

Irak : situation sécuritaire dans le district de Sinjar

Recherche rapide de l'analyse-pays

Berne, 28 novembre 2018

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1 Introduction

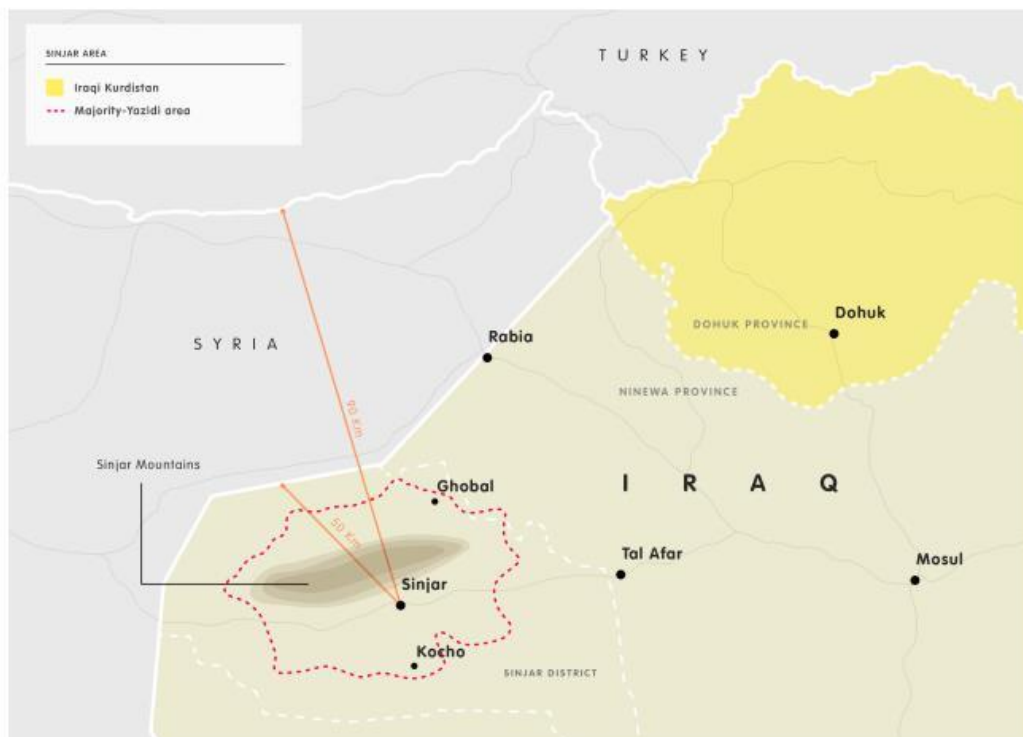
Le présent document a été rédigé par l'analyse-pays de l'Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés (OSAR) à la suite d'une demande qui lui a été adressée. Il se penche sur les questions suivantes:

Quelle est la situation sécuritaire dans le district de Sinjar (province de Ninawa) ? L' « État islamique » (EI) autoproclamé /Daesh est-il encore présent ou représente-t-il encore une menace dans ce district ?

1. Quels sont les principaux obstacles au retour des personnes déplacées et à la reconstruction dans le district de Sinjar ?
2. Est-il concevable qu'un enfant mineur irakien d'origine kurde, qui a passé plusieurs mois dans un camp de l'EI/Daesh dans le district de Sinjar, puisse à son retour subir des mesures de représailles de la part de la population locale ?

Pour répondre à ces questions, l'analyse-pays de l'OSAR s'est fondée sur des sources accessibles publiquement et disponibles dans les délais impartis (recherche rapide) ainsi que sur des renseignements d'expert-e-s.

