 3 February <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/03/world/struggle-for-iraq-atrocity-s-aftermath-grief-anger-overwhelm-kurds-northern-iraq.html> – Accessed 25 June 2009 – Attachment 20).

An overview of Ansar al-Islam, the areas where it operates, and those targeted by the group are provided in a November 2008 report by Kathryn Gregory for the Council of Foreign Relations:

Ansar al-Islam operates primarily in northern and central Iraq and claims the second largest number of Sunni jihadist attacks in Iraq after Al-Qaeda in Iraq. The group targets coalition forces, Iraqi government and security forces, and Iraqi political parties. Ansar al-Islam made headlines in September 2001 when it ambushed and killed forty-two PUK fighters. Ansar al-Islam continued to organize small terrorist threats (CSMonitor) in the war era of Iraq, but their major terrorist attack came three years after the occupation in Iraq started. On February 1, 2004, during Eid al-Adha, the Muslim festival that celebrates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael to Allah, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan were celebrating the holiday in Erbil, Iraq, when suicide bombers entered the

PUK and KDP headquarters and killed 109 (MEIB) people, including KDP Deputy Prime Minister Sami Abdul Rahman.

In January 2005 the group assassinated Sheik Mahmoud Finjan (Mahmoud al-Madaeeni), an assistant to senior Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, in the Salman Park area of Baghdad as he was returning from evening prayers.

The transformation into Ansar al-Sunnah

On September 1, 2001, al-Tawhid, Hamas and Soran Forces announced the formation of Jund al-Islam. The group declared jihad (holy war) against secular and other political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan deemed to have deviated from the “true path of Islam,” according to a report by the U.S.-based rights monitor Human Rights Watch.

Jund al-Islam, led by al-Shafii, seized control of several villages near Halabja, Iraq in September 2001 and established a local administration governed according to Sharia law. Mullah Krekar formed Ansar al-Islam as a merger of Jund al-Islam and a splinter group of the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan. In the area then under its control, Ansar barred women from education and employment, confiscated musical instruments, and banned music both in public and private, banned televisions, and threatened the use of Islamic punishments of amputation, flogging, and stoning to death for offenses such as theft, the consumption of alcohol, and adultery, said Human Rights Watch. The off-shoot group has continued to be a threat, but acknowledged in September of 2007 that it was formally derived from Ansar al-Islam, and changed its name back to the original. “Given our responsibility in maintaining the principles of Islam, the unity of Muslims, and to deal with existential issues that shall determine our survival, we have decided to continue our work under the name of the Ansar al-Islam organization,” read a statement issued by Ansar al-Sunnah’s leader al-Shafii in 2007.

Where does Ansar al-Islam operate?

Originally based in an enclave wedged between Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran, it has been active throughout northern Iraq. While Ansar is not known to have operated outside Iraq, it was suspected of involvement in a plot to attack a NATO summit (BBC) meeting in Istanbul in June 2004, though the attack was unsuccessful. Police in Turkey seized guns, explosives, bomb-making booklets and over 4,000 compact discs with training advice from Osama bin Laden. Some analysts say Ansar has received logistical support from Iran and Syria and recruited members in Italy. Some analysts say Iran assists Ansar, harboring its militants within its borders and providing a route for foreign fighters to enter Iraq and join Ansar’s ranks. “It’s very clear that there are fighters streaming in over the Iranian border tied to this group,” says Jonathan Schanzer, an expert on militant Islam at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Iran has denied reports of links to the group.

Targeting ‘Collaborators’

The victims of targeted assassination by Ansar have included government officials, politicians, judges, journalists, humanitarian aid workers, doctors, professors, and individuals thought to be collaborating with foreign forces in Iraq, including translators, cleaners, and others who perform civilian jobs for the U.S.-led Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I). Insurgents have directed suicide and car bomb attacks at Shi’a mosques, Christian churches, and Kurdish political parties with the purpose of killing civilians.

These attacks started to take place in the context of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the ensuing military occupation. During the occupation, tens of thousands of civilians died, which caused the emergence of many more insurgency groups and the subsequent attacks on public officials. Head members among Ansar, as well as other groups such as al-Qaeda and the

Armed Islamic Group, justify their actions by saying that the U.S. illegally invaded Iraq and killed thousands of Iraqi civilians since March 2003.

