



COI QUERY

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The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 24 April 2018. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.



COI QUERY RESPONSE

1. Role, activities and ranking of Asayish forces in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Possible differences between Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) Asayish forces, and their respective regions of responsibility

Role and activities of Asayish¹ forces in the KRI

In a report dated October 2016, Amnesty International (AI) notes that the Kurdistan Regional Security Council (KRSC) is composed of six divisions, 'of which the Asayish (security agency) and the Anti-Terrorism Directorate².

The official website of the KRSC states that:

'The Directorate General of Asayish is responsible for domestic security throughout the Kurdistan Region' and that its overall strategy is 'to counter domestic threats by working closely with government organizations and departments, including the KRG Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice'³.

The KRSC website mentions that 'Asayish deploys Directorates in provinces and smaller offices in districts and sub-districts throughout the Kurdistan Region'⁴. AI (2016) notes that the Asayish is composed of several directorates, including the General Security Directorate (Asayish Gishti), with headquarters in Erbil, as well as Asayish branches in all KRI governorates, in both the capital cities of governorates and smaller towns and villages. Finally, AI indicates that the Asayish operates detention facilities (for terrorism and security-related cases, drug crimes and other serious offences)⁵.

The KRSC website states that the Asayish's work is 'conducted within the framework of existing legislation with oversight from the Kurdistan Parliament and the KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] Council of Ministers' with 'Asayish's Director General report[ing] to both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor'⁶. According to information collected by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) in April 2016, however, 'the Asayish is the only institution in KRI that is not being subjected to external monitoring'. It further mentions several sources saying that 'the Asayish is linked directly to the president of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)' and another one saying that 'not even the parliament has the power to gain insight into working methods of the Asayish'. The same source also mentions that 'there may be a law regulating the activities of the Asayish, but during war time they

¹ 'Asayish' is also spelled 'Asayış' or 'Asayesh' and is the Kurdish term for 'security'. In this document, the spelling 'Asayish' will be used, unless quoting a source, which uses a different spelling.

² AI, 'Punished for Daesh's Crimes': *Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces*, 18 October 2016, ([url](#)), p. 18.

³ KRSC, *General Security (Asayish)*, n.d., ([url](#)).

⁴ KRSC, *General Security (Asayish)*, n.d., ([url](#)).

⁵ AI, 'Punished for Daesh's Crimes': *Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces*, 18 October 2016, ([url](#)), p. 18.

⁶ KRSC, *General Security (Asayish)*, n.d., ([url](#)).



can do what they want in order to maintain security', and that the force 'is carrying out law enforcement based on political instructions'⁷.

According to AI (2016):

'Law 5 of 2011 sets out the long list of the Asayish's responsibilities, which include the protection of public and private liberties [...] the security of official institutions and individuals; the security of airports, borders, dams and oil establishments; gathering information on and confronting threats to internal security; countering organized crime, terrorism and drug trafficking; and "following up" on cases of refugees, residents and foreign visitors in the KR'⁸.

The same source notes that the Asayish appears 'to be most involved in the arrest, detention and interrogation of terrorism suspects, including IDPs fleeing areas under the control of IS [Islamic State⁹]'¹⁰.

The DIS report (April 2016) indicates that, according to the law, Asayish is responsible for combating terrorism, drug trafficking, weapon trade, human trafficking, and for national security. It also mentions that, according to Human Rights Watch, the exact law enforcement powers of the Kurdish intelligence branches remain unclear¹¹.

Possible differences between the PUK and KDP Asayish forces, and their respective regions of responsibility

In a report dated 2016, AI mentions that the two leading Kurdish parties in Iraq, the KDP and the PUK, 'run their own security and intelligence agencies in the areas under their spheres of influence, namely Erbil and Dohuk governorates in the case of the KDP and Sulaymaniya governorate and parts of Kirkuk in the case of the PUK'¹².

A March 2018 report by the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI), an independent non-profit think tank based in Berlin¹³, mentions that 'although nominally united as the KRG's forces, the two largest fighting forces in the Peshmerga, Division 70 (est. 48,000 fighters) and Division 80 (est. 50,000 fighters), continue to report respectively to the PUK's and KDP's political bureaus', with both divisions having other subgroups within their structures, including the Asayish. The report continues:

⁷ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 40-41, 124, 169.