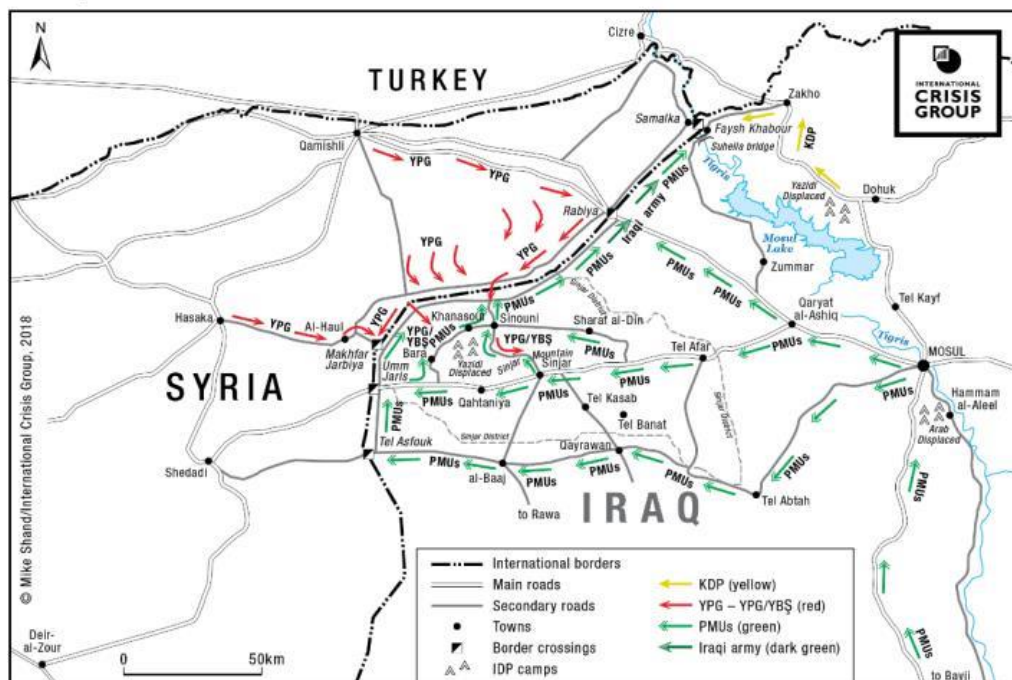
2 Situation sécuritaire dans le district de Sinjar



Source : European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), octobre 2018

Entre 2014 et 2015, l'EI/Daesh a massacré des milliers de civils yézidis dans le district de Sinjar et kidnappé un grand nombre de femmes et d'enfants. Depuis l'éviction de l'EI/Daesh fin 2015, la situation sécuritaire s'est complexifiée avec plusieurs groupes armés rivaux se disputant le contrôle du district. Selon *Foreign Policy* (FP), pendant l'occupation du district de Sinjar entre 2014 et 2015, le groupe EI/Daesh a massacré des milliers de civils yézidis et kidnappé un grand nombre de femmes et d'enfants, qui ont été envoyés en Syrie pour être y être vendus ou offerts comme esclaves sexuels (FP, 23 novembre 2018). Selon le *International Crisis Group* (ICG), depuis l'éviction de l'EI/Daesh du district de Sinjar fin 2015, l'occupation successive du district par des acteurs irakiens et non-irakiens a militarisé la population, fragmenté les élites et empêché le retour des personnes déplacées. Des groupes affiliés au *Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan* (PKK), notamment des Peshmergas soutenus par les États-Unis, ont pu sauver des yézidis et repousser l'EI/Daesh, mais sans parvenir à restaurer le gouvernement local. Ces groupes ont ensuite dominé le district de Sinjar, avec le *Parti Démocratique du Kurdistan* (KDP), soutenu par la Turquie, contrôlant d'autres groupes rivaux. La population locale a été recrutée dans ces différents groupes. Le résultat de ces rivalités est que le district est resté disputé et dangereux. L'année 2017 a vu le retour dans le district des forces de sécurité irakiennes ainsi que l'arrivée du groupe d'*Unités de Mobilisation Populaire* (PMU), une milice chiite soutenue par l'Iran (ICG, 20 février 2018). Selon FP, aucune des factions rivales ne contrôle complètement le district. Selon un commandant du groupe *Unités de résistance de Sinjar* (YBS), une milice yézidie forte de 3 000 combattants, affiliée au PKK, cité par FP, il n'y a pas de sécurité dans le district en raison de la présence du PMU et il dit craindre que si ce groupe finit par contrôler le district, les yézidis connaîtront une situation pire que sous l'EI/Daesh (FP, 23 novembre 2018). Selon le ICG, depuis octobre 2017, le PMU est devenu la force dominante sans que cela ne permette le début de la reconstruction et avec comme conséquence une plus grande dispersion de la communauté yézidie (ICG, 20 février 2018).

