



Home Office

Country Information and Guidance

Iraq: Security situation in Baghdad, the south and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

Version 1.0

April 2016

Contents

Preface	3
Guidance.....	4
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Basis of Claim	4
1.2 Other points to note.....	4
2. Consideration of Issues	4
2.1 Credibility.....	4
2.2 Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive.....	5
2.3 Internal relocation.....	6
2.4 Certification	6
3. Policy summary	6
Country Information.....	7
4. Sources	7
5. Overview.....	7
6. Baghdad	12
6.1 Geography.....	12
6.2 Control of Baghdad	20
6.3 Levels of violence.....	22
6.4 Displacement.....	27
6.5 Human rights violations	28
7. The South	33
7.1 Geography.....	33
7.2 Control of the Southern governorates	33
7.3 Levels of violence.....	33
7.4 Displacement.....	35
7.5 Human rights violations	36
8. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).....	39
8.1 Geography.....	39
8.2 Control of the KRI.....	40
8.3 Levels of violence.....	40
8.4 Displacement.....	41
8.5 Human rights violations	42
Version Control and Contacts.....	50

Preface

This document provides country of origin information (COI) and guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the guidance contained within this document; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country Information

The COI within this document has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve the guidance and information we provide. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this document, please [e-mail us](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy.

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of Claim

- 1.1.1 That the security situation in Baghdad, the south of Iraq and Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) presents a real risk which threatens life or person such that removal would be in breach of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive, which applies where there is a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict.

[Back to Contents](#)

1.2 Other points to note

- 1.2.1 For the purposes of this guidance Baghdad refers to the governorate (including Baghdad City), the south refers to the governorates of Babil, Basra, Kerbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qaddisiyah, Thi-Qar and Wissan) and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) the governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymnyah.
- 1.2.2 Decision makers should note that the Upper Tribunal in the Country Guidance (CG) case of [AA \(Article 15\(c\)\) \(Rev 1\) Iraq CG \[2015\] UKUT 544 \(IAC\) \(30 September 2015\)](#) made findings on whether the security situation in the whole of Iraq, including the so-called 'contested areas' comprising the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewah and Salah al-Din, would result in a breach of Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive. In considering whether persons from the 'contested areas' would face a risk of a breach of 15(c), decision makers should consult AA and up to date country information.
- 1.2.3 For consideration of Humanitarian Protection because of the prevailing humanitarian conditions, see [Iraq, Country Information and Guidance – humanitarian situation in Baghdad, the south \(including Babil\) and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

2. Consideration of Issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For further guidance on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas

should be investigated prior to the asylum interview; see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#).

- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing; see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.2 Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive

- 2.2.1 It is only if the person does not qualify under the Refugee Convention or Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) that decision makers need to make an assessment of the need for protection under Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive.
- 2.2.2 Unlike Article 3 ECHR, Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive applies only to civilians, who must be genuine non-combatants and not those who are party to the conflict. This could include former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.
- 2.2.3 In the Country Guidance (CG) case of [AA \(Article 15\(c\)\) \(Rev 1\) Iraq CG \[2015\] UKUT 544 \(IAC\) \(30 September 2015\)](#), which replaces all other country guidance on Iraq, the Upper Tribunal (UT) found that the degree of armed conflict in most of Baghdad governorate (including Baghdad City), the southern governorates and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) **does not** engage Article 15(c) of the QD.
- 2.2.4 The UT, however, also found that the degree of armed conflict in certain parts of the 'Baghdad Belts' (the urban environs around Baghdad City) **does** give rise to a generalised Article 15(c) risk. The parts of the Baghdad Belts concerned are those forming the border between the Baghdad Governorate and the contested areas [i.e. with the governorates of Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Diyala] (paragraph 204, sub-paragraph 2)
- 2.2.5 The security situation remains fluid and decision makers must take into account the latest country information in assessing if a person is at risk of serious harm (See [Country information](#)). However, since the promulgation of [AA](#) in September 2015, the security situation has not changed so significantly such as to warrant departing from the country guidance given in that Determination.
- 2.2.6 Even though there is no general Article 15(c) risk in most of Baghdad (excluding those areas identified in paragraph 2.2.4 above), decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk.
- 2.2.7 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and for guidance on Article 15(c), including consideration of enhanced risk factors, see the [Asylum Instruction on Humanitarian Protection](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.3 Internal relocation

- 2.3.1 Internal relocation is likely to be a viable option. In the Country Guidance case of AA, the UT found that: 'As a general rule, it will not be unreasonable or unduly harsh for a person from a contested area to relocate to Baghdad City...or [parts of the] Baghdad Belts [not identified as having a generalised 15(c) risk] (paragraph 204, sub-paragraph 14).
- 2.3.2 See also: [Iraq: Internal relocation \(including documentation and feasibility of return\)](#)
- 2.3.3 For further guidance on internal relocation, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

2.4 Certification

- 2.4.1 Where a claim falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.4.2 For further guidance on certification, see the [Appeals Instruction Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

[Back to Contents](#)

3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 In most of Baghdad (including Baghdad City), the southern governorates and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) indiscriminate violence is not at such a level that substantial grounds exist for believing that a person, solely by being present there for any length of time, faces a real risk of harm which threatens their life or person. However, decision makers should consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's individual circumstances which might nevertheless place them at enhanced risk.
- 3.1.2 The security situation in the parts of the 'Baghdad Belts' (the areas surrounding Baghdad City), which border Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Diyala governorates is however at such a level that removal to these areas would breach Article 15(c).
- 3.1.3 The security situation remains fluid and decision makers must take into account up-to-date country information in assessing the risk.
- 3.1.4 Internal relocation may be a viable option but only if the risk is not present in the place of relocation and it would not be unduly harsh to expect a person to do so. Each case will need to be considered on its individual facts.
- 3.1.5 Where a claim falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

[Back to Contents](#)

Country Information

4. Sources

- 4.1.1 The following sources provide regular updates on the human rights and security situation in Iraq and, in addition to the material in this section, the latest available information on the current conflict and humanitarian situation should be consulted:

[International Organisation for Migration \(IOM\), Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix](#)

[Iraq Body Count](#)

[Institute for the Study of War](#)

[Musings on Iraq, Joel Wing](#)

[UNHCR's Refworld database, Iraq](#)

[United Nations Iraq, Civilian Casualties](#)

[United Nations Iraq, Human Rights](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

5. Overview

- 5.1.1 Iraq remained one of the most vulnerable states in the world in 2015, ranking 12th on the Fund for Peace's, 'Fragile States Index' (compared with 13th in 2014), with weak or poor scores against all twelve primary social, economic and political indicators and the lowest possible recorded scores on 'security apparatus' and 'group grievance', the latter respectively including internal armed conflict and sectarian based conflicts.¹
- 5.1.2 The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research's Conflict Barometer 2014 categorised the situation in Iraq as a 'highly violent conflict', adding: 'IS [Daesh] and other Sunni militant groups fought the government, which was supported by Shiite militias, Kurdish Peshmerga, pro-government Sunni tribal fighters, Iran, and a US-led coalition. This conflict was given an intensity rating of 5, the highest possible. Other conflicts were less intense: that between Shia factions and the government was allocated a rating of 3; while those between the Kurdistan Regional government and the Baghdad

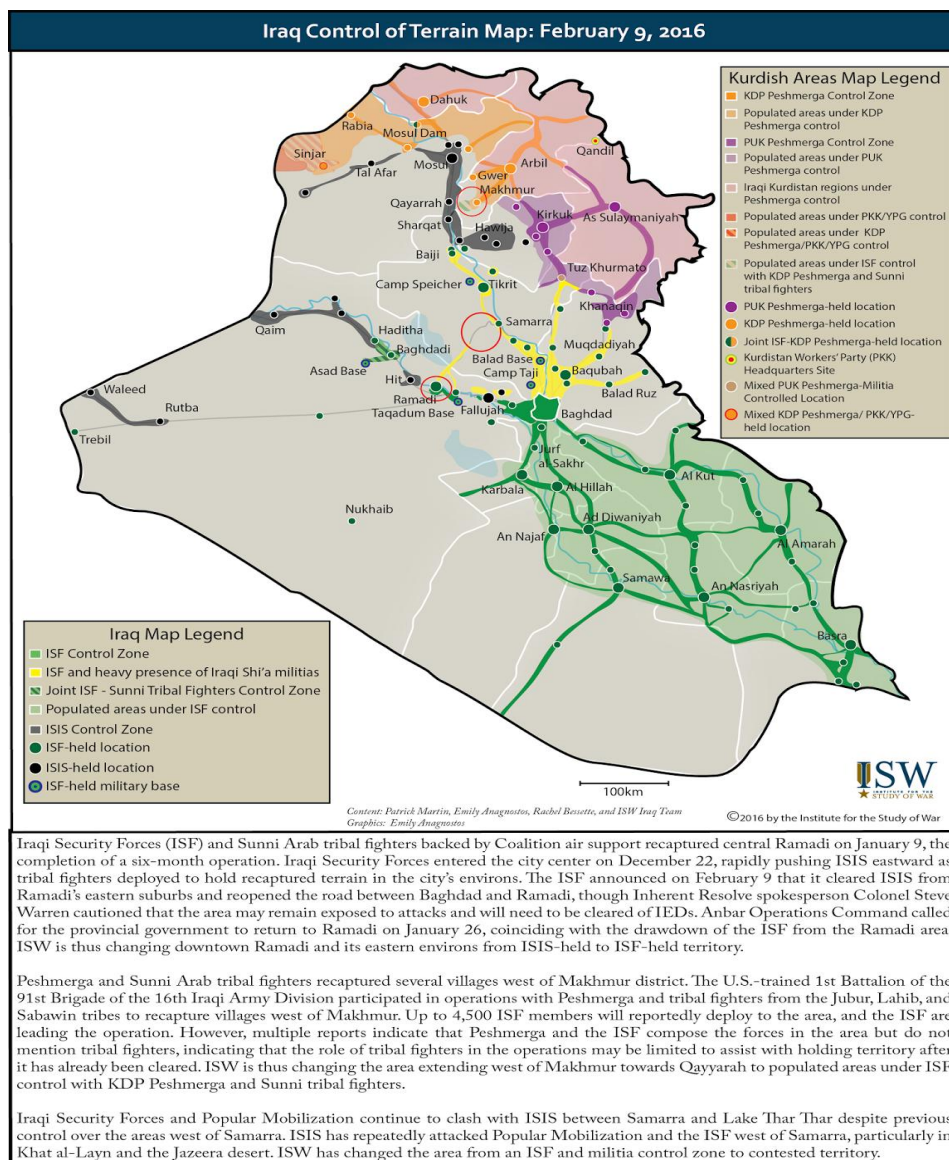
¹ Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index 2015, <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/rankings-2015>, accessed 4 February 2016

government and a territorial dispute with Iran were each given a rating of 1.2'.²

Control of territory

- 5.1.3 The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provided the following snapshot showing control of terrain in Iraq, as of 9 February 2016. For access to the latest map refer to the source directly:

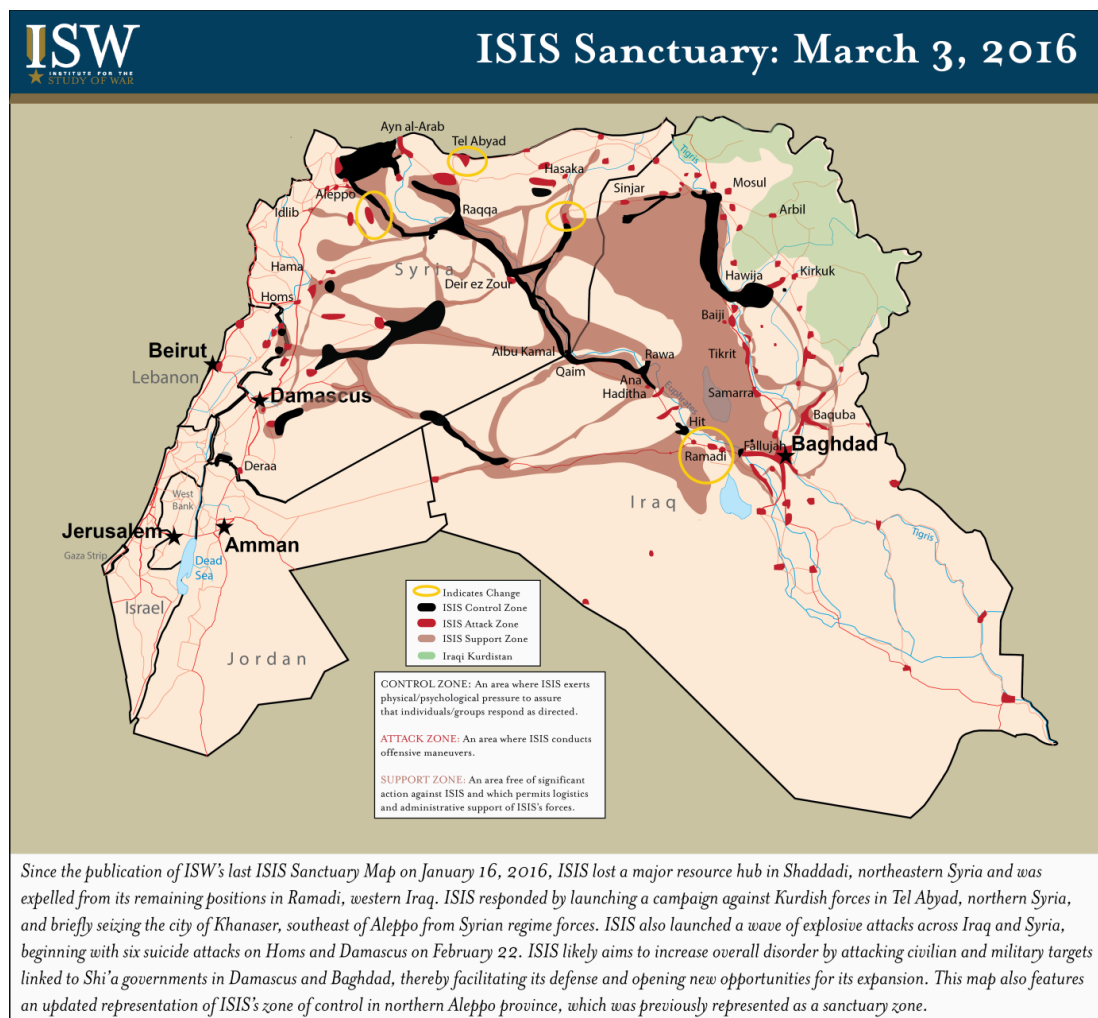
Map showing control of Iraq as of 9 February 2016



² Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, Conflict Barometer 2014, http://www.hiik.de/en/konfliktbarometer/pdf/ConflictBarometer_2014.pdf, accessed 23 October 2015

- 5.1.4 The Institute for the Study of War (ISW)'s 'ISIL Sanctuary Map', as at 21 December 2015, showed the attack and support zones of Daesh, including all of Baghdad governorate:

Map showing control of Daesh in Iraq as 3 March 2016



Fatalities

- 5.1.5 The following table compares fatalities between the 'contested' governorates in Iraq for the period January 2014 to September 2015 (the latest date up to which IBC data is available). Data on population is from the Central

³ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Iraq Control of Terrain map, 3 February 2016, <http://iswresearch.blogspot.co.uk/2016/02/iraq-control-of-terrain-map-february-9.html>, accessed 7 March 2016

⁴ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), ISIS Sanctuary Map, 3 March 2016, <http://www.understandingwar.org/project/isis-sanctuary-map>, accessed 7 March 2016

Organisation for Statistics and Information Technology and fatality data is from [Iraq Body Count database](#):

Table showing fatalities in Iraq governorates, June 2014-September2015

Governorate/province	Pop (2011 est)	Killings	% of population	Number of people per killing
Babil	1,820,673	836	0.05	2178
Baghdad	7,055,196	5208	0.07	1355
Basra	2,531,997	133	0.005	19038
Dohuk	1,128,745	1	0.000001	1,128,745
Erbil	1,612,692	36	0.002	44797
Kerbala	1,066,567	54	0.005	19751
Missan	971,448	30	0.03	32382
Muthanna	719,069	15	0.002	47938
Najaf	1,285,484	13	0.001	98883
Qadisiyah	1,134,313	10	0.001	113431
Thi-Qar	1,836,181	29	0.002	63316
Sulayminyah	1,878,764	7	0.0004	268395
Wasit	1,210,591	24	0.002	50441

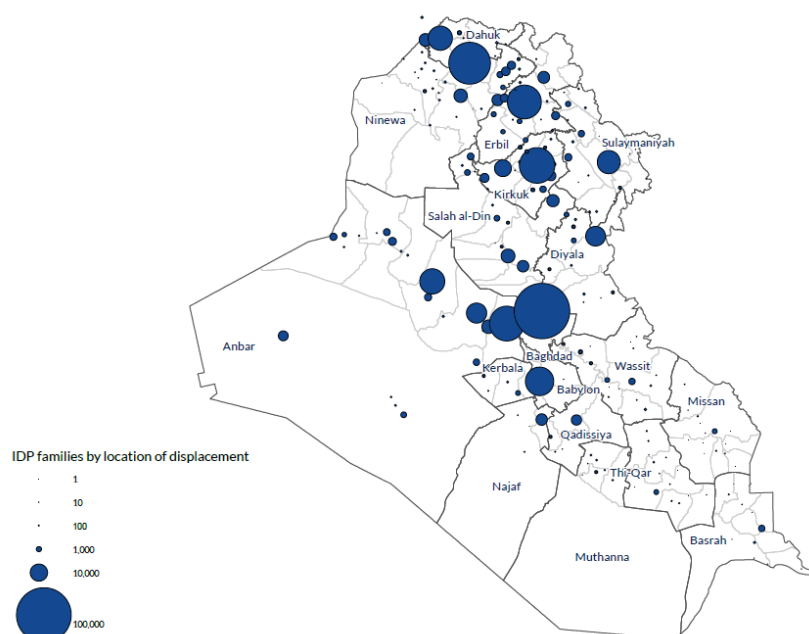
- 5.1.6 The [United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq \(UNAMI\)](#) also provides fatality data for Iraq, but only breaks it down to governorate level for the most violent governorates, so this data is unavailable for the governorates concerned in this report.

Displacement

- 5.1.7 The IOM provided the following map showing the location of displaced families:

Map showing location of displaced families in Iraq, December 2015

1.0 NUMBER OF IDP FAMILIES BY DISTRICT OF DISPLACEMENT, DECEMBER 2015

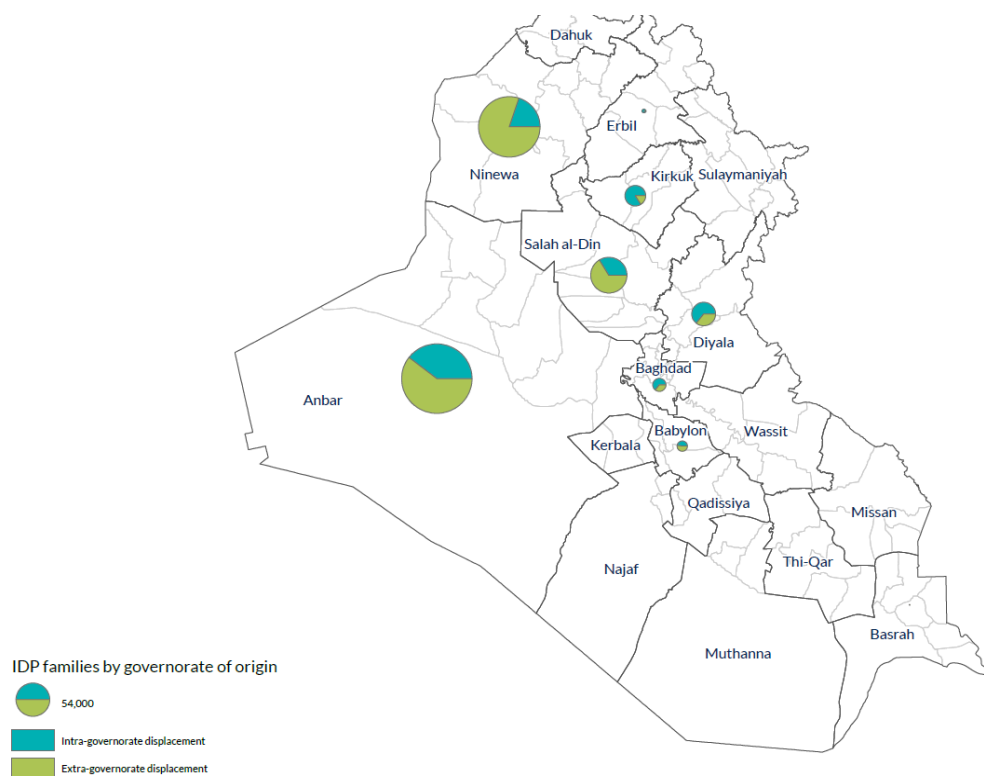


5

⁵ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 34, December 2015, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 4, accessed 5 January 2016

5.1.8 The IOM provided the following map showing the origin of displaced families:

Map showing origin of displaced families, December 2015



6

[Back to Contents](#)

6. Baghdad

6.1 Geography

Baghdad governorate

6.1.1 Baghdad governorate covers 4,555 sq km and is located in central Iraq, surrounded by the governorates of Diyala, Wasset, Babil, Anbar, and Salah Al-Din. It comprises 10 districts, identified as: Abu Ghraib, Adhamiya, Kadhimiya, Karkh, Mada'in, Al-Resafa, Tarmia, Mahmoudiya, Sader/1, and

⁶ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 34, December 2015, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 4, accessed 2 February 2016

Sader/2.⁷ A later UN IAU Baghdad Governorate profile, dated December 2015, clarified that Sadr City was also known as Thawra 1 and 2.⁸

- 6.1.2 A Baghdad Provincial Council report, '5 year Strategic Plan', covering the period 2008-2012, listed Baghdad governorate as having 10 districts and 22 sub-districts; the source listed these sub-districts, however it has not been possible to verify this information with other sources:

'... Al-Rusafa region and its districts: Baghdad Al-Jadida- Al-Karrada Al-Sharqiyyeh- Palestine [;] ... Al-Adhamiya and its districts: Al-Fahhameh – Al-Zuhour- Al-Rashidiyyeh [;] ... Al-Sadr region / 1 and its two districts [;] Al-Sadr region / 2 and its two districts [;] ... Al-Mada'en and its districts: Al-Wihdeh- Diyala Bridge [;] adhimiiyyeh Region and its Districts: That Al-Salasel- Al-Taji [;] Al-Karkh region and its districts: Al-Mansour – Al-Ma'moun [;] Al-Mahmoudiyyeh region and its districts: Al-Rashid- Al-Yousufiyyeh- Al-Lutayfiyyeh [;] Abu Ghraib region and it has one district: Al-Nasr and Al-Salam [and] Al-Tarmiyeh and its districts: Al-Mashahdeh- Al-Abayji.'⁹

- 6.1.3 The following map was published in the IAU's December 2015 profile:

Map showing districts of Baghdad governorate



⁷ UN Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, 'Baghdad Governorate Profile 2013', <http://www.iau-iraq.org/documents/475/GP-Baghdad%202013.pdf>, date accessed: 16 December 2015, and IAU, 'Baghdad Governorate Profile', December 2015, <http://www.iau-iraq.org/gp/print/GP-Baghdad.asp> accessed 16 December 2015

⁸ IAU, 'Baghdad Governorate Profile', December 2015, <http://www.iau-iraq.org/gp/print/GP-Baghdad.asp>, accessed 16 December 2015

⁹ Baghdad Provincial Council, 'First 5 year Strategic Plan (2008 – 2012), draft, 10 October 2007, accessed via UN Joint Intelligence Unit, Baghdad Provincial Council, 'First 5 year Strategic Plan (2008 – 2012), draft, 10 October 2007, <http://www.iau-iraq.org/documents/1505/Baghdad%20PDS%202008-2012%20English.pdf>, accessed 16 December 2015

- 6.1.4 The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) provides various maps for Baghdad governorate, accessible via Humanitarian Response. See:

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad governorate, 19 July 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Ghraib District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Adhamia District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Kadhimia District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Karkh District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mada'in District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mahmoudiya District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Resafa District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Tarmia District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Thawra1 District, 9 August 2014](#)

[OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Thawra2 District, 9 August 2014](#)

Baghdad City

- 6.1.5 Baghdad city comprises 9 districts¹⁰ ; these are: Sadir district, Karada district, “9” Nisan district, Rusafah district, Ahdamiya district, Kadumiah district, Rasheed district, Al Mansour district and Al Karkh district.¹¹
- 6.1.6 An International Crisis Group (ICG) report, ‘Iraq: Can Local Governance Save Central Government?’, ICG Middle East Report No 33, dated 27 October 2004, noted that in 2003 Baghdad was made up of 88 neighbourhood advisory councils and 9 district councils.¹² As noted: ‘The CPA created a representational pyramid, building up from 88 Neighbourhood

¹⁰ International Business Publications, ‘Iraq: Country Study Guide: Volume 1’, 2013, p.42, accessed via Google books, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ZeGZBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA2&lpg=PA2&dq=International+Business+Publications,+%E2%80%98Iraq:+Country+Study+Guide:+Volume+1%E2%80%99,+2013&source=bl&ots=1LCEaljWr0&sig=Ye1skbLCpwVhiVr7kSq1QKF9TJY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiQ2aaK1uDJAhVI0hoKRWHAQAQ6AEIFDAA>, accessed 15 December 2015; and Baghdad Provincial Council, ‘First 5 year Strategic Plan (2008 – 2012), draft, 10 October 2007, accessed via UN Joint Intelligence Unit, <http://www.iau-iraq.org/documents/1505/Baghdad%20PDS%202008-2012%20English.pdf>, accessed 16 December 2015

¹¹ Baghdad Provincial Council, ‘First 5 year Strategic Plan (2008 – 2012), draft, 10 October 2007, accessed via UN Joint Intelligence Unit, <http://www.iau-iraq.org/documents/1505/Baghdad%20PDS%202008-2012%20English.pdf>, accessed 16 December 2015

¹² International Crisis Group report, ‘Iraq: Can Local Governance Save Central Government?’, ICG Middle East Report No 33, 27 October 2004, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Iraq/Iraq%20Can%20Local%20Governance%20Save%20Central%20Government.pdf>, accessed 16 December 2015