⁸ AI, *'Punished for Daesh's Crimes': Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces*, 18 October 2016, ([url](#)), p. 18.

⁹ The 'Islamic State' group is often also referred to as 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' (ISIS), 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant' (ISIL), or 'Daesh'. Since most reputable sources refer to the group under the name 'Islamic State', in this document, the abbreviation 'IS' will be used, unless quoting or citing a source, which uses one of the aforementioned alternative names (or their variations).

¹⁰ AI, *'Punished for Daesh's Crimes': Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces*, 18 October 2016, ([url](#)), p. 18.

¹¹ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), p. 40.

¹² AI, *'Punished for Daesh's Crimes': Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces*, 18 October 2016, ([url](#)), p. 18.

¹³ [Website](#).



'KDP Asayish, a police and intelligence unit for the KRG, also tended to be co-deployed with Division 80 and Zerevani¹⁴ in KDP controlled areas. On the PUK side, Division 70 units were often complemented by PUK counter-terrorism forces (called the "Deja Terror" forces) and PUK Asayish'¹⁵.

The consulted sources do not necessarily distinguish between KDP and PUK Asayish in terms of activities.

The GPPI report, however, mentions KDP Asayish taking part in the reclamation of the Rabi'a and Zummar subdistricts from IS in the second half of 2014, as well as providing security inside Zummar at the time of writing¹⁶. The report further mentions Kurdish presence in Tuz, stating that:

'PUK's Unit 70 was in charge of most Kurdish-controlled areas of Tuz and had its base in Khidr Wali town. However, Kurdish-controlled parts of the capital, Tuz Khurmatu, were ethnically mixed. In Kurdish areas of Tuz Khurmatu, there were two separate Asayish: one reporting to the PUK leadership and the other to the KDP'¹⁷.

In a 2016 report, AI documents security screenings conducted by the Asayish in the KRG-controlled areas. According to AI's interview with Adel Botani, the Deputy Director of the Asayish Gishti, these security checks 'take place on the basis of lists of "wanted names" compiled by security and intelligence agencies, photos and other intelligence, including information collected from informants'. Additionally, the Asayish detain internally displaced persons (IDPs) suspected of links with the IS¹⁸. Asked about the risk of IS sleeper cells in KRI and other Kurdish controlled areas, a source cited by the DIS said that 'Asayish is following all suspicious groups. In case terrorist sleeper cells are discovered, the Asayish will not spend time to sort this out through the court system, they will take them out right away'. The source also stated that while the Peshmerga is posted at the front line, the Asayish is posted at the main roads¹⁹.

Sources often point out the extensive role of the Asayish with regard to IDPs. For example, the DIS cites sources saying that 'IDPs need approval from the Asayish to change address, to change work, to get electricity in their homes, to go to health care clinics and schools etc., and there are no fixed criteria for the approval'²⁰. The Asayish also provides clearance to live in a house in the KRI and provides entry

¹⁴ Described by the report as 'a specially trained, paramilitary unit of the police force (sometimes described as a gendarmerie)'.
¹⁵ GPPI, *Iraq After ISIL: Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control*, March 2018, ([url](#)), p. 23.

¹⁶ GPPI, *Iraq After ISIL: Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control*, March 2018, ([url](#)), pp. 37, 39.

¹⁷ GPPI, *Iraq After ISIL: Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control*, March 2018, ([url](#)), p. 73.

¹⁸ AI, 'Punished for Daesh's Crimes': *Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces*, 18 October 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 32, 35.

¹⁹ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), p. 118.

²⁰ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 45-46.



permits to the KRI²¹. A report by UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (March 2016) mentions that among other responsibilities, local Asayish provide (upon request) a housing permit to Yazidi IDPs who wish to rent a house in an urban area in the KRI. The permit is also necessary in order to register with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement²². Additionally, the Asayish is involved in the management of IDP camps²³. The DIS report mentions that 'Each IDP family has a registration card given to them by the Asayish after screening of every family member. The Asayish keeps files of the IDP families. The registration card is not related to other registration systems in KRI'. Finally, the report mentions sources saying that 'the competency of registering non-governmental organisations (NGO) was taken out of the Ministry of Interior and transferred to the Asayish. Currently, NGOs need approval from the Asayish to provide help to IDPs'²⁴.