January 2018



Source : ICG, 20 février 2018

Des incidents de sécurité et des bombardements aériens en 2018. D'après le *Global Protection Cluster* (GPC) des Nations unies, la situation sécuritaire à Sinjar est complexe et constitue un problème majeur pour bon nombre de déplacés yézidis. Une source humanitaire, citée par le GPC, estimait qu'il y avait eu au moins 20 incidents de sécurité pendant le mois de mars 2018 (GPC, mars 2018). En août 2018, le site d'information *Rudaw* rapportait que la Turquie avait procédé à des bombardements aériens visant des zones du district de Sinjar sous le contrôle du groupe YBS (*Rudaw*, 15 août 2018).

L'EI/Daesh ne contrôle plus de territoires en Irak mais maintient et semble développer une capacité insurrectionnelle ainsi qu'une capacité à se déplacer et à atteindre des cibles dans le nord et le centre du pays. Selon le *Congressional Research Center* (CRS), bien que l'EI/Daesh n'ait aujourd'hui plus le contrôle de territoires en Irak, le groupe a débuté une guerre insurrectionnelle aussi bien en Irak qu'en Syrie dont le but à long terme reste l'instauration d'un califat. En octobre 2018, les forces de sécurité irakiennes continuaient de se battre contre des éléments de l'EI/Daesh dans plusieurs provinces, y compris la province de Ninewa. Selon des informations du gouvernement américain et des médias, l'EI/Daesh continue de mener des attaques dans les zones rurales dont le groupe avait le contrôle. Des analystes indépendants, cités par CRS, décrivent une dynamique où des éléments de l'EI/Daesh menacent, intimident et tuent des citoyens la nuit ou là où les forces irakiennes sont absentes (CRS, octobre 2018). Selon l'*Institute for the Study of War* (ISW), l'EI/Daesh est actuellement en train de reconstituer une force et une capacité insurrectionnelle aussi bien en Irak qu'en Syrie. Selon le *Département de la défense des États-Unis*, cité par ISW, l'EI/Daesh peut encore compter sur près de 30 000 combattants dans ces deux pays. ISW estime que l'EI/Daesh sera sous peu capable de lancer de nouvelles attaques d'envergure qui seront difficiles à contenir pour les forces de sécurité locales aussi bien en Syrie qu'en Irak. Même si l'EI/Daesh ne contrôle aujourd'hui que de petites zones dans le nord de l'Irak, il conserve la capacité de se déplacer et de frapper des cibles dans le nord et dans le centre du pays. Selon ISW, cette capacité de déplacement et de violence est en augmentation, surtout depuis qu'en octobre 2017 le gouvernement irakien a porté son attention sur le Kurdistan irakien (ISW, 2 octobre 2018). Selon FP, les yézidis continuent de craindre des cellules dormantes de l'EI/Daesh et un possible retour du groupe djihadiste à Sinjar (FP, 23 novembre 2018).

3 Obstacles au retour et à la reconstruction dans le district de Sinjar

Plus de 16 000 yézidis déplacés sont toujours en attente d'une amélioration avant d'envisager un retour. Selon l'ECFR, plus de 16000 yézidis déplacés en 2014 de Sinjar et de ses environs continuent de vivre dans un camp dans la province voisine de Dohuk. Les trois principaux obstacles à leur retour sont l'insécurité, notamment due à la présence de différentes factions armées, un manque de services de base et de compensation pour les maisons détruites, et une colère teintée de peur envers leurs voisins arabes. Certains yézidis ont peur que les attaques contre eux puissent se reproduire à l'avenir. D'autres estiment qu'un retour et une réconciliation ne sont pas concevables tant que les arabes qui ont

participé aux exactions contre les yézidis n'auront pas été jugés et tant que les femmes et enfants kidnappés par l'EI/Daesh n'auront pas été libérés.

Une situation sécuritaire tendue due à la présence des groupes armés et un manque de garanties en termes de protection qui limitent les retours. Selon l'ECFR, les yézidis ne font confiance ni aux forces de sécurité irakiennes, ni aux Peshmergas pour assurer leur sécurité. Ils se souviennent que les deux groupes ont fui devant l'arrivée de l'EI/Daesh en 2014, les laissant à la merci du groupe djihadiste. Les yézidis souhaitent une force internationale ou la capacité de se protéger eux-mêmes. (ECFR, octobre 2018). Selon le *Guardian*, depuis que les forces kurdes, menées par les Peshmergas, ont chassé l'EI/Daesh en 2015, les yézidis craignent de nouvelles attaques, non seulement de l'EI/Daesh mais également de la part de leur « libérateurs » kurdes. Beaucoup sont méfiants des groupes kurdes rivaux (*Guardian*, 25 juillet 2017). Selon FP, plus de 3 000 personnes continuent de vivre sous tentes dans un camp sur le flanc de la montagne, préférant affronter le froid plutôt que de rentrer à la maison. Beaucoup ont peur d'être à nouveau la cible d'attaques. Selon *Marie Fantappie*, citée par FP, la présence des groupes armés est le principal obstacle à la reconstruction, au déminage et au retour des yézidis (FP, 23 novembre 2018).