Advisory Councils (majales al-hayy), to nine District Advisory Councils (majales al-qat'a), to a City Advisory Council (majlis al-baladiyah) headed by three deputy mayors (and, eventually, a mayor).'¹³ The 'Iraq: Country Study Guide: Volume 1', 2013, clarified that Baghdad's 88 neighbourhood councils later increased to 89.¹⁴

- 6.1.7 A map published by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), dated 10 August 2012, illustrated the geographical location of these 9 districts, and also listed Baghdad neighbourhoods.¹⁵ The map is reproduced at Annex B.
- 6.1.8 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), British Embassy in Baghdad, in a letter dated 31 August 2013 included a map of Baghdad which represented Adhamiyah, Doura, Jihad Bayaa, Karadah, Karkh, Khadamiyah, New Baghdad, Rusafa, Sadr City and Mansour. It should be noted that other sources show Jihad Bayaa and Doura to be neighbourhoods of Baghdad not districts. New Baghdad is also known as "9" Nisan or Baghdad Al-Jidida. The FCO map is reproduced at Annex A.
- 6.1.9 The US Geospatial Intelligence Agency, [produced a map of Baghdad, dated 10 February 2006](#), showing roads, buildings and neighbourhoods in Baghdad. The map also illustrated built up areas, areas of lower density and other areas, identified as 'orchards' or green spaces.¹⁶ These were predominantly on the outskirts of the city. Other more dated map sources were listed on [the website of the University of Texas](#)

Baghdad 'Belts'

- 6.1.10 The Institute for the Study of War, in an undated briefing, explained:
 'The Baghdad belts are residential, agricultural, and industrial areas that encircle the city, and networks of roadways, rivers, and other lines of communication that lie within a twenty or thirty mile radius of Baghdad and connect the capital to the rest of Iraq. Beginning in the north, the belts include the cities of Taji [Baghdad governorate¹⁷], clockwise to Tarmiyah

¹³ International Crisis Group report, 'Iraq: Can Local Governance Save Central Government?', ICG Middle East Report No 33, 27 October 2004, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Iraq/Iraq%20Can%20Local%20Governance%20Save%20Central%20Government.pdf>, accessed 16 December 2015

¹⁴ International Business Publications, 'Iraq: Country Study Guide: Volume 1', 2013, p.42, accessed via Google books, accessed 16 December 2015; <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ZeGZBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA2&lpg=PA2&dq=International+Business+Publications,+%E2%80%98Iraq:+Country+Study+Guide:+Volume+1%E2%80%99,+2013&source=bl&ots=1LCealjWr0&sig=Ye1skbLCpwVhiVr7kSg1QKF9TJY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiQ2aaK1uDJAhVI0hoKHRWHAAAQ6AEIFDAA>

¹⁵ Institute for the Study of War, 'Map of Baghdad', 10 August 2012, <http://www.understandingwar.org/map/map-baghdad>, accessed 1 May 2015

¹⁶ US Geospatial Intelligence Agency, Map of Baghdad, 10 February 2006, accessed via University of Texas, Austin, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/baghdad_nima_2006.jpg, accessed 16 December 2015

¹⁷ OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Kadhimia District, 9 August 2014, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Kadhimia_Distri

[Baghdad governorate¹⁸], Baqubah [Diyala governorate¹⁹], Buhriz [Diyala governorate²⁰], Besmayah and Nahrwan [Baghdad governorate²¹], Salman Pak [Baghdad governorate²²], Mahmudiyah [Baghdad governorate²³], Sadr al-Yusufiyah [Baghdad governorate²⁴], Fallujah [Anbar governorate²⁵], and Karmah [Anbar governorate²⁶]. This "clock" can be divided into quadrants: Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest.²⁷

6.1.11 The same source provided the following geographical background for each of the four quadrants:

North-east belt

'The northeastern belt runs from the Tarmiyah area in the Tigris River Valley, east through Khalis and Baqubah and south to Nahrawan east of Baghdad. It controls the road networks that link Baghdad with the eastern shore of the Tigris River Valley, as well the Diyala River Valley and a key border crossing with Iran.'²⁸

South-east belt

ct.pdf, accessed 1 May 2015

¹⁸ OCHA, Baghdad governorate, Tarmia district, 9 August 2014, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Tarmia_District.pdf, accessed 1 May 2015

¹⁹ OCHA, Baghdad governorate, 19 July 2014, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/M_A012%20Iraq%20Governorate%20map_Baghdad_0.pdf, accessed 1 May 2015

²⁰ OCHA, Baghdad governorate, 19 July 2014, https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/M_A012%20Iraq%20Governorate%20map_Baghdad_0.pdf, accessed 1 May 2015

²¹ OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mada'in District, 9 August 2014, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Mada%27in_District_1.pdf, accessed 9 August 2014

²² OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mada'in District, 9 August 2014, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Mada%27in_District_1.pdf, accessed 9 August 2014

²³ OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mahmoudiya District, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Mahmoudiya_District_0.pdf, accessed 9 August 2014

²⁴ OCHA, Iraq- Baghdad Governorate, Mahmoudiya District, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Baghdad_Gov_Mahmoudiya_District_0.pdf, accessed August 2014

²⁵ OCHA, Iraq – Anbar Governorate, Falluja District, 9 August 2014, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Anbar_Gov_Falluja_District.pdf, accessed 19 July 2014

²⁶ OCHA, Iraq – Anbar Governorate, Falluja District, 9 August 2014, http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/Anbar_Gov_Falluja_District.pdf, accessed 19 July 2014

²⁷ Institute for the Study of War, 'Baghdad belts', undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts>, accessed 1 May 2015

²⁸ ISW, 'Baghdad belts: Northeast', undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/northeast>, accessed 1 May 2015

'The southeastern belt wraps around the capital in an arc running from Nahrawan east of Baghdad, south through Jisr Diyala down to Salman Pak, and east through Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab to the city of Mahmudiyah. Most of the area is rural farmland, crisscrossed by irrigation canals that limit mobility and facilitate the creation of insurgent refuges. The area sits astride several key lines of communication, including Highway Eight, running from Baghdad through Mahmudiyah to the south, and Highway Six, linking Baghdad with Salman Pak and al-Kut to the southeast.'²⁹

South-west belt:

'The southwestern belt runs from Fallujah down the Euphrates River corridor, through Sadr al-Yusufiyah, Yusufiyah, east to Mahmudiyah and south to Iskandariyah.'³⁰

North-west belt :

'The northwestern Baghdad belt ... [stretches] from Karmah west of Baghdad to Tarmiyah in the north.'³¹

6.1.12 According to the Long War Journal (LWJ), in 2006 a forerunner to Daesh, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) devised a strategy to attack the Iraqi capital by taking over the belt regions that surrounding Baghdad. The plan was discovered after US forces found a map on the body of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, ISI's leader, who was killed in Baqubah (Diyala) in 2006.³²

6.1.13 The Long War Journal in a briefing paper dated 2014 explained:

'Zarqawi's plan was to seize control of the outer provinces and Baghdad's belts, or key areas surrounding the capital. The ISI would then use its bases in the belts to control access to Baghdad and funnel money, weapons, car bombs, and fighters into the city. The ISI also planned to strangle the US helicopter air lanes by emplacing anti-aircraft cells along known routes in the belts areas around Baghdad.'³³

6.1.14 A briefing published by the Institute for the Study of War, undated, accessed 5 May 2015, explained how each of the four quadrants, which formed the Baghdad belts region, had historically been a known area of insurgent activity. Referring to the civil unrest between 2004 and 2006, the source

²⁹ ISW, Baghdad belts: Southeast', undated, '<http://www.understandingwar.org/region/southeast>, accessed 1 May 2015

³⁰ ISW, Baghdad belts: Southwest', undated <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/southwest>, accessed 1 May 2015

³¹ ISW, Baghdad belts: Northwest', undated <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/northwest>, accessed 1 May 2015

³² Long War Journal, Analysis: ISIS, allies reviving 'Baghdad belts' battle plan, 14 June 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/analysis_isis_allies.php#ixzz3PHlpCSic, accessed 27 October 2015

³³ Long War Journal, Analysis: ISIS, allies reviving 'Baghdad belts' battle plan, 14 June 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/06/analysis_isis_allies.php#ixzz3PHlpCSic, accessed 27 October 2015

noted that insurgents were able to use the terrain around Baghdad to 'project forces and funnel supplies into the capital, and to freely move around the city into the provinces.'³⁴

- 6.1.15 The briefing paper cited Lt General Ray Odierno, commander of the then Multi-National Corps [MNF], who explained: "Attacks occurring in Baghdad often originate in these outerlying regions. Sectarian lines begin to blur in these belts, creating a flashpoint for extremists looking to assert their control over Baghdad. Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Shi'a extremists want to control these areas." The article explained how the MNF counter-offensive, known as the 'surge', involved additional troop deployment to the Baghdad area to create a deep encirclement of Baghdad to prevent insurgents from moving around Iraq or from sector to sector. The article concluded: 'By mid-2008, the offensives, which combined raids and strikes with the intensive projection of US and Iraqi forces into local communities, rendered al-Qaeda's belt system inoperable even as pockets of local al-Qaeda and a few foreign fighters remained in those areas.'³⁵
- 6.1.16 The ISW reported that the north-eastern belt, because of its strategic location, had historically been contested both by Al Qaeda in Iraq, Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM – a Shiite group) and associated Iranian backed groups.³⁶ The south-eastern belt, which held several key lines of communication between Baghdad and the south, had been important for AQI and JAM, with AQI using the areas Arab Jabour, Hawr Rajab and Salman Pak to support operations in the capital, while JAM had infiltrated Shia populations in Mahmudiyah and Nahrawan, in east Baghdad.³⁷ In the south-west quadrant, Al Qaeda infiltrated the area to link up to its strongholds in Anbar governorate and used road and river networks to launch attacks, which it was able to conduct both south in Babil governorate, and north in Baghdad. The area was nicknamed the 'Triangle of Death' in 2005-06, with known battlegrounds in and around Mahmudiyah [Baghdad governorate], mixed areas to the south in Iskandariyah and Musayyib [in Babil governorate] and refuges in Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab, south east of the city [of Baghdad].³⁸ Finally the north west belt had been a sanctuary for AQI since 2007, when the capital of ISI was displaced from Diyala to Tarmiyah [Baghdad governorate]. AQI used this area to move between Anbar, Salah al Din and Diyala and to build bombs for use in Baghdad city. AQI also

³⁴ ISW, Baghdad belts, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts>, accessed 27 October 2015

³⁵ ISW, Baghdad belts, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts>, accessed 27 October 2015

³⁶ ISW, Baghdad belts, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/baghdad-belts>, accessed 27 October 2015

³⁷ ISW, South East, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/southeast>, accessed 27 October 2015

³⁸ ISW, South West, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/southwest>, accessed 27 October 2015

established 'quasi-legal structures' in the area, which constituted the 'entirety of AQI's political program.'³⁹

- 6.1.17 Richard Barnett, writing in 'The Islamic State', published in November 2014, noted that in March 2014 ISIL released a map to show its administrative divisions or provinces (Wilayat), which spanned across both Syria and Iraq. This included Baghdad Wilayat and al Janoub (the south).⁴⁰ A report from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW), dated November 2014, explained that Wilayat Janoob or 'southern governorate', extended from south western Baghdad towards northern Babil to the south, and west towards Amiriyat al-Fallujah, in Anbar governorate.⁴¹ The same report also commented that the south western Baghdad belt area 'has been an ISIS stronghold for some time', with the group re-establishing itself in 2013. Referring to the geographical area anchored by Jurf al-Sakhar (in Babil governorate), the source noted:

'The challenging terrain of the area, its locations adjacent to the troubled province of Anbar, the historical presence of AQI, and a mainly Iraqi Sunni population, made it very difficult for the ISF to control or gain foothold there. Several major operations were launched throughout 2014 to clear the area but none were successful [prior to the operations in October 2014]. These challenges led former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to order the creation of the Babil Operations Command in March of 2014, and then replace its commander several times in order to make a difference.'⁴²

- 6.1.18 The same source observed that area of Mahmudiyah (in Baghdad governorate) was a mixed Sunni/Shia area and had function as an AQI stronghold between 2004 and 2006. ISW however clarified that AQI was cleared from the area in 2006, with ISF currently maintaining a strong presence there.⁴³
- 6.1.19 An ISW report entitled, 'Iraq's Sunni Insurgency', published October 2014, observed that aside from ISIS, other Sunni insurgent groups were known to operate in the Baghdad Belts area, these included 'the GMCIR (General Military Council for Iraqi Revolutionaries), Ansar al-Islam, Jaysh al-Mujahideen, and the 1920s Brigades.'⁴⁴

³⁹ ISW, North West, undated, <http://www.understandingwar.org/region/northwest>, date accessed: 27 October 2015

⁴⁰ Richard Barrett, The Islamic State, November 2014, <http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TSG-The-Islamic-State-Nov14.pdf>, accessed 27 October 2015

⁴¹ ISW, ISIS in the southwest Baghdad belts, 24 November 2014, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-southwest-baghdad-belts>, accessed 27 October 2015

⁴² ISW, ISIS in the southwest Baghdad belts, 24 November 2014, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-southwest-baghdad-belts>, accessed 27 October 2015

⁴³ ISW, ISIS in the southwest Baghdad belts, 24 November 2014, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Dahlin%20Backgrounder.pdf>, accessed 27 October 2015