According to the DIS report, an IDP who wishes to move from one part of the KRI to another needs to obtain the approval from the Asayish offices in both the places from which and to which the person is moving. The report states that 'there is restriction of movement for IDPs':

'If an IDP is registered in for instance Dohuk, the IDP cannot move to Erbil. The sources emphasised that by constitution, everyone has total freedom of movement in Iraq, but the Asayish 'acts differently', meaning that the Asayish is the only agency that is not monitored in terms of whether their acts are legal[...]. In Sulaimania, the information card differs from that in other governorates, because the Asayish in Sulaimania is under the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), whereas the Asayish is under the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in Erbil and Dohuk'²⁵.

A report by the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) dated December 2016 reports on alleged expulsions, by Asayish, of certain families from Tilkaif to Duhok governorate, between November 2015 and January 2016, on account of being relatives of IS members. The report also mentions another expulsion of families, in April 2016, from Ninewa governorate to Duhok governorate, for security reasons²⁶.

Human Rights Watch reported twice (in December 2016 and July 2017) on the expulsion, by the Asayish, of particular groups from the KRI, specifically the area of Dohuk, because of their relatives'

²¹ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 54, 97.

²² UNHCR, *Relevant COI for Assessments on the Availability of an Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative (IFA/IRA) for Yazidis in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I)*, March 2016, ([url](#)), p. 4.

²³ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 43-44.

²⁴ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 115, 172.

²⁵ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), p. 171.

²⁶ UNAMI, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016*, 30 December 2016, ([url](#)), p. 24.



participation in armed groups. The December 2016 report concerned families who joined PKK-affiliated forces, while the July 2017 report refers to Yezidi families whose relatives joined Iraqi security forces²⁷.

The Asayish is mentioned in several sources as conducting, or taking part in, the destruction of households in the KRI. The DIS report cites a source according to whom 'Peshmerga, Asayish or affiliated forces operating in areas under the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) control destroyed scores of local houses, some of which were pointed out by Kurds who did not want Arabs living there', apparently in retaliation for IS destroying houses belonging to Kurds who worked for the Iraqi security forces²⁸. In this context, the report also mentions that 'according to the source (*a HRW senior researcher*), Kurdish Asayish carried out raids arresting more than two hundred local Arabs in villages between the Sinjar Mountain and Mosul dam in the first half of 2015'²⁹. A Human Rights Watch report from November 2016 mentions that Asayish participated in the destruction of houses in the villages of Sheikhan, Hamad Agha, Bardiya, and Barzan, in the Zummar subdistrict³⁰.

Other reports on the Asayish destroying households in the KRI concern the Kirkuk area and are mentioned in section 3.

Sources mention the participation of the Asayish in operations against IS in the 2015-2017 period.

According to a report by UNAMI, during the reporting period (1 November 2015 - 30 September 2016), 'ISF, supported by associated armed groups, and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Security Forces (KSF, composed of the Peshmerga and Asayish) continued to take ground from ISIL, retaking several areas, in particular in Ninewa and Anbar Governorates'³¹. In August 2017, BasNews - an independent and multilingual news agency based in Erbil³² - reports, in several articles, that the Asayish took part (along with Peshmerga forces) in mopping up operations against IS fighters³³ and rescue operations³⁴. One article mentions that the Asayish took part in the reclamation of Gwer in August 2014, the fight against IS and curbing recruitment into IS³⁵.

According to a BasNews article (December 2017), Asayish forces were prepared, along with the Kurdish police forces and Peshmerga, to confront Iraqi government forces advancing towards three

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *Iraq: Armed Groups Using Child Soldiers*, 22 December 2016 ([url](#)); Human Rights Watch, *Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Yezidi Fighters' Families Expelled*, 9 July 2017, ([url](#)).

²⁸ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), p. 126.

²⁹ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), p. 121.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Marked With an "X": Iraqi Kurdish Forces' Destruction of Villages, Homes in Conflict with ISIS*, 13 November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 5.

³¹ UNAMI, *Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Armed Conflict in Iraq: 1 November 2015 – 30 September 2016*, 30 December 2016, ([url](#)), p. 2.

³² [Website](#).

³³ BasNews, *Third IS Militant Killed in Mopping Up Campaign in Meqdadiyah*, 18 August 2017, ([url](#)).

³⁴ BasNews, *Asayish Forces Free Kidnapped Kurdish Child in Diyala*, 6 July 2017, ([url](#)).