Future of Ansar al-Islam in Iraq

In May 2007, an agreement was announced between some members of Ansar al-Sunnah, Ansar al-Islam, the Islamic Army in Iraq and the Army of the Mujahideen to form a united group called “The Jihad and Reformation Front.” The group is trying to adopt a moderate approach to the Islamic doctrine and urges Islamic militants to avoid side battles at the expense of the main battle against the American occupation.

Kara Driggers, who monitors jihad web sites for the Terrorism Research Center, said that the groups who formed the Jihad and Reformation Front did so in response to the cruel practices of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and are challenging the authority of al-Qaeda.

“The important difference between them and al-Qaeda is that they are nationalist groups,” Driggers says. “They are fighting for Iraq, and solely for Iraq.” (Gregory, K. 2008. ‘Ansar al-Islam (Iraq, Islamists/Kurdish Separatists), Ansar al-Sunnah’, The Council on Foreign relations website, 5 November <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9237> – Accessed 3 July 2009 – Attachment 34).

In January 2007, five Iranians were seized in Erbil by United States forces, which according to *The Washington Post* report were “members of the elite Quds Force, an arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps charged with Iran’s clandestine foreign operations. The Quds Force has ties to the Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant groups as well as to Iraqi political movements that the United States has supported” (Wright, R. 2007, ‘U.S. Decides Against Freeing 5 Iranian Agents’, *The Washington Post*, 14 April <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/13/AR2007041301282.html> – Accessed 25 June 2009 – Attachment 22).

Reports of groups pressuring athletes, or young men generally:

No reports were found on political, armed, or religious groups pressuring athletes, or young men generally, in the Erbil governorate. There are reports that since 2003, professional athletes have been targeted by various extremist groups in other parts of Iraq. The April 2009 *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers* provides the following information on the recent targeting of athletes:

Since 2003, and as described by UNHCR in previous position papers, professionals such as academics, judges and lawyers, doctors and other medical personnel as well as athletes have been a prime target for various extremist groups. Motives for these attacks are multilayered. Professionals have been targeted for their (perceived) political opinion, their religion or ethnic background, their social status as well as for criminal motives. Many attacks appear to be motivated by extremist groups’ aim to destroy Iraq’s cultural, intellectual and political diversity, frustrate economic recovery and, ultimately, de-legitimize the Iraqi Government by spreading fear and terror.¹⁰⁰⁰ Another reason may be 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 (pp.179-180)

316. As previously documented by UNHCR, Iraqi athletes, coaches and athletic officials have also been targeted since 2003. In 2008, several targeted killings have also been reported. (p.184)

Annex V: Assaults on professionals, including academics, teachers, doctors, judges and lawyers, athletes (January 2008 – March 2009, not exhaustive)

...10 February 2009: Gunmen in a car shot dead a football player who played for a local team in Kirkuk.

...27 September 2008: Gunmen killed the coach of a table-tennis sport club in Mosul (p.230)

...25 March 2008: Gunmen killed the Iraqi Olympic Committee's Assistant Secretary-General and a basketball referee and wounded the coach of the Iraqi basketball team in Baghdad.

- 14 March 2008: Armed men shot dead the coach of Al-Karkh football club, who was also a former national player, in Baghdad (p.232) (UNHCR 2009, *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers*, April, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...IRQ,.49f569cf2,0.html> – Accessed 23 June 2009 – Attachment 23).

For further details on the circumstances of some of these deaths of athletes, including most recently in Mosul, see the following articles: 'Iraq karate coach shot and killed' 2009, *BBC News*, 19 June http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8110033.stm – Accessed 29 June 2009 – Attachment 24; 'Iraqis shot 'for wearing shorts'' 2006, *BBC News*, 26 May http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5020804.stm – Accessed 29 June 2009 – Attachment 25; 'IRAQ: Athletes targeted for sectarian, religious reasons' 2006, *IRINnews*, 8 June <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=26984> – Accessed 29 June 2009 – Attachment 26.

3. Are there any reports of the Asso or Party Teams?

No information was found on the Asso or Party Teams.

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The Brookings Institution website <http://www.brookings.edu/>

The Jamestown Foundations website <http://www.jamestown.org/>

International News & Politics

AlertNet website <http://www.alertnet.org>

The Washington Post <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>

BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

Region Specific Links

The Hawler Tribune – Erbil <http://www.hrtribune.net/View.aspx?id=104>

IraqSlogger website www.iraqslogger.com

Aswat Al Iraq website <http://en.aswataliraq.info/>

Search Engines

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Library Networks

University Sites

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

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