⁴⁴ ISW report, Iraq's Sunni Insurgency, dated October 2014, <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Sunni%20Insurgency%20in%20Iraq.pdf>, accessed

6.2 Control of Baghdad

- 6.2.1 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, in a briefing updated 28 October 2015 but containing information over a year older, described Iraq's security situation as 'deteriorating'. It observed that the government's main challenges were to 'restore Sunni confidence in Baghdad and enlist their active cooperation to fight insurgents' with 'retaliatory attacks by Shia militias against the Sunni risks undermining those efforts', although also noted that 'Coalition airstrikes will probably prevent insurgents from contesting Baghdad'.⁴⁵
- 6.2.2 The latest ISW Control of Terrain map shows that Baghdad is under the control of the Iraqi Security Forces. See [5.1.4](#)

Control of the 'Baghdad Belts'

- 6.2.3 The map at [5.1.3](#) shows that ISF forces control the west of Baghdad, up to Fallujah, and south into Babil governorate.
- 6.2.4 Previous Control of Terrain maps produced by the ISW showed areas in the 'Baghdad Belts' as being 'watched', including Abu Ghraib, Yusufiyah and Mada'in.⁴⁶ However, the latest map made no mention of these areas or their current control status.
- 6.2.5 The latest map showing Daesh control (see [5.1.4](#)) shows no change in the Daesh 'attack zones' or 'support zones' from the map dated 22 May 2015. It does show a reduction in the 'control zone' north and south of Fallujah.^{47 48}
- 6.2.6 The latest United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHA), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015' reported that in July 2015 Government forces and Popular Mobilisation Units captured villages and areas around Fallujah, pushing back Daesh. It also reported that while this offensive was taking place, 'a wave of bombings took place across the country on 21 July, the deadliest of which killed 22 people and wounded 32 in the mainly Shia district of New Baghdad, north-eastern Baghdad'.⁴⁹

27 October 2015

⁴⁵ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Iraq Executive Summary, 28 October 2015, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1303502>, accessed 6 January 2016

⁴⁶ ISW, Control of Terrain in Iraq: 1 May 2015, <http://iswiraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/05/control-of-terrain-in-iraq-may-1-2015.html>, date accessed: 1 May 2015

⁴⁷ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), ISIS Sanctuary Map, 22 May 2015, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS%20Sanctuary_22%20MAY%202015_0.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS%20Sanctuary%2022MAY%202015_0.pdf), accessed 21 January 2016

⁴⁸ Fallujah is in Anbar governorate, 69km from Baghdad, but is a key strategic outpost on the way to the capital.

⁴⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for

Daesh (formerly Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL))

- 6.2.7 A background briefing from ISW entitled 'ISIS [ISIL] battle plan for Baghdad', dated 27 June 2014, reported at the time that Daesh likely had separate forces that could operate in the northern Baghdad Belts area as well as Anbar governorate⁵⁰, with forces north and south of Fallujah in Thar Thar (Anbar governorate) and Jurf al-Sakhar (Babil governorate).⁵¹ Additionally the source noted that at the time of writing in June 2014, Daesh threatened to advance their operations towards Abu Ghraib in the west, whilst also seeking to open lines south east of Baghdad, especially in the vicinity of Mada'in.⁵²
- 6.2.8 The ISW report also noted that Daesh was likely to have a presence within the city of Baghdad and that the capital remained potentially vulnerable to suicide bombers, whether using cars or on foot, wearing explosive vests.⁵³
- 6.2.9 Musings on Iraq observed that Daesh focused their attacks mainly on the provinces of Anbar and Baghdad in 2015. The blog observed that: 'Rather than making a push on the capital, IS was more focused upon terrorizing the public and stoking sectarian tensions by hitting Shiite areas. There were 5.9 incidents in November, going up to 6.6 in December and January, before hitting 7.6 in February. Then from March to October incidents fluctuated, but averaged 7.0 per day.' The blog continued that after Daesh's 'stunning success' in the summer of 2014, when it captured Mosul (Iraq's second city), it has since 'realized its offensive limitations as it failed to seize important Shiite and Kurdish areas of Iraq, and therefore gave up on further expansion. That could also explain why it is still hitting Baghdad, because it cannot take any more land, but it can continue with its terrorist attacks into the foreseeable future.'⁵⁴
- 6.2.10 See map at [5.1.4](#) for the areas controlled by Daesh.

Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016,
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 2, accessed 21 January 2016

⁵⁰ Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.2,
<http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad>, accessed 19 January 2015

⁵¹ Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.3,
<http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad>, accessed 19 January 2015

⁵² Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.4,
<http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad>, accessed 19 January 2015

⁵³ Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.5,
<http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad>, accessed 19 January 2015

⁵⁴ Musings on Iraq, 'Iraq Sees 30% Drop in Violence in 2015%', 24 November 2015,
<http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/11/iraq-sees-30-drop-in-violence-in-2015.html>, accessed 20 January 2016

Other actors

- 6.2.11 Sources reported the mobilisation of Shia militia groups in Baghdad, including pro-Iranian paramilitary forces.⁵⁵ In October 2014 the Council of Ministers approved a decree regularizing the Popular Mobilisation Units to fight against Daesh. A number of reports indicated that some armed groups operated outside of Government control.⁵⁶ A September 2015 Congressional Research Service report states that current estimates of the total Shia militiamen in Iraq number about 100,000.⁵⁷ The main armed Shia groups operating in Iraq were the Badr Brigades; the Mahdi Army; Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Kata'ib Hizbullah.⁵⁸

For more information on Shia militias in Baghdad, see [Iraq: Sunni \(Arab\) Muslims](#)

- 6.2.12 Although Daesh remained the main insurgent group in Baghdad (and Iraq), other Sunni anti-government groups included Jaysh Rijal-al Tariqah al-Naqshabandia (JRTN) and the closely-related General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries and Iraq Ba'ath Party; the Fallujah Military Council; the Council of Revolutionaries Tribes of Anbar; the 1920 Brigades; the Islamic Army of Iraq; Jayish al-Mujahidin and Ansar al-Islam.⁵⁹ An October 2014 ISW report noted that these factions are also present in the 'Baghdad Belts'.⁶⁰

[Back to Contents](#)

6.3 Levels of violence

Security incidents

- 6.3.1 The blogger Joel Wing, in a Musings on Iraq post dated 24 November 2015, noted that, from January to October 2015, there had been a 31.9% drop in

⁵⁵ Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.5, <http://www.understandingwar.org/background/isis-battle-plan-baghdad>, accessed 19 January 2015 and Rudaw, 'Iranian official: Basij forces saved Baghdad from ISIS takeover', 14 December 2014, <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/141220143>, accessed 20 January 2015

⁵⁶ UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 11 September to 10 December 2014, p19, February 2015, 2014 http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=HumanRights&lang=en, accessed 13 January 2016

⁵⁷ Congressional Research Service, Iraq: Politics, Security, and US Policy, 16 September 2015, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21968.pdf>, accessed 6 January 2016

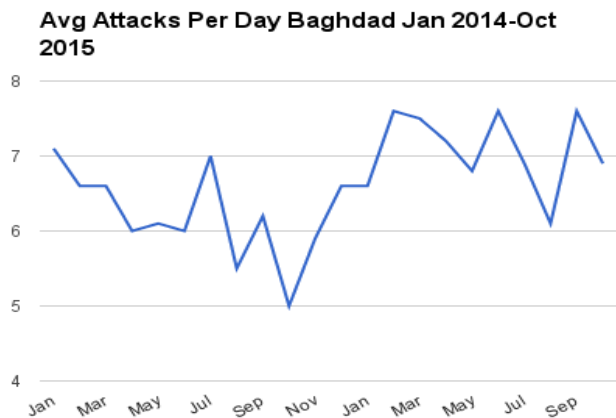
⁵⁸ Amnesty International, 'Iraq: Absolute impunity: militia rule in Iraq', 14 October 2014, p.17, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/015/2014/en/17cbb7ef-7ca4-4b5a-963e-661f256fddb0/mde140152014en.pdf>, accessed 13 January 2016

⁵⁹ Institute for the Study of War, 'Beyond The Islamic State: Iraq's Sunni Insurgency', October 2014, p.9, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/beyond-islamic-state-iraqs-sunni-insurgency>, accessed 7 January 2016

⁶⁰ Institute for the Study of War, 'Beyond The Islamic State: Iraq's Sunni Insurgency' October 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/beyond-islamic-state-iraqs-sunni-insurgency>, accessed 19 January 2015

attacks in the whole of Iraq. The average number of attacks per day in Iraq was 26.9 in January, dropping to 18.3 in October. He added that: ‘While there are plenty of security incidents that do not get reported they are still the most reliable metric for violence in Iraq’.⁶¹ Data from this source shows the average attacks per day in Baghdad from January 2014 to October 2015:

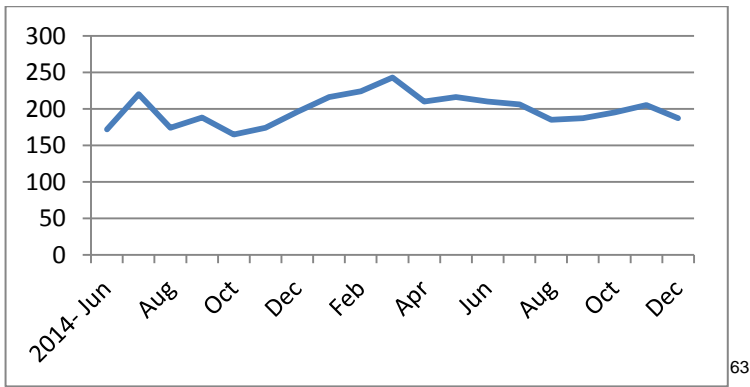
Chart showing average number of attacks per day in Baghdad, January 2014 – October 2015



62

6.3.2 The following table shows the number of security incidents in Baghdad between June 2014 and December 2015:

Chart showing number of security incidents in Baghdad, June 2014-December 2015



63

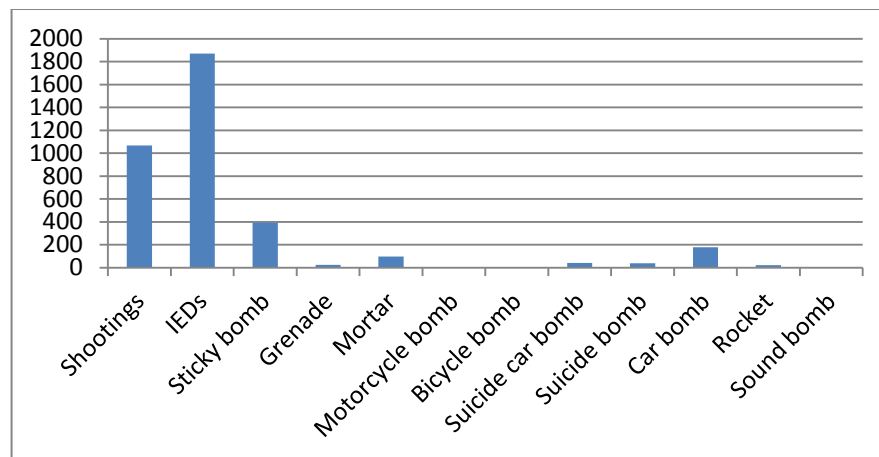
⁶¹ Musings on Iraq, ‘Iraq sees 30% Drop In Violence in 2015’, 24 November 2015, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/search?updated-max=2015-11-25T08:51:00-08:00&max-results=20&start=51&by-date=false>, accessed 13 January 2016

⁶² Musings on Iraq, ‘Iraq sees 30% Drop In Violence in 2015’, 24 November 2015, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/search?updated-max=2015-11-25T08:51:00-08:00&max-results=20&start=51&by-date=false>, accessed 13 January 2016

⁶³ Data from Musings on Iraq, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/>, accessed 13 January 2016

- 6.3.3 The following table shows the nature of violent attacks in Baghdad for the period between the fall of Mosul in June 2014 and December 2015. Data comes from Joel Wing, Musings in Iraq:

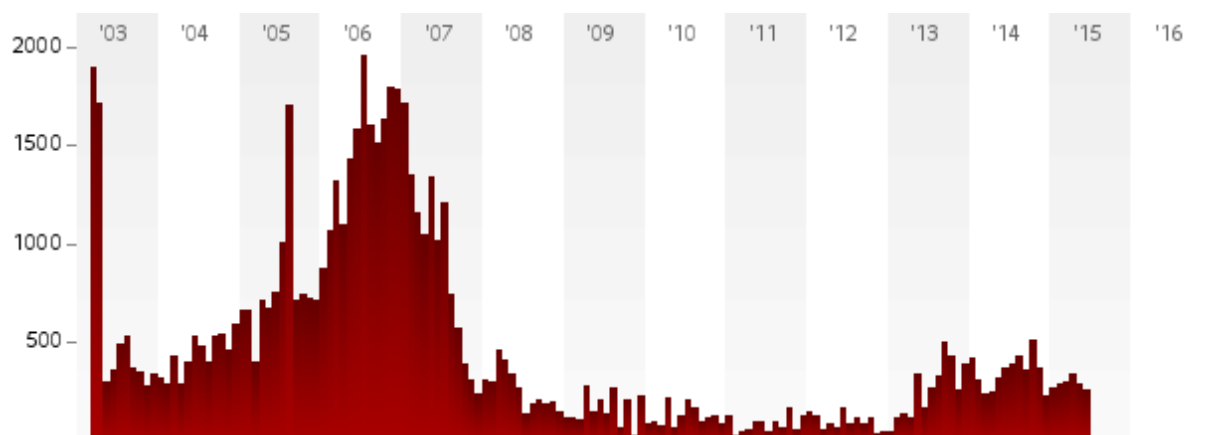
Chart showing nature of violent attacks in Baghdad, June 2014 – December 2015