³⁵ BasNews, *Asayish Senior Official: We Regard All People of Erbil as Security Members*, 22 August 2017, ([url](#)).



Peshmerga-held checkpoints between Gulala and Kalar³⁶. Rudaw reported that the two sides eventually reached an agreement leading to the withdrawal of Iraqi forces to their previous positions and joint action against IS activities in the region³⁷.

An article by Nalia Radio and Television (NRT), a Kurdish media network³⁸, from August 2017 states that KDP Asayish shut down an NRT TV studio, 'in which the broadcast of an outgoing program on the Kurdistan referendum was set to take place'. According to this source, 'KDP Asayish received the order to prevent the opening of the studio from Barzani'³⁹.

In its report dated 20 December 2017, Human Rights Watch documents a similar incident:

'on the evening of December 19 in Iraq's Kurdistan Region, following protests against unpaid government salaries in parts of the region, Kurdish Asayish security forces forced independent media outlet NRT to take its three TV channels off the air. Asayish also forced NRT to evacuate their offices, and confiscated some of the outlet's recording equipment'⁴⁰.

According to a Human Rights Watch report dated 8 February 2018, 'between August 28 and September 3, 2017, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Asayish security forces from the West of the Tigris branch carried out mass executions of alleged Islamic State (also known as ISIS) fighters in their custody'. The alleged execution took place in the vicinity of the town of Zummar⁴¹.

Ranking of Asayish forces

No recent information on the ranking of Asayish forces could be found amongst all sources consulted. Information dated 2009 can be obtained by consulting the following source: Chapman, Dennis P., *Security Forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government*, 2009, U.S. Army War College, ([url](#)), pp. 189-190.

2. Activities of Asayish forces in Kirkuk, especially in the Dibis district, between 2015 and 2017 and involvement in the fight against IS

The abovementioned responsibilities of the Asayish forces in KRI apply to Kirkuk as well. As such, the information provided below consists solely of those sources, which directly mention the Asayish's activities and fighting against IS, in Kirkuk, between 2015 and 2017.

A BasNews article (21 July 2017) on the possible creation of a Turkmen force in Kirkuk province, mentions that the local administration 'reiterated that Peshmerga and Asayish (Kurdish security) forces are responsible for safeguarding the lives and possession of all the components of Kirkuk'⁴².

³⁶ BasNews, *Iraqi Interior Minister Intervenes to Stop Potential Confrontation Between Peshmerga, Iraqi Forces*, 26 December 2017 ([url](#)).

³⁷ UPDATE: *Peshmerga report agreement with Iraqi army after Kifri standoff*, 26 December 2017, ([url](#)).

³⁸ [Website](#)

³⁹ NRT, *KDP-affiliated Asayish shut down NRT studio in Erbil*, 22 August 2017, ([url](#)).

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Iraq and Kurdistan Region Share Bad Behavior: Suppressing Media*, 20 December 2017 ([url](#)).

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch, *Kurdistan Regional Government: Allegations of Mass Executions*, 8 February 2018 ([url](#)).

⁴² BasNews, *Kirkuk Administration Refuses Creation of Turkmen Force*, 21 July 2017, ([url](#)).



A report by AI from November 2016 mentions the Asayish taking part in combating the IS in the Wahed Huzairan neighbourhood of Kirkuk on 21-22 October 2016⁴³.

According to Human Rights Watch's Middle East researcher Christophe Wilcke, cited in the aforementioned DIS report (April 2016) 'the Asayish and the Peshmerga forces are reportedly continuing to round up suspected Islamic State supporters or members in Kirkuk'. The DIS also cites an independent researcher saying 'the Asayish is monitoring people with regard to sleeper cells, including people in the mosques'⁴⁴.

A Human Rights Watch report, dated 21 December 2017, mentions interviewing 26 people who said that 'they had witnessed identifiable Asayish forces detain 27 of their relatives, all Sunni Arab men, between August 2015 and October 2017 in Kirkuk or south of the city'⁴⁵.