L'absence de reconstruction et le manque de services de base (eau, électricité) rend la ville de Sinjar largement inhabitable. Un grand nombre de personnes qui sont revenues dans le district n'ont pas pu retourner dans leurs villages d'origine. D'après FP, Sinjar est aujourd'hui une ville sans vie, en ruine et vidée de ses habitants (FP, 23 novembre 2018). Selon ICG, l'éviction de l'EI/Daesh en novembre 2015 a certes amené une forme de stabilité mais elle n'a pas permis de reconstruction politique ou économique. Il existe une possibilité que les yézidis de Sinjar déplacés dans la région kurde restent là-bas de façon permanente. La grande majorité du district de Sinjar reste inaccessible en raison de la présence des milices et du manque de progrès dans la reconstruction (ICG, 20 février 2018). Selon le Conseil norvégien pour les réfugiés (NRC), plus de 200 000 personnes, en majorité des yézidis, restent déplacées dans le nord de l'Irak et à l'étranger sans possibilités de retour. La ville de Sinjar reste largement inhabitable et la reconstruction n'a même pas encore débuté. Il manque des services de base comme l'eau et l'électricité ainsi que des écoles (NRC, 8 novembre 2018). Selon le GPC, en tout ce sont plus de 8 000 familles qui sont retournées dans le district de Sinjar, dont 20 pendant le mois de mars. La majorité sont dans une situation de déplacement secondaire, n'ayant pas pu retourner dans leur village d'origine. La principale raison pour retourner dans le district de Sinjar était le manque d'assistance et de moyens de subsistance dans leur région de déplacement (GPC, mars 2018).

4 Représailles contre des personnes soupçonnées d'avoir collaboré avec EI/Daesh

La peur de représailles et de violence contre des groupes ou des personnes, principalement des arabes sunnites, soupçonnées d'avoir soutenu l'EI/Daesh limite les retours. Selon le NRC, des habitants musulmans sunnites déplacés hésitent à revenir à Sinjar de peur de représailles de la part des yézidis ou des forces de sécurité locales (NRC,

8 novembre 2018). Selon l'Agence des Nations unies pour les réfugiés (HCR), dans les zones reprises à l'EI/Daesh, des groupes armés affiliés au PMU, des groupes tribaux et des forces de sécurité kurdes se sont livrés à des actes de représailles contre des arabes sunnites, des turkmènes et des personnes retournées soupçonnées d'avoir soutenu ou d'avoir été affiliées à l'EI/Daesh. Ces représailles comprenaient des arrestations et détentions arbitraires, des disparitions forcées, des exécutions extrajudiciaires, des déplacements forcés ainsi que la destruction de propriétés privées, de maisons, de mosquées ou même de villages tout entiers. Dans le district de Sinjar, des milices yézidiées s'en sont pris à des civils arabes sunnites, y compris des femmes et des enfants, qu'ils accusaient d'avoir collaboré avec l'EI/Daesh (UNHCR, 16 novembre 2016).