Fatalities

- 6.3.4 The following graph from Iraq Body Count shows the number of civilian fatalities between March 2003 and June 2015:

Chart showing number of civilian fatalities in Baghdad between March 2003 and June 2015



- 6.3.5 Iraq Body Count observed that 16,115 civilians had been recorded killed in Iraq in 2015 (up to 30 December) (compared to 4,622 in 2012, 9,851 in 2013 and 20,030 in 2014). Five provinces, including Baghdad, accounted for over 90% of the casualties (the others being Anbar, Ninewah, Salah-al-Din and Diyala). Anbar and Ninewah experienced the most civilian deaths, although

Baghdad 'was not far behind...having remained at a consistently elevated level throughout the year'.⁶⁴

- 6.3.6 Based on IBC data between March 2003 and June 2015 a total of 67,673 civilians were killed in Baghdad. The average number of civilians killed in Baghdad governorate per month over this period was 457. The average for the period 2003-2015 is slightly lower than the average for 2003-2014 (470) and 2003-2013 (472).
- 6.3.7 According to IBC data, the average number of civilians killed in Baghdad per month for 2012-15 were as follows:

Table showing average number of civilians killed per month in Baghdad, 2012-15

Year	Average number of civilians killed per month
2012	93
2013	224
2014	349
2015	294 ^{65 66}

- 6.3.8 UNAMI documented 3,702 civilians were killed in Baghdad in 2014. However the Iraq Body Count (IBC) reported 4,183 civilians as killed in 2014.⁶⁷ In 2015 (up to June) IBC recorded 1735 civilian fatalities.⁶⁸ UNAMI recorded 3727 civilian casualties in 2015.^{69 70}

⁶⁴ Iraq Body Count, Iraq 2015: A Catastrophic Normal – An overview of the year's violence, 1 January 2016, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2015/>, accessed 5 January 2016

⁶⁵ Iraq Body Count database, data used between January 2003 and June 2015, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>, date accessed: 7 January 2015

⁶⁶ Whilst UNAMI and IBC both record civilian fatality data, the methodology applied will vary and should be considered in any like-for-like comparison. For further details refer direct to the sources.

⁶⁷ Iraq Body Count, 'Iraq 2014: Civilian deaths almost doubling year on year', 1 January 2015, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/analysis/numbers/2014/>, date accessed: 19 January 2015

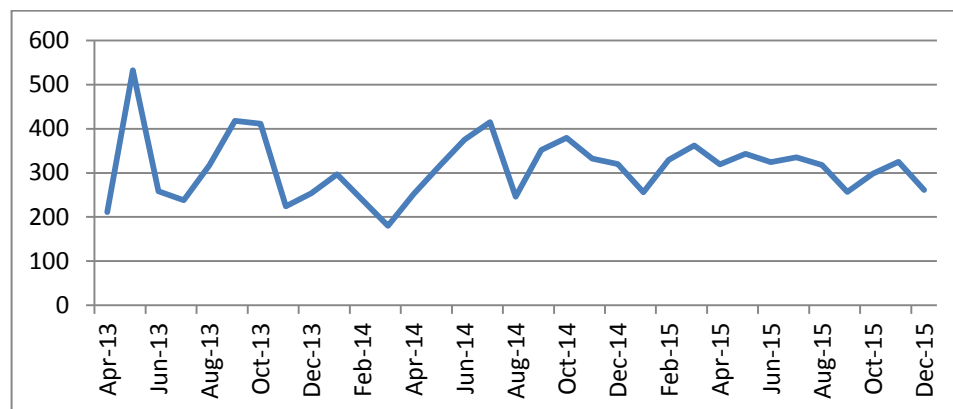
⁶⁸ Iraq Body Count database, data used between January 2003 and June 2015, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>, date accessed: 7 January 2015

⁶⁹ UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Civilian casualties, updated to December 2015, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Casualty%20Figures&Itemid=633&lang=en&limitstart=0, date accessed 7 January 2015

⁷⁰ UNAMI provided the following caveat to its figures: 'In general, UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in conflict areas. UNAMI could not obtain the casualty figures for the month of October from the Anbar Health Directorate. In some cases, UNAMI could only partially verify certain incidents. UNAMI has also received, without being able to verify, reports of large numbers of casualties along with unknown numbers of persons who have died from secondary effects of violence after having fled their homes due to exposure to the elements, lack of water, food, medicines and health care. For these reasons, the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum.'

- 6.3.9 UNAMI/OHCHR, in their latest report covering May to October 2015, recorded that 92% of casualties⁷¹ in Baghdad were attributed to unidentified perpetrators.⁷²
- 6.3.10 Based on UNAMI data, the following chart shows the fatalities recorded in Baghdad between April 2013 and December 2015:

Chart showing fatalities in Baghdad, April 2013 –December 2015



Injuries

- 6.3.11 There is limited data on injuries. Iraq Body Count does not break down their statistics into injuries only. UNAMI records injuries. According to UNAMI data, 9,272 civilians were injured in Baghdad in 2015, an average of 773 per month (UNAMI), an increase of 11% over 2014.⁷³
- 6.3.12 According to UNAMI, for 2015 Baghdad was the worst affected governorate in Iraq for overall civilian casualties (fatalities plus injuries) in every single month of the year.⁷⁴

[Back to Contents](#)

⁷¹ To note, 'casualties' here refers to fatalities plus those wounded

⁷² United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 27, accessed 21 January 2016

⁷³ UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Civilian casualties, updated to December 2015, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Casualty%20Figures&Itemid=633&lang=en&limitstart=0, date accessed 7 January 2016

⁷⁴ UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Civilian casualties, updated to December 2015, http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=Casualty%20Figures&Itemid=633&lang=en&limitstart=0, date accessed 7 January 2015

6.4 Displacement

- 6.4.1 The UNAMI/OHCHR report, covering the period December 2014 to April 2015, recorded that Baghdad hosted 412,200 IDPs (14.5% of the total of Iraq).⁷⁵ The latest report, covering May to October 2015, recorded that Baghdad had the second-highest number of Internally Displaced Person's (IDPs) (after Anbar) with 577,584.⁷⁶
- 6.4.2 According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), in December 2015, Baghdad hosted more IDPs than any other governorate – 577,230, accounting for 18% of the total (slightly more than Anbar with 570,768 IDPs). Within Baghdad, the Karkh district holds more IDPs than any other (191,892 IDPs, or 6% of the country-wide total). Between November and December 2015, although the total number of IDPs remained stable, Baghdad's number rose by 9,090. This increase was mainly due to the registration of many IDPs who were not initially registered by the local authorities.⁷⁷
- 6.4.3 Of the IDPs who originate from Baghdad, 31,698 (64%) remain within the governorate. To compare, 98% of IDPs from Erbil, 84% of IDPs from Kirkuk and 64% of IDPs from Diyala have been internally displaced in this way.⁷⁸
- 6.4.4 The UNAMI/OHCHR report noted that 'widespread displacement has heavily impacted host communities, with tensions between host communities, IDPs, and refugees increasing. For instance, local media reported growing resentment towards IDPs amongst host communities in Baghdad at the end of April, apparently driven by fears that entry of IDPs also may have permitted ISIL fighters to enter the city...[OHCHA] reported that IDPs who had found shelter in Baghdad mosques were evicted by members of the host community.'⁷⁹

⁷⁵ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: December 2014 – April 2015, June 2015, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_4th_POCHReport-11Dec2014-30April2015.pdf, p. i, accessed 5 January 2016

⁷⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRReport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 6, accessed 21 January 2016

⁷⁷ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 34, December 2015, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 2, accessed 5 January 2016

⁷⁸ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 34, December 2015, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 4, accessed 5 January 2016

⁷⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: December 2014 – April 2015, June 2015, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_4th_POCHReport-11Dec2014-30April2015.pdf, p.8, accessed 5 January 2016

Internal displacement

- 6.4.5 According to the IOM, as of 3 December 2015 there were 458,358 IDPs (76,393 families) who returned to their district of origin. The data does not show that there are any IDPs who have been displaced outside of Baghdad who have returned to the governorate. Most returnees went back to Salah al-Din (54%), Diyala (20%) and Ninewah (15%).⁸⁰
- 6.4.6 The latest UNAMI/OHCHR report, covering May to October 2015, noted that the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) reported that, in September, 720 people had returned to Kharma in Anbar, bringing the number of returnees to 3176 in the sub-districts of al-Khayrat and al-Jazeera. Most of the returnees were previously displaced in Baghdad.⁸¹

For general background information on Baghdad see: [IOM, Baghdad governorate profile, September 2014](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

6.5 Human rights violations

Daesh

- 6.5.1 Daesh was responsible for repeated attacks deliberately targeting civilian and civilian infrastructure. For example, on 18 July 2015 Daesh claimed responsibility for a car bombing in the mainly Shia town of Khan Bani Saad, north of Baghdad, which killed 120 people and injured at least 130 in a busy market.⁸² On 14 August 2015 a Daesh truck bomb killed at least 67 people at the Jameela market in the predominantly Shia district of Sadr City.⁸³ On 18 September 2015 ISIL perpetrated two suicide bombings in Baghdad markets, killing at least 23 people and wounded more than 60.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 34, December 2015, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 10, accessed 5 January 2016

⁸¹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 7, accessed 21 January 2016

⁸² 'Iraq violence: Car bomb kills scores in mainly Shia town', BBC website, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33577817>, accessed 8 January 2015

⁸³ 'Iraq truck bomb kills dozens at Baghdad market', BBC website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-33901796>, accessed 8 January 2015

⁸⁴ 'Iraq: Baghdad market bombings kill at least 23', BBC website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34277021>, accessed 8 January 2015

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)

- 6.5.2 UNAMI reported that IED were employed in a variety of formats, including body-borne IEDs (BBIEDs), vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs) and suicide vehicle-borne IEDs (SVBIEDs). Attacks impacted and targeted civilians of all sects and ethnicities, in neighborhoods across Iraq that were both homogenous and mixed.⁸⁵
- 6.5.3 A report from the ISW noted the emergence of Suicide Vests (SVESTS) attacks in June 2014, which suggested an adaption by Daesh from the more detectable Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVBIED) attacks, possibly in response to the increased Shia security presence in the capital.⁸⁶
- 6.5.4 In July and September 2014, Baghdad was, according to OHCHR and UNAMI, 'particularly hard hit by IED attacks' and while 'circumstantial information may suggest in general terms who may have been responsible' in some incidents the perpetrators were unknown.⁸⁷ IED attacks continued into 2015. A UN report dated July 2015 recounted various incidents of IED attacks. For example, on 8 May, a car bomb explosion and four improvised explosive devices killed 24 civilians and wounded 67 around Karrada district. Among the casualties were Shi'ite pilgrims preparing for the commemoration of the death of Imam Mousa al-Kazim. On 28 May, vehicle-borne and suicide bomb attacks on the Sheraton and Babylon Hotels in Karrada killed 12 civilians and wounded 27.⁸⁸ In their latest report, UNAMI/OHCHR reported that 'a large number of IED-related civilian deaths were recorded in Baghdad, where such incidents occurred on a daily basis.'⁸⁹ The report recorded further specific IED attacks in Baghdad. For example, on 13 August, a VBIED detonated at the Jameela wholesale market in the Shi'a majority Sadr City, in the east of the city. According to reports, at least 45

⁸⁵ UNAMI, Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 11 September – 10 December 2014, p24-25, February 2015

http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&task=tag&tag=HumanRights&lang=en accessed on 31 March 2015

⁸⁶ Institute for the Study of War, 'ISIS Battle Plan for Baghdad', 27 June 2014, p.5, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-battle-plan-baghdad>, accessed 9 January 2016

⁸⁷ UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office for High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Iraq: 6 July to 10 September 2014', p.22-23, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf, accessed 20 January 2015

⁸⁸ UN Secretary-General, 'Fourth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 2169 (2014)', 13 July 2015, [http://www.uniraq.org/images/SGReports/N1521149%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.uniraq.org/images/SGReports/N1521149%20(2).pdf), accessed 7 January 2015

⁸⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIR1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 29, accessed 21 January 2016

people were killed and at least 72 wounded by the blast, for which Daesh claimed responsibility.⁹⁰

- 6.5.5 Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, dated 15 December 2015, provided an assessment of IED risk in Baghdad. It should be noted that this is a security analysis rather than a reflection of events that have actually taken place:

'In Baghdad, property adjacent to religious, government and security buildings are at highest risk of being temporarily seized during firefights with insurgents, while a sustained vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) campaign targeting Shia neighbourhoods is also likely. Despite Islamic State aspirations to overrun the capital, the concentration of Shia militias and on-going Coalition airstrikes will probably prevent this. Instead, insurgents are likely to increase the pace of suicide and VBIED attacks and focus their efforts on targeting high-profile Shia religious shrines (e.g. Khadhimiya in Baghdad and al-Askari mosque in Samarra).'⁹¹

- 6.5.6 The source continued:

'Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks are a high risk in Baghdad's Shia neighbourhoods, targeting public spaces including markets, mosques and government buildings. Such attacks pose severe death and injury risks to bystanders. Neighbourhoods adjacent to the Green Zone, such as Karadat Maryam, are among the safest from IED attacks but not immune.'⁹²

- 6.5.7 Musings on Iraq data for 2014 showed a marked decline in car bomb attacks, from an average of 91.6 per month in January-May to 53.1 per month in June-December. The blog suggested that this might indicate that Daesh's capacity to launch such attacks had been diminished.⁹³ The decline did not continue into 2015, however, and on 20 October 2015 the blog reported: 'Finally, IS continued with its car bomb campaign, which began in July. During the second week of October there were a total of 51 VBIEDs [Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices] compared to 18 the week before. Of those 51, only 6 hit their targets, while the other 45 were destroyed... These attacks will likely remain at this pace for the next several months.'⁹⁴

⁹⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 15, accessed 21 January 2016

⁹¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Iraq Security, 23 December 2015, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1303454>, accessed 6 January 2016

⁹² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment, Iraq Security, 23 December 2015, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1303454>, accessed 6 January 2016

⁹³ 'Iraq Forces Make Major Advances In Baiji Area', 20 October 2015, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/iraq-forces-make-major-advances-in.html>, accessed 9 January 2015

⁹⁴ Musings on Iraq, 2014 deadliest year in Iraq since civil war period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html, accessed 9 January 2015

- 6.5.8 Musings on Iraq, in a 9 December blog post, described Daesh's Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) campaign which launched in May 2015. Although Anbar and Salah-al-Din were the main targets, Baghdad was also a target. Joel Wing provided the following VBIED data for Baghdad for 2015:

Table showing Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices in Baghdad (2015)

Month	Total Car VBIEDs	Successful VBIEDs	Destroyed VBIEDs
Jan	5	2	3
Feb	6	6	0
Mar	6	6	0
Apr	24	24	0
May	13	11	2
Jun	15	8	7
Jul	20	19	1
Aug	23	11	12
Sep	13	7	6
Oct	6	5	1
Nov	5	2	3

Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and associated forces

- 6.5.9 There were cases of abductions, kidnappings and forced evictions in Baghdad carried out by armed groups affiliated to or supportive of government forces, as well clashes between Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Shia armed groups on one side and non-state armed groups on the other. For example, in October 2014 Amnesty International documented the fates of four Sunnis who were abducted and killed, reportedly by Shia militias⁹⁵, and of a further six individuals who were abducted and still missing.⁹⁶ The same report quoted a member of AAH, on duty at a checkpoint north of Baghdad, as stating:: "if we catch 'those dogs' [Sunnis] coming down from the Tikrit area we execute them; in those areas they are all working with DA'ESH. They come to Baghdad to commit terrorist crimes. So we have to stop them".⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Amnesty International, Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq, p6-9, October 2014, http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/absolute_impunity_iraq_report.pdf accessed 30 March 2015

⁹⁶ Amnesty International, Absolute Impunity, Militia rule in Iraq, p15-16, October 2014, http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/absolute_impunity_iraq_report.pdf accessed 30 March 2015

⁹⁷ Amnesty International, 'Iraq: Absolute impunity: militia rule in Iraq', 14 October 2014, p.18, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/015/2014/en/17cbb7ef-7ca4-4b5a-963e-661f256fddb0/mde140152014en.pdf>, accessed 20 January 2015

For more information on the activities of the Shia militias in Baghdad, see [Iraq: Sunni \(Arab\) Muslims](#)

- 6.5.10 The UNAMI/OHCHR report, covering December 2014 to April 2015, noted: 'Several reports were received concerning the killing and abduction of individuals displaced from Anbar into Baghdad. For instance, on 29 April, Iraqi Police found the remains of two males who died from gunshot wounds: one in Amil, south-western Baghdad, and another in Bayaa, eastern Baghdad. The victims were reported to have been IDPs from Anbar and it was alleged that they had been killed by a Shi'a militia. A source reported to UNAMI/OHCHR that Shi'a militias in Amil threatened Anbar IDPs that they would be killed if they did not leave. Such threats were reportedly not issued to members of the Sunni community normally resident of the area.'⁹⁸

Unidentified perpetrators

- 6.5.11 The same document reported that: 'A large number of unidentified bodies were recovered daily during the reporting period. In many cases, investigations could not reveal the identity of or other information about the victims. Bodies often bore gunshot wounds and were sometimes found blindfolded and/or with their hands and/or feet bound. Some also exhibited signs of ill-treatment and torture. UNAMI/OHCHR documented 421 unidentified bodies during the reporting period yet was unable to verify a large number of other reports. Of these bodies, 317 (75 percent) were recovered in Baghdad.'⁹⁹
- 6.5.12 The latest UNAMI/OHCHR report, covering May to October 2015, observed that while the majority of bodies recovered were men, women and children were also found. It noted: 'Many women were among the bodies that were recovered in Baghdad on a daily basis, the victims of unidentified killers. On 29 June, for example, the bodies of two women were found in different locations in Baghdad, both having died of gunshot wounds. On 5 September, in northwest Baghdad, the bodies of two children were found, one aged seven and the other 12. The children had reportedly been abducted by unidentified gunmen.'¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: December 2014 – April 2015, June 2015, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_4th_POCReport-11Dec2014-30April2015.pdf, p.8, accessed 5 January 2016

⁹⁹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: December 2014 – April 2015, June 2015, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_4th_POCReport-11Dec2014-30April2015.pdf, p.31, accessed 5 January 2016

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRReport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 28, accessed 21 January 2016

6.5.13 The same report also detailed cases of abductions. For example:

‘In Baghdad, on 25 May, four civilians were abducted by gunmen dressed in military uniforms at a checkpoint near the military academy, in Canal Street, eastern Baghdad. Also in Baghdad, the Acting Deputy Justice Minister, was abducted by black-clad gunmen on 9 September, in the Bunuk area, northeastern Baghdad. A senior official of the Ministry of Justice and four security guards were reportedly also abducted. All were eventually released. The perpetrators remained unknown at the time of reporting.’¹⁰¹

[Back to Contents](#)

7. The South

7.1 Geography

7.1.1 The Southern governorates of Iraq are Babil, Basra, Kerbala, Missan, Muthanna, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Thi-Qar and Wasit. See [Annex A: Map of Iraq](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

7.2 Control of the Southern governorates

7.2.1 The Institute for the Study of War’s Control of Terrain map, dated 9 March 2016, shows the southern governorates under the control of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).¹⁰² See [5.1.3](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

7.3 Levels of violence

Fatalities

7.3.1 UNAMI did not break down statistics for the southern governorates. Iraq Body Count provided the following statistics for civilian fatalities:

¹⁰¹ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ‘Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015’, January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 28, accessed 21 January 2016

¹⁰² Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Iraq Control of Terrain map, 3 February 2016, <http://iswresearch.blogspot.co.uk/2016/02/iraq-control-of-terrain-map-february-9.html>, accessed 7 March 2016

Governorate	2014	2015 (up to June)	2003-2015
Babil	909	189	7934
Basra	92	58	4949
Kerbala	60	0	2139
Missan	17	17	464
Muthanna	15	6	264
Najaf	12	1	1698
Qadisiyah	10	1	748
Thi-Qar	27	10	1367
Wasit	38	6	2406

7.3.2 Based on IBC data between March 2003 and June 2015 a total of 21,969 civilians were killed across all the southern governorates. The average number killed per month was 143.

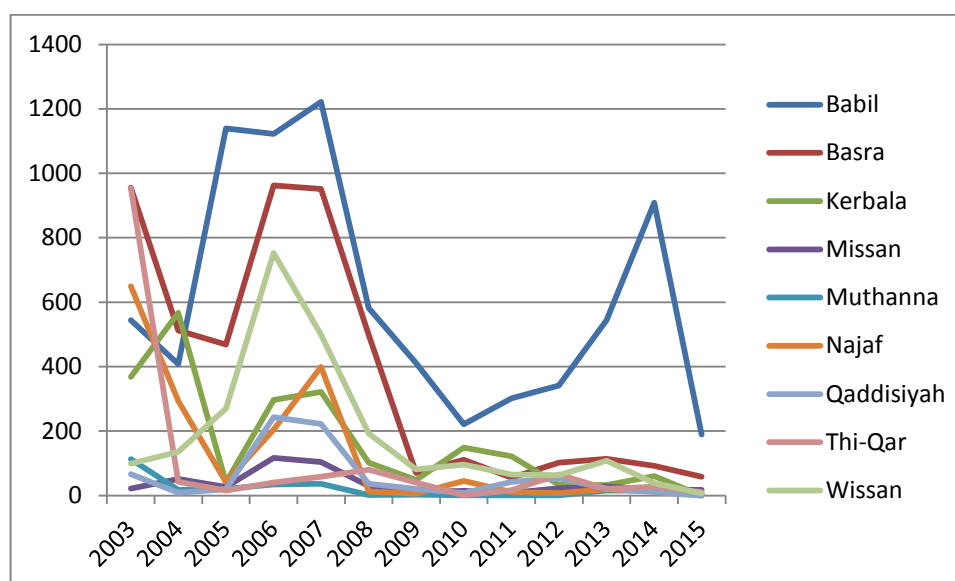
7.3.3 According to IBC data, the average number of civilians killed across all southern governorates per month in 2012-15 were as follows:

Year	Average number of civilians killed per month
2012	57
2013	75
2014	98
2015	48

The southern governorate with the highest average fatality figure per month over this period was Babil (47.21). The second highest was Basra (8.73). The lowest was Muthanna (0.88).

7.3.4 The following chart, using data from Iraq Body Count, shows civilian fatalities in the southern governorates from 2003 to June 2015:

Chart showing civilian casualties in the south, 2003-15



Injuries

- 7.3.5 There is limited data on injuries. Iraq Body Count do not break down their statistics into injuries only. UNAMI records injuries but did not include data for the southern governorates.

[Back to Contents](#)

7.4 Displacement

- 7.4.1 The southern governorates host a relatively small number of IDPs – the total combined in the nine governorates accounting for 8% of Iraq's total IDP population according to data from the IOM.

Governorate	Individuals	Families	% of Iraq's IDP population
Babil	60,036	10,006	2%
Basra	11,394	1899	0%
Kerbala	66,258	11,043	2%
Missan	6,600	1,100	0%
Muthanna	5,406	901	0%
Najaf	78,942	13,157	2%
Qadisiyah	24,822	4,137	1%
Thi-Qar	8994	1499	0%

Wissan	25,098	4183	1%
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¹⁰³

- 7.4.2 The only southern governorate from where some IDPs originate is Babil. See [5.3.1.](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

7.5 Human rights violations

Babil

- 7.5.1 Joel Wing, in a blog entry dated 6 January 2015, noted that the area of Jurf al-Sakhr in Babil had militant bases which were used to launch attacks in the surrounding areas, but reported at year's end, the major Daesh base of Jurf al-Sakhr had been destroyed and the insurgents dispersed to the north of the governorate.¹⁰⁴ A later post dated 23 January 2015 observed that the loss of Jurf al-Sakhar had significantly improved security in southern Iraq, not least because the town was a major car bomb factory for Daesh.¹⁰⁵
- 7.5.2 On 20 October 2015 Joel Wing's blog stated: 'IS [Daesh] operations in Babil have been at a very low level since it lost its base in Jurf al-Sakhr at the end of 2014. During the week however a car bomb went off in Mahmudiya that killed 3 and wounded 17.'¹⁰⁶
- 7.5.3 The UNHCR's position on returns paper, dated October 2014, confirmed that the current conflict in Iraq was largely concentrated in central and northern governorates, including Baghdad and Babil. However the source further observed: 'The southern governorates also continue to see security incidents, including in the form of car bomb attacks, as well as targeted killings/kidnappings and sectarian reprisal attacks against individuals, including members of political parties, religious and tribal figures, government employees, and professionals.'¹⁰⁷ This position had not been updated at the time of writing.