Another Human Rights Watch report, dated November 2016, details the account of villagers from the Kirkuk area, according to whom joint forces of Peshmerga, Asayish, and Kirkuk police or Kurdish civilians destroyed dozens of houses in several villages in the area. These included the village of Qarah Tappa in May 2016, the villages of Idris Khaz'al, Idris Khubbaz and Idris Hindiya Qadima in February 2015⁴⁶

The AI report from November 2016 further states that:

'Following the IS attacks on 21 October [2016], the Asayish intensified their patrols in predominantly Arab neighbourhoods as well as mixed neighbourhoods, such as al-Kadra, Hay al-Nasr, al-Asra wa al-Mafkudin, al-Wasiti and Shikat Tarek, and issued verbal warnings to Arab residents that they must return to their places of origin. The Asayish also confiscated identity cards and at times other essential documents such as food ration cards and sponsorship certificates, and instructed Arab men to report to local Asayish headquarters. Once men appeared at Asayish headquarters, some, particularly IDPs from outside Kirkuk, were told that their identity cards would only be returned once they gathered their families and belongings and left the governorate'⁴⁷.

The report continues:

'following the IS attack on 21 October on the Dibis power station and the killing of a reported 12 guards and employees, Kurdish forces have forcibly displaced the population of two villages in the district of Dibis, northwest of Kirkuk'. In one of these villages, Qoshkaya, the displacement was carried out by 'a mixed force of the Asayish and Peshmerga, which entered

⁴³ AI, 'Where are we supposed to go?' *Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk*, 7 November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 9.

⁴⁴ DIS, *The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); Access, Possibility of Protection, Security and Humanitarian Situation; Report from fact finding mission to Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and Beirut, Lebanon, 26 September to 6 October 2015*, 12 April 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 33-35, 120.

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Kurdistan Region of Iraq: 350 Prisoners 'Disappeared'*, 21 December 2017, ([url](#)).

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Marked With an "X": Iraqi Kurdish Forces' Destruction of Villages, Homes in Conflict with ISIS*, 13 November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 4.

⁴⁷ AI, 'Where are we supposed to go?' *Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk*, 7 November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 12.



the village on 21 October'. Security officials took villagers, who were unable to arrange their own transportation, to IDP camps in Kirkuk governorate, while confiscating their ID cards'⁴⁸.

According to AI, such practices by Kirkuk authorities towards Sunni Arab IDPs and local residents apparently pre-date the IS attack on 21 October 2016⁴⁹.

A report by Human Rights Watch dated 7 May 2017 states that KRG authorities, specifically Asayish security forces, forced Sunni Turkmen IDPs to leave Kirkuk city, and confiscated ID cards until they left. According to some interviewed Turkmen, Asayish had tried to force them out of Kirkuk in late 2016 and early 2017. The KRG denied that such practices were taking place⁵⁰.

Similar information was also provided in an October 2016 report by the Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR), which states that 'some displaced families from Salah al-Din and Al-Anbar to Kirkuk, were forced to hand over their identification documents to Asayish Forces [...], who would then force them to leave Kirkuk and go back to their cities'⁵¹.

According to a report by AI (November 2016), residents of Kirkuk's Wahed Huzairan neighbourhood reported the following:

'officials from the Asayish and Peshmerga had started rounding up men from 22 October, confiscating their identity cards and ordering them to vacate the area. In the following days, security forces went around the neighbourhood notifying residents that their homes would be destroyed'⁵².

One of the evicted persons stated that, the night prior to the demolition of his house on 25 October, 'a group of men in military dress, whom he identified as a mixed force of Asayish affiliated to either the Kurdistan Democratic Party or the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan based on their uniforms, went around the neighbourhood instructing him and his neighbours to vacate their homes by the following morning'. Another evicted resident stated that 'Asayish and Peshmerga officials were ordering people through loudspeakers and in person to vacate within hours or have their belongings destroyed along with their homes'. The resident also mentioned that 'IDPs from outside Kirkuk were instructed to go to the Asayish headquarters in the area' and 'that security forces evicting him were blaming IDPs for the attack carried out by IS: "Asayish and Peshmerga told us: 'We give martyrs to fight Daesh and you bring them here and harbour them in these houses'''⁵³.

The GPPI report dated March 2018 states that, in the Kirkuk district, 'generally, PUK forces controlled more of the territory, including Kirkuk city and most of the surrounding areas'⁵⁴. The report also mentions that 'there were both overlapping areas of control and mutually contested areas. Although

⁴⁸ AI, 'Where are we supposed to go?' *Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk*, 7 November 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 12-13.

⁴⁹ AI, 'Where are we supposed to go?' *Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk*, 7 November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 12.