5 Sources

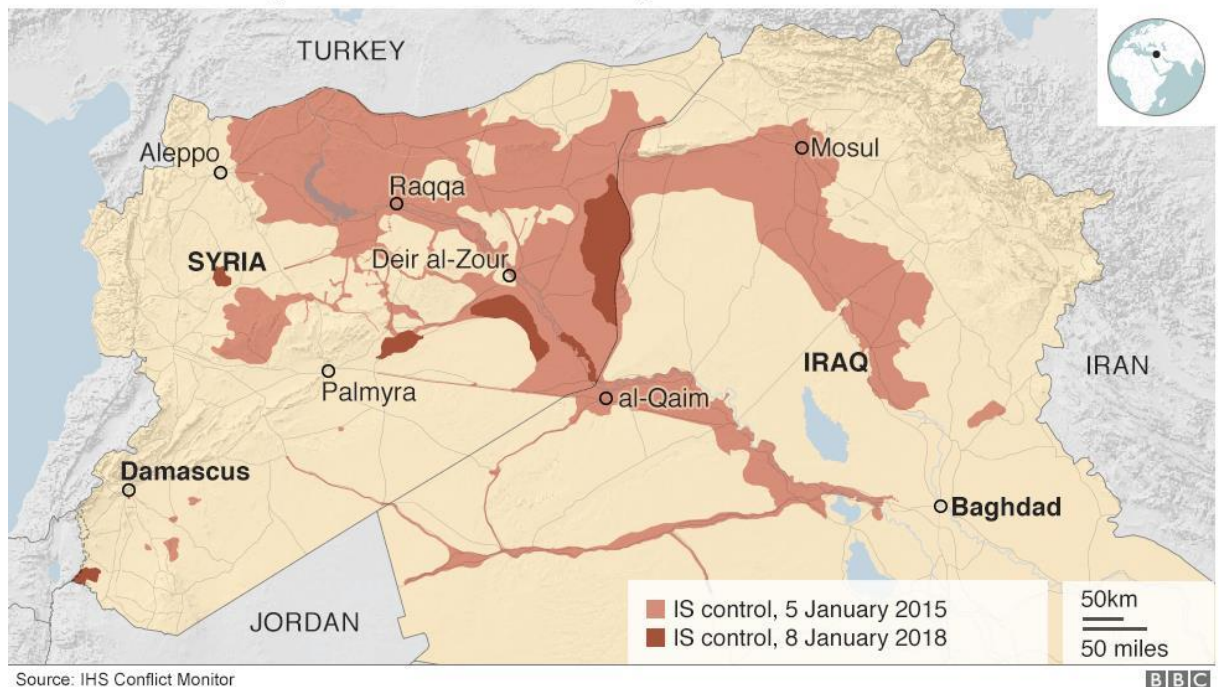
BBC, 28 mars 2018 :

« *The US-led coalition against so-called Islamic State (IS) says 98% of territory once claimed by the jihadist group across Iraq and Syria has been recaptured.*

Iraq's government announced in December 2017 that its war against IS was over, almost four years after the group first seized parts of the country.

That month also saw Russia's President Vladimir Putin announce a partial withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria, after IS was left controlling only a few pockets of land.

How much territory IS has lost since January 2015



The capture of Raqqa by a US-backed alliance of Syrian Kurdish and Arab fighters in October was seen as a major victory in the battle against IS. The city was the de facto capital of the "caliphate" the group declared.