¹⁰³ International Organisation for Migration, Iraq Mission, Displacement Tracking Matrix, DTM Round 34, December 2015, <http://iomiraq.net/dtm-page>, p. 3, accessed 2 February 2016

¹⁰⁴ Joel Wing, 'Musings on Iraq, '2014 Deadliest Year In Iraq Since Civil War Period', 6 January 2015, http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/2014-deadliest-year-in-iraq-since-civil_6.html, date accessed 8 January 2015

¹⁰⁵ Musings on Iraq, 'The clearing of Iraq's Jurf Al-Sakhr, Babil and its impact', 15 January 2015, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/01/the-clearing-of-iraqs-jurf-al-sakhr.html>, date accessed: 20 January 2015

¹⁰⁶ 'Iraq Forces Make Major Advances In Baiji Area', 20 October 2015, <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/iraq-forces-make-major-advances-in.html>, accessed 26 October 2015

¹⁰⁷ UNHCR, UNHCR position on returns to Iraq', 27 October 2014, p.6, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/544e4b3c4.html>, accessed 20 January 2015

- 7.5.4 The Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, in a report on the south of Iraq dated May 2015, noted that ‘in the past few years, Babil was the most violent of the southern provinces. In the mainly Sunni northern part of Babil, but also in other parts of the province, enhanced security measures have been into force since 2013. The number of checkpoints increased, roads between towns were regularly closed to traffic, and curfews were imposed... Initially, Babil Province was not directly affected by the ISIL [Daesh] offensive launched in June 2014 but by the end of June, fighting erupted in the north of the province, at Buhairat... During the first months of 2015, bomb and other attacks still took place in the north of Babil province, with various targets...’¹⁰⁸

For general background information on Babil see: [Joint Analysis and Policy Unit, Babil Governorate Profile, January 2015](#)

- 7.5.5 The same source also described the security situation in various individual governorates:

Basra

‘Tribal and sectarian violence escalated particularly in 2007 in Basra city. Only when it launched an offensive in 2008 was the Iraqi army able to break the power of Shi’a and tribal militias in the city...Despite sporadic terror attacks, the security situation in the province improved markedly during the last few years... As ISIL [Daesh] was stepping up its terror campaign against Shi’a targets in Baghdad, Basra city’s Sunni minority was targeted by a number of violent attacks. In January 2014, Basra’s provincial governor, Majid al-Nasrawi, announced the dismantling of some checkpoints in Basra city following the improved security situation... Basra province was not directly affected by ISIL’s June 2014 offensive and there were no direct confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops.’¹⁰⁹

7.5.6 Kerbala

‘Despite several attacks on Shi’a targets and rivalry between Shi’a militias, the violence in Kerbala province in 2006 and 2007 did not reach the same levels as in central Iraq. The intensity of the violence decreased significantly after security matters were transferred from the Coalition troops to the local police and the Iraqi armed forces. Over the period 2013-2014, a limited number of terror attacks were committed against Shi’a targets in the holy city of Kerbala. In 2013, 48 civilians were killed in Kerbala city, and 11 civilians

¹⁰⁸ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, p. 18, accessed 2 February 2016

¹⁰⁹ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, p. 21, accessed 2 February 2016

between January and June 2014. Security measures were several times reinforced in 2013-2014 in the province. Especially during the Ashura festival, which is attended every year by tens of thousands of pilgrims, strict security measures are imposed...Although ISIL [Daesh]'s spokesman announced in the summer of 2014 that his movement would carry its offensive as far as Kerbala and Najaf, there were no large-scale armed confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops in Kerbala province. Security measures were enhanced in Kerbala and Iraqi troops were reinforced by volunteers...'¹¹⁰

7.5.7 Najaf

'In the summer of 2004, Najaf city saw fierce fighting between the Mahdi Army and the US-led coalition troops. Fighting again broke out in Najaf in 2007. As more and more American troops were leaving the province, the security situation stabilised and violence was limited to sporadic terrorist attacks. As ISIL [Daesh] intensified its terror campaign in 2013-2014, security measures were enhanced in Najaf. In October 2013, a new security plan was announced for the Eid al-Adha religious holiday...Although ISIL [Daesh]'s spokesman announced in the summer of 2014 that his movement would carry its offensive as far as Kerbala and Najaf, there were no large-scale armed confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops in Najaf province. Security measures were enhanced in the province and many Shi'a answered Ayatollah al-Sistani's call to take arms and to back the Iraqi armed forces. In the second half of 2014, suspects were repeatedly arrested during security operations in Najaf. On 12 September 2014, 12 persons were injured in a bomb attack in Najaf's al-Amir area. During the period from January to April 2015, suspected terrorists and other suspects were arrested during several security operations in Najaf city and in other places in the province.'

7.5.8 Missan, Muthanna, Qaddisiyah, Thi-Qar and Wassit

'Sporadic terror attacks, usually small-scale, are committed mainly in the towns of Kut (Wassit province) and Nasiriya (Thi-Qar province)... With the increase of terror attacks in 2013-2014, security measures were enhanced in the region. In 2013, the police carried out several large-scale security operations in Wassit...The ISIL [Daesh] summer offensive of 2014 did not reach Wassit, Qadisiya, Thi-Qar, Missan or al-Muthanna province and there were no direct confrontations between ISIL militants and Iraqi troops. Violence in the region is limited to sporadic bomb attacks causing a relatively low number of civilian casualties. Arrests are regularly taking place during

¹¹⁰ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, p. 22, accessed 2 February 2016

security operations in the region. The number of civilians killed in the five provinces remained low in 2015.¹¹¹

7.5.9 The source provided the following overall summary of the security situation in the southern governorates:

‘The nine southern Iraqi provinces were not directly affected by the offensive launched by ISIL in central Iraq in June 2014, with the exception of the north of Babil province, where ISIL tried to open new lines of attack towards Baghdad south and southwest of the capital. This offensive was accompanied by numerous bomb attacks and led to heavy fighting in some towns. Although ISIL was unable to gain control over the north of Babil and the number of civilian casualties has markedly decreased since the beginning of 2015, the security situation in Babil province has not yet improved on a lasting basis. The fact that ISIL controls large areas in neighbouring Anbar province increases the risk of a new upsurge in violence.

‘In the mainly Shi’a southern provinces of Najaf, Kerbala, Basra, Wassit, Qadisiya, Thi-Qar, Missan and al-Muthanna, there were no direct confrontations between ISIL and the Iraqi armed forces. The violence in these provinces was limited to sporadic terrorist attacks of decreasing frequency and intensity. The number of civilian casualties is significantly lower than in Babil province, and far below the levels reached in central Iraq, including Baghdad.’¹¹²

[Back to Contents](#)

8. The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

8.1 Geography

8.1.1 The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) is an autonomous region within Iraq which comprises the governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymnyah. See [Annex A: Map of Iraq](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

¹¹¹ Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, p. 27, accessed 2 February 2016

¹¹² Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, COI Focus: Iraq – Security Situation in South Iraq, 29 May 2015, http://www.cgra.be/sites/default/files/rapporten/coi_focus_iraq_security_situation_in_south_iraq_0.pdf, p. 30, accessed 2 February 2016

8.2 Control of the KRI

- 8.2.1 The Institute for the Study of War's Control of Terrain map, dated 25 November 2015, shows the KRI under the control of the Peshmerga, the Kurdish military forces. The Peshmerga of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) have 'control zones' in Dohuk and Erbil; the Peshmerga of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have 'control zones' in Sulaymaniyah.¹¹³ See [5.1.3](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

8.3 Levels of violence

Fatalities

- 8.3.1 UNAMI did not break down statistics for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Iraq Body Count provided the following statistics for civilian fatalities:

Governorate	2014	2015 (up to June)	2003-2015
Dohuk	1	0	26
Erbil	20	5	405
Sulaymaniyah	15	1	316

- 8.3.2 Based on IBC data between March 2003 and June 2015 a total of 747 civilians were killed across all the Kurdistan governorates. The average number killed per month was 5.
- 8.3.3 According to IBC data, the average number of civilians killed across all southern governorates per month in 2012-15 were as follows:

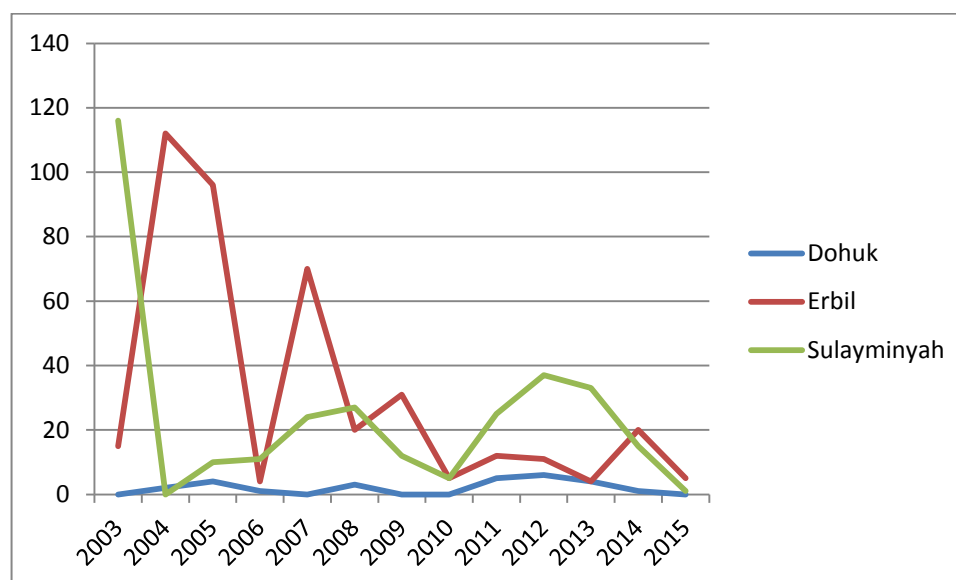
Year	Average number of civilians killed per month
2012	4.5
2013	3.4
2014	3
2015	0.5

¹¹³ Institute for the Study of War (ISW), Iraq Control of Terrain map, 3 February 2016, <http://iswresearch.blogspot.co.uk/2016/02/iraq-control-of-terrain-map-february-9.html>, accessed 7 March 2016

The Kurdistan governorate with the highest average fatality figure per month over this period was Sulayminyah (1.8). The second highest was Erbil (0.83). The lowest was Dohuk (0.23).

- 8.3.4 The following chart, using data from Iraq Body Count, shows civilian fatalities in the Kurdistan governorates from 2003 to June 2015:

Chart showing civilian fatalities in the Kurdistan governorates, 2003-15



[Back to Contents](#)

8.4 Displacement

- 8.4.1 The Kurdistan region accounts for 28% of all hosted IDPs in Iraq. The IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix gave the following breakdown:

Governorate	Individuals	Families	% of Iraq's IDP population
Dohuk	409,170	68,195	13%
Erbil	329,472	54,912	10%
Sulaymaniyah	162,678	27,113	5%

- 8.4.2 IDPs do not tend to originate from Kurdistan. See [5.3.2](#)

For general background on the KRI governorates see:

- [IOM, Erbil governorate profile, September 2014](#)
- [IOM, Dahuk governorate profile, September 2014](#)
- [IOM Sulaymaniyah governorate profile, September 2014](#)

[Back to Contents](#)

8.5 Human rights violations

- 8.5.1 The latest UNAMI/OHCHR report, covering May to October 2015, noted that Dohuk had seen Turkish airstrikes targeting the Turkish PKK. Six corpses and eight wounded people were received on 1 August by a hospital in the town of Soran following an air raid by Turkish fighter jets on PKK targets in the village of Zarkel, Rawanduz area, east of Erbil.¹¹⁴ In August, Turkish airstrikes allegedly hit Zharga and Mar Dawa villages, in the foot of the Qandil Mountains, in Pashdar district in Sulaymaniyah.¹¹⁵
- 8.5.2 The same report reported that on 12 August Daesh allegedly used chemical weapons against Peshmerga forces in Makhmour district, Erbil. This was supported by claims from German military intelligence.¹¹⁶

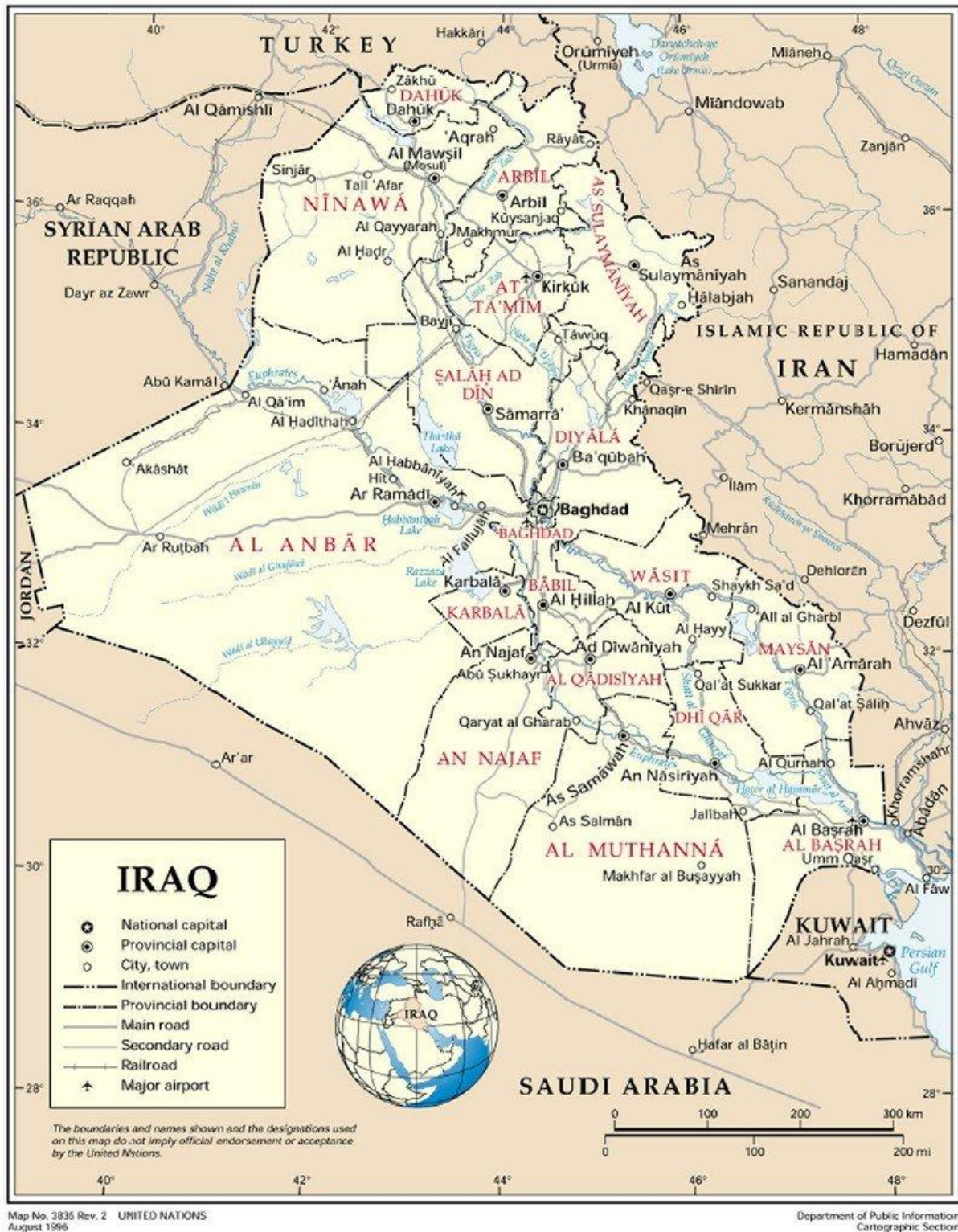
[Back to Contents](#)

¹¹⁴ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 3, accessed 2 February 2016

¹¹⁵ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 26, accessed 2 February 2016

¹¹⁶ United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 'Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 May – 31 October 2015', January 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMIRreport1May31October2015.pdf>, p. 17, accessed 2 February 2016

Annex A: Map of Iraq



117

117 http://map.vbgood.com/Iraq/iraq-map_un1996.jpg

Annex B: Letter from the British Embassy Baghdad, 'Violence in Baghdad by area', 29 March 2016



British Embassy
Baghdad

International Zone

Baghdad

www.fco.gov.uk

29 March 2016

ISSUE: Violence in Baghdad by Area

This letter has been compiled by staff of the British Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq. The letter does not reflect the opinions of the author (s) nor any policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The author (s) have compiled this letter in response to a request from UKBA and any further enquiries regarding its contents should be directed to UKBA.