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Iraq: Kirkuk Security Forces Expel Displaced Turkmen*, 7 May 2017, ([url](#)).

⁵¹ IOHR, *Asayish forces ask displaced people from Al-Anbar and Salah al-Din to leave Kirkuk*, 11 October 2016, ([url](#)).

⁵² AI, 'Where are we supposed to go?' *Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk*, 7 November 2016, ([url](#)), p. 10.

⁵³ AI, 'Where are we supposed to go?' *Destruction and forced displacement in Kirkuk*, 7 November 2016, ([url](#)), pp. 10-11.

⁵⁴ GPPI, *Iraq After ISIL: Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control*, March 2018, ([url](#)), p. 56.



the PUK-Peshmerga had the upper hand in Kirkuk city, both KDP- and PUK-affiliated Asayish forces as well as Kirkuk's local police also retained a prominent role in security⁵⁵.

AI (October 2016) mentions the case of IDPs/Sunni Arabs, who were detained by the Asayish in July 2016 (and prior to this date) at the Dibis checkpoint, and who were subsequently held and allegedly tortured by the Asayish, in Dibis or Dohuk⁵⁶.

Several articles by BasNews mention security operations carried out, in 2017, by the Asayish in Kirkuk province. These operations included: the February 2017 participation (along with Peshmerga and the Iraqi security service) in the arrest of 84 IS members, in camps bordering the Hawija district of Diyala province (Daquq administrative area), in southern Kirkuk⁵⁷; the killing⁵⁸ of a senior IS member, also in Hawija district, with the support of US-led coalition forces⁵⁹; and the arrest of an IS "terrorist" in Kirkuk city⁶⁰. Other reported operations include the arrest (along with Iraqi federal police units) of 25 suspected IS members in northwestern Kirkuk⁶¹; the seizure and dismantlement of a bomb in the car of a Hashd al-Shaabi/Hashd al-Difaa member, as well as his arrest, in Kirkuk's Huzayran-1 district⁶²; the arrest of five people 'wanted over "terrorism" charges'⁶³; and the participation, with Kirkuk police, in the arrest of 'some 15 people who were either wanted or suspected', in central Kirkuk's Qadesiyah neighbourhood and Rashad district⁶⁴.

3. Situation of Asayish members and their families in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and in Kirkuk region. Situation of Asayish members and their families who fled from Kirkuk region

BasNews states, in an article dated 23 October 2017, that 'two members of Garmiyan Security (Asayish) were killed in their home in Khanaqin city which was recently taken over by the Shi'ite militias of Hashd al-Shaabi'. The article specifies that the attack took place in 'Ali Bag village in Khanqin, a Kurdish disputed city in Diyala Province'. The victims, father and son, were from an Arab family and members of Khanaqin's Asayish branch. The attackers, a group of armed men, were 'allegedly affiliated with Hashd al-Shaabi'⁶⁵.

An article by Kurdistan 24 – an online Kurdish news service – from 8 January 2018 informs about the kidnapping of an Asayish member in Kirkuk's Runaki neighbourhood by 'unidentified gunmen riding in a civilian car'. The report quotes one witness saying that "'The Asayish was a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's (PUK) security apparatus'"⁶⁶.

⁵⁵ GPPI, *Iraq After ISIL: Sub-State Actors, Local Forces, and the Micro-Politics of Control*, March 2018, ([url](#)), p. 74.

⁵⁶ AI, 'Punished for Daesh's Crimes': Displaced Iraqis abused by militias and government forces, 18 October 2016, ([url](#)), p. 47.

⁵⁷ BasNews, *84 IS Members Arrested among Hawija IDPs*, 22 February 2017, ([url](#)).

⁵⁸ The report states that the participating unit was the 'Erbil Security Forces (Asayish)'.

⁵⁹ BasNews, *Coalition, Kurdish Forces Kill Senior IS Member in Hawija*, 19 February 2017, ([url](#)).

⁶⁰ BasNews, *Kirkuk Asayish Arrests IS Terrorist, Former Iraqi Soldier*, 21 February 2017, ([url](#)).

⁶¹ BasNews, *Kurdish Security Forces Capture 25 IS Suspects*, 17 August 2017, ([url](#)).

⁶² BasNews, *Kirkuk Security Arrests Hashd Al-Shaabi Member Carrying a Bomb*, 17 June 2017, ([url](#)).