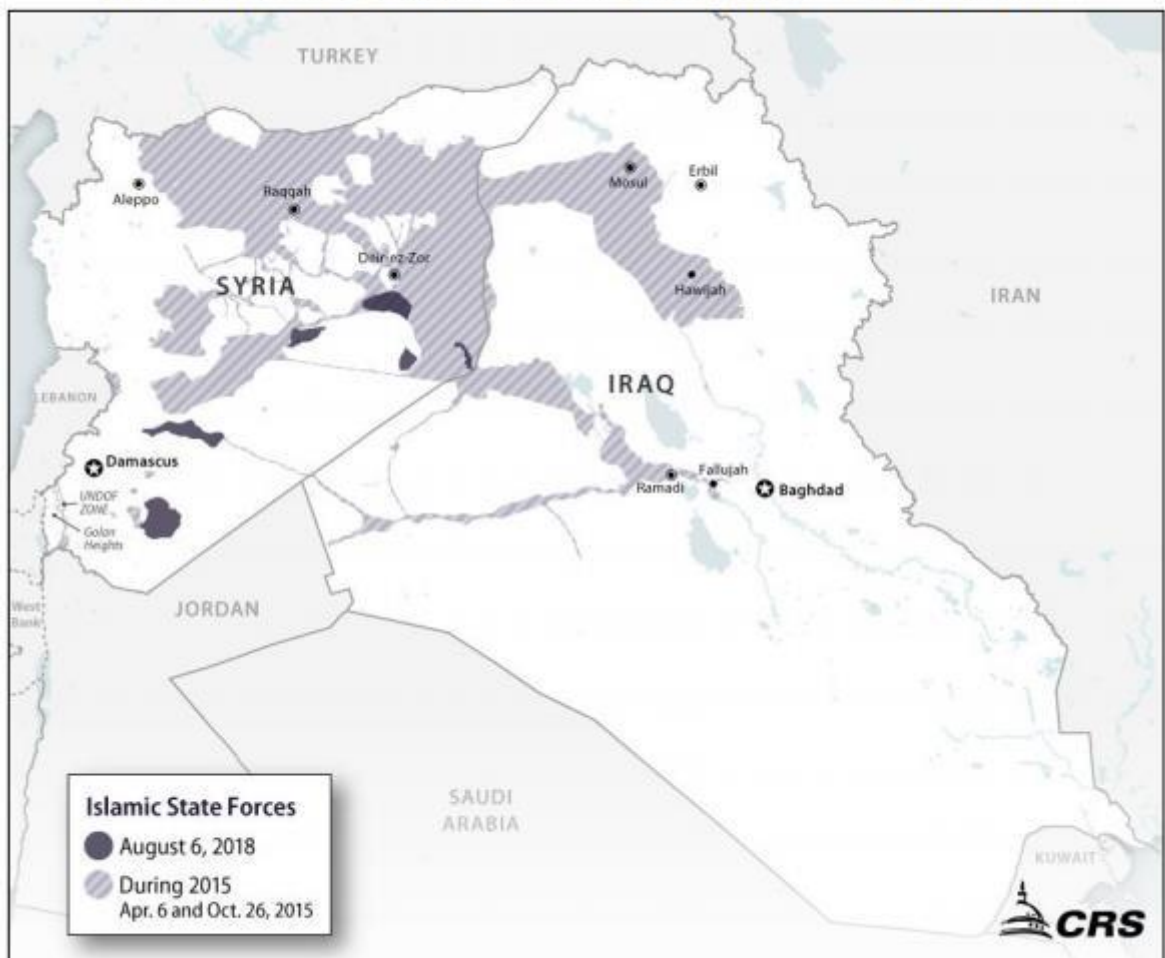
A few months earlier, in July 2017, Iraqi government forces retook the second city of Mosul, which fell to IS in 2014 when militants routed the Iraqi army.

At its peak, some 10 million people were living in territory under IS control. » Source: BBC, Islamic State and the crisis in Iraq and Syria in maps, 28 mars 2018: www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034.

CRS, octobre 2018 :

*« In July 2017, Prime Minister Haider al Abadi visited Mosul to mark the completion of major combat operations there against the Islamic State forces that had taken the city in June 2014. Iraqi forces subsequently retook the cities of Tal Afar and Hawijah, and launched operations in Anbar Governorate in October amid tensions elsewhere in territories disputed between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and national authorities. **On December 9, 2017, Iraqi officials announced victory against the Islamic State and declared a national holiday. Although the Islamic State's exclusive control over distinct territories in Iraq has now ended, the U.S. intelligence community told Congress in February 2018 that the Islamic State "has started—and probably will maintain—a robust insurgency in Iraq and Syria as part of a long-term strategy to ultimately enable the reemergence of its so-called caliphate."***