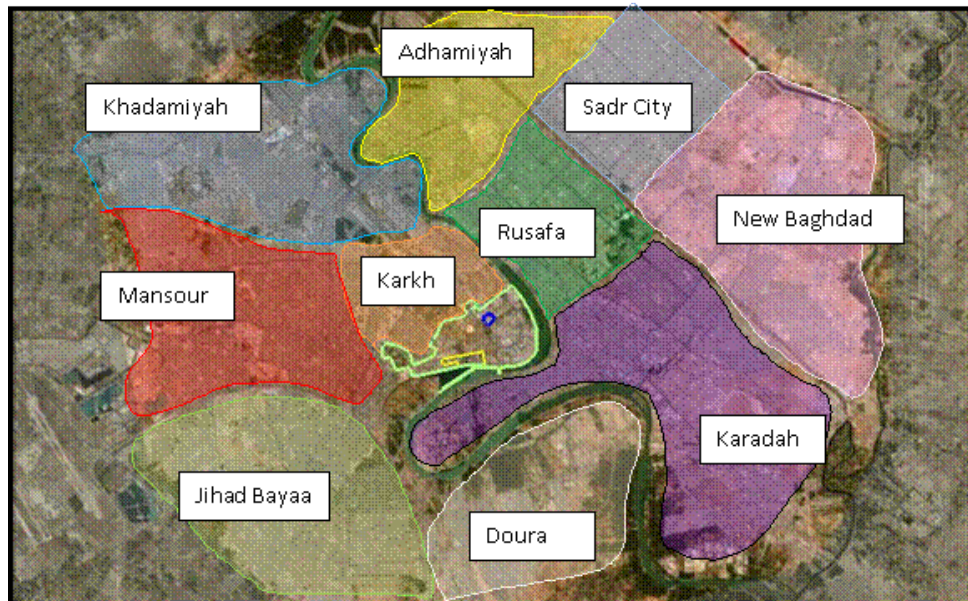
The Threat

Broadly speaking the threat in Baghdad can be broken down along ethno-sectarian lines between Sunni insurgent groups and Shia militias:

- **Sunni insurgents**, most notably Da'esh, remain tactically agile and continue to adapt and respond to the changing situation on the ground. Despite being constrained by logistical limitations and a lack of freedom of movement in Baghdad, Da'esh retains the capability to maintain its operational tempo in the capital. At present they are conducting a two-track campaign focussed on propagating sectarian discord through attacks targeting the majority Shia community in Baghdad whilst also attempting to undermine the Shia-led government by maintaining the perception of the Government of Iraq's (GoI) inability to maintain an effective security environment. On a tactical level this is played out in two different ways. Firstly, and accounting for the vast majority of their activity, their attacks are directed towards ISF and GoI personnel and civilians and comprise small roadside Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Under Vehicle IEDs (UVIEDs) alongside Small Arms Fire (SAF) attacks, including assassinations. These attacks can be targeted or random in nature but have little practical risk of large-scale collateral damage. Targeted individuals are typically singled out for attack due to a lack of security

awareness – driving clearly marked government vehicles or wearing uniform off-duty. Secondly, Da'esh and associated Sunni insurgent groups maintain the intent and capability to conduct standalone and co-ordinated high-intensity attacks. These are usually in the form of Vehicle Borne IEDs (VBIEDs), large-yield roadside IEDs and suicide attacks utilising VBIEDs or explosive vests. These attacks are capable of causing numerous casualties; however their lethality is far reduced from the types of devices seen between 2004 to 2007. Targets for these high intensity attacks tend to be Shia gathering areas, including cafés/restaurants, markets and mosques. Historically Sunni insurgents have conducted Indirect Fire (IDF) attacks in the capital but these have been a rare occurrence. During early 2014 suspected members of the Jaish Riyal al-Tariq ar Naqshabandiya (JRTN – Naqshabanidya Army) conducted a number of IDF attacks targeting Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) however despite the assessment that they retain the intent and (limited) capability to conduct future attacks, recent attacks in the area of BIAP have been attributed to Shia militias.

- **Shia militia** groups (SMGs) including Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), Khatib Hezbollah (KH) and the Promised Day Brigades (PDB) were historically seen as more capable than their Sunni insurgent counterparts and tended to use far more technologically advanced methods of attack. AAH were also held responsible for some of the most high profile kidnapping operations in Iraq including that of five British nationals abducted from the Ministry of Finance in Baghdad in May 2007. Shia militia conducted their respective campaigns against a backdrop of a dynamic political agenda driven by Iran who utilised the militias as a proxy force in Iraq against the coalition force presence. As such Shia militia were historically focused on attacks targeting coalition forces utilising conventional IEDs, IDF and SAF. In addition they utilised the much more effective Explosively Formed Projectile (EFP) IEDs to defeat coalition force protection measures to great effect. They also conducted a high-tempo of IDF attacks targeting the US Embassy in Baghdad. Shia militia were also involved in sectarian motivated attacks in the capital during the height of the insurgency including operating the notorious Shia 'Death Squads' that killed large numbers of Sunni civilians in a campaign of effective 'ethnic cleansing' in Baghdad. Following their respective ceasefires in 2008 and the withdrawal of coalition forces in 2011 Shia militia groups remained largely quiet, although they did continue to conduct non-attributable attacks. Following the Da'esh advance on northern and western Iraq in June 2014 Shia militia have mobilised in vast numbers operating largely under the umbrella of the Popular Mobilisation Force (PMF). Whilst heavily involved in fighting alongside the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) on the frontlines against Da'esh, Shia militia also maintain a heavy presence on the streets of Baghdad where they are conducting routine security patrols and checkpoints.



Kadhamiyah: Formerly a Sunni area in the Saddam era. Sunnis were largely driven out by Shia militia during sectarian fighting in 2006/7. The area is still mixed, but now with a larger Shia populace than was previously the case. Due to the high presence of ISF, attacks in the area have decreased. But Da'esh and associated Sunni insurgents groups remain active in the area and as such we continue to see sporadic high intensity attacks targeting gathering areas such as markets, mosques and restaurants as well as the use of IEDs, including MAIEDs, and SAF targeting the Shia community. The presence of the Kadhamiyah Shrine also means that we see targeting of Shia pilgrims in the area. These attacks typically comprise IDF and low-level IEDs on transit routes. The mass mobilisation of Shia militia groups in response to Da'esh advance in northern and western Iraq in June 2014 has resulted in an increase in sectarian motivated attacks on the Sunni community in the area. These attacks typically comprise SAF attacks targeting both individuals and properties and hand grenade attacks against houses.

Mansour: Levels of violent activity in Mansour tend to be lower than elsewhere in Baghdad. This is due in part to the sectarian make-up of the area – predominately Sunni. The majority of attacks in the city continue to target Shia citizens and areas. The lower level of activity is also due to the high number of Gol buildings and foreign embassies situated in central Mansour and the high profile security presence deployed to secure them. The majority of attacks that do take place in Mansour typically comprise low-yield IEDs targeting ISF and Gol personnel and SAF attacks. IEDs can have either RC or CW initiators, though RC is much more likely. There also continues to be a steady tempo of MAIED/SAF attacks against ISF and Gol workers in the general area. Western Mansour, in particular the Ameriyah and Ghazaliyah areas was historically linked to AQI. It is assessed that Da'esh may well use these areas as safe-havens from which to house insurgents and from which to mount operations in the city.

Karkh: This is a mixed area with a strong security presence. Many of the government ministries and foreign embassies are located here, and as such security is better. Day to day activity is low, with incidents very rare. Occasionally Sunni extremists will mount attacks in this area, using VBIEDs to target government

ministries (the last attack was a complex suicide attack targeting the Ministry of Justice on 14 March 2013).

Jihad Bayaa: This used to be a mixed area but is now almost wholly Shia. It does however sit along a number of ethnic fault lines with the Sunni dominated Mansour district to its north and ethnically mixed Doura district to its east. As a result it has increasingly witnessed some of the highest levels of violence in the city. On a day to day basis attacks take place targeting food stores and cafes and roadside IEDs are common place. SAF attacks are also a frequent occurrence including both targeted assassinations and random drive by shoots. Jihad Bayaa is also frequently exploited by Sunni insurgent groups conducting co-ordinated VBIED attacks targeting the local community. There continues to be a high presence of Shia militia groups in the area and as such sectarian attacks targeting the Sunni community have increased.

Doura: Previously a Sunni area, though now mixed. The security situation is generally good but has deteriorated somewhat over recent months. Attacks are still lower than the nearby Jihad Bayaa district and are typically targeted IEDs or UVIEDs against ISF or Gol workers.

Karradah: The most prosperous area of the city, housing many business interests, government ministries and foreign embassies. The area is ethnically mixed though with Shia predominance in the east. Islamification attacks continue with a number of attacks targeting shops selling alcohol. Roadside IED and SAF attacks targeting both ISF and civilians also continue. There was a general increase in the tempo of attacks in central Karradah during 2015, however incident numbers have once again reduced. Southern Karradah does however continue. The area remains susceptible to VBIED attacks due to the number of high profile businesses, including banks and hotels housing foreign visitors, and government ministries. Da'esh remain active in the area and continue to conduct attacks. Recent high profile attacks include the targeting of the Palestine Hotel with a VBIED in May 2015 and a suicide attack targeting Shia civilians on 29 March 2016.

Rusafa: A largely mixed population in a busy area, containing both the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Baghdad Police College (BPC). Attacks here are generally carried out by Sunni extremists targeting ISF with IEDs and MAIEDs. These attacks are again generally targeted and don't lead to collateral damage. Shia militia did use advanced IEDs in this area towards the end of 2011, though these were targeted against US private security companies and again did not lead to collateral damage. Previously attacks on US Forces or western interests were far bolder, with some allegations of ISF collusion. Da'esh and associated Sunni insurgent groups remain active in the area and continue to target Shia gathering areas including markets, mosques and restaurants with IEDs, VBIEDs and suicide attacks.

Adhamiyah: A largely Shia area with small Sunni enclaves. The threat is characterised by MAIEDs against ISF or government officials. The far eastern parts of Adhamiyah, along with Sadr City and New Baghdad are the areas where Sunni extremists are most likely to employ VBIEDs or IEDs in crowded areas in order to cause civilian casualties. These attacks are generally indiscriminate. SAF attacks targeting local civilians are also common place in the area with frequent reports of drive by shoots and assassinations.

Sadr City: Traditionally quite an impoverished area of Baghdad during the Saddam era, the area is entirely Shia. As such Sadr City is continually targeted by Da'esh and associated Sunni insurgent groups. VBIED and IED occur frequently. Criminality is also rife and SAF attacks are a frequent occurrence and probably attributable to in-fighting between different criminal gangs and Shia militia groups.

New Baghdad: An entirely Shia area of eastern Baghdad, which shares many of the characteristics of Sadr City although it is not as impoverished. New Baghdad continues to witness high levels of sectarian violence, including VBIED and suicide attacks targeting busy shopping areas. IED and SAF attacks are also relatively frequent albeit random in nature and not assessed as targeted.

British Embassy
Baghdad

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Annex C: Map of Baghdad, Institute for the Study of War, 10 August 2012



118

¹¹⁸ Institute for the Study of War, 'Map of Baghdad', 10 August 2012, <http://www.understandingwar.org/map/map-baghdad>, date accessed: 1 May 2015

Version Control and Contacts

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email [the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

Clearance

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **7 April 2016**
- this version approved by **Sally Weston, Deputy Director, Legal Strategy Team**
- approved on: **3 April 2016**