⁶³ BasNews, *Five People Arrested in Kirkuk over "Terrorism" Charges*, 15 June 2017, ([url](#)).

⁶⁴ BasNews, *Dozens of IS Militants Killed in Western Kirkuk*, 24 May 2017, ([url](#)).

⁶⁵ BasNews, *Two Security Members Murdered in Hashd Al-Shaabi-held Khanaqin*, 23 October 2017, ([url](#)).

⁶⁶ Kurdistan24, *More violence in Kirkuk as Kurdish security member is kidnapped*, 8 January 2018, ([url](#)).



Rudaw – an Erbil-based Kurdish media network⁶⁷ – reports, on 18 February 2018, that a member of Kirkuk’s Asayish force, Samid Hassan Gharib, was killed by unknown gunmen, in front of his house in the city’s Huriyah neighbourhood. The article notes that the killing ‘comes amid a growing number of assassinations and kidnappings targeting Kurdish and Turkmen citizens in the disputed city’⁶⁸.

During the incursion of the Hashd al-Shaabi forces, Rudaw (18 October 2017) writes that ‘Kurdish residents continue to flee Kirkuk, fearing abuse at the hands of the Shiite Hashd al-Shaabi forces’. The article quotes one of the women who fled, saying “‘My husband is Asayesh. He is missing. We don’t know where he is”⁶⁹.

Regarding the overall presence of Iraqi security forces in Kirkuk and surrounding areas, an article by Rudaw, dated 26 March 2018, states that ‘Fearing the presence of ISIS in southern Kirkuk, Kurdish people from Daquq have abandoned their village homes because Iraqi forces are present only inside cities and the larger towns in southern and western Kirkuk, and Hashd al-Shaabi cannot function as a counterterror organization’⁷⁰.

A Rudaw article dated 3 April 2018 reports that, due to increasing ISIS activities in Kirkuk province, the United States (US) have pressured the Iraqi government to allow the return of Peshmerga forces to the area. The article mentions that a Kurdish Member of Parliament (MP) in Baghdad said that ‘once the Peshmerga has returned, Asayesh (Kurdish security units) will also return to the city administrated by the central government’⁷¹.

The article further cites Mohammed Dushiwani, a PUK MP in the Iraqi parliament :

“‘Baghdad and the Iraqi army have understood that ISIS poses threat to the triangle of Tikrit - Diyala - Kirkuk and that the federal forces cannot secure these areas, therefore they need the Peshmerga,” Dushiwani said. ... Concerning the matter of the redeployment of Asayesh forces alike to Kirkuk, Dushiwani said “‘Peshmerga and Asayesh are one force. Thus, we dare say if the Peshmerga returns, Asayesh will also come back”⁷².

However, in subsequent articles, dated 5 April 2018, the Peshmerga ministry denied that the forces were to be redeployed to ‘the disputed territories in the coming weeks’, refuting also any talks between the KRG and central government, as well as mediation on part of the US or the US-led coalition⁷³. Another Rudaw article, dated 10 April 2018, mentions an IDP from Kirkuk, speaking from Erbil, who ‘wants Peshmerga forces and Asayesh (Security) forces to return’⁷⁴.

⁶⁷ [Website](#)

⁶⁸ Rudaw, *Kurdish security officer killed in Kirkuk amid wave of assassinations*, 18 February 2018, ([url](#)).

⁶⁹ Rudaw, *Kurds continue to flee Kirkuk as violence mounts at hands of Hashd al-Shaabi*, 18 October 2017, ([url](#)).

⁷⁰ Rudaw, *Fearing ISIS, Kurds abandon homes in southern Kirkuk*, 26 March 2018, ([url](#)).

⁷¹ Rudaw, *Peshmerga, Kurdish security forces to return to Kirkuk under US auspices*, 3 April 2018, ([url](#)).

⁷² Rudaw, *Peshmerga, Kurdish security forces to return to Kirkuk under US auspices*, 3 April 2018, ([url](#)).

⁷³ Rudaw, *Peshmerga deny reports of re-deployment to disputed territories*, 5 April 2018, ([url](#)); NRT, *No official negotiation over return of Peshmerga to disputed areas: Jabar Yawar*, 5 April 2018, ([url](#)).

⁷⁴ Rudaw, *15,000 Kirkuk IDPs deprived from voting in Iraqi election*, 10 April 2018, ([url](#)).



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