Figure 2. Islamic State Territorial Control in Syria and Iraq, 2015-2018

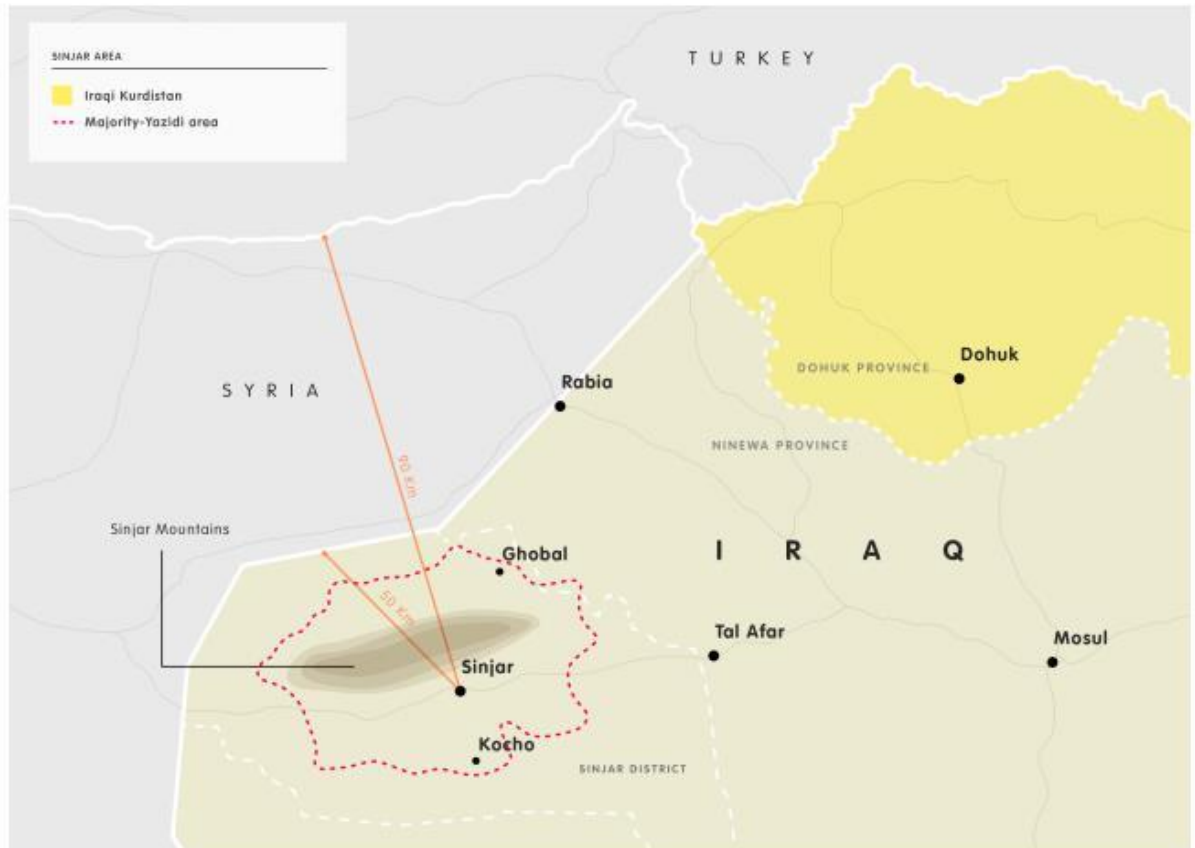


Source: Congressional Research Service using IHS Markit Conflict Monitor, ESRI, and U.S. State Department data.

As of October 2018, Iraqi security operations are ongoing in Anbar, Ninewa, Diyala, and Salah al Din against IS fighters. These operations are intended to disrupt IS fighters' efforts to reestablish themselves and keep them separated from population centers. Iraqi officials warn of IS efforts to use remaining safe havens in Syria to support infiltration of Iraq. Press reports and U.S. government reports describe continuing IS attacks, particularly in rural areas of governorates the group formerly controlled. Independent analysts describe dynamics in these areas in which IS fighters threaten, intimidate, and kill citizens in areas at night or where Iraq's national security forces are absent. In some areas, new displacement is occurring as civilians flee IS attacks. » Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS), Iraq: Issues in the 115th Congress, octobre 2018, p.4-5: <https://fas.org/sqp/crs/mideast/R45096.pdf>.

ECFR, octobre 2018 :

«



The KDP-dominated KRG and the government in Baghdad are also engaged in a pronounced security dispute. Iraq's army and the federal police monitor checkpoints leading into Sinjar. Less conspicuously, Shia-majority Hashd al-Shaabi units have turned abandoned homes in and around Sinjar city into makeshift bases, ignoring orders from Baghdad to withdraw from major towns and cities – especially those ISIS once held. Meanwhile, there are three local Yazidi Hashd al-Shaabi units in the area, each of which answers to a different pro-Iranian commander based in Baghdad. Peshmerga forces under Qassem Shesho are headquartered at the Yazidi shrine of Sharaffadin, at the base of Mount Sinjar; PKK affiliates, including the Yazidi YBS, are deployed on the mountain.

Shesho's 5,500 fighters (down from 8,000 at their peak) have a tense relationship with the Hashd al-Shaabi, and have engaged in clashes with PKK affiliates. He claims that both rivals "came as occupiers", and that the "illegitimate forces" affiliated with the PKK must be dislodged from the area. "In the beginning, we loved the Hashd al-Shaabi; we had a common enemy: Daesh," Qassem Shesho says, "but they looted [Sinjar]. That's the truth. We didn't see anything except respect from the Iraqi army. They came to protect us."

The role of the regional and international backers of various fighting forces in Sinjar further complicates the situation. For instance, Qassem Shesho is a proud member of the

KDP. The group briefly detained one of his relatives, Haider Shesho, an affiliate of the PUK, in April 2015 for attempting to form an independent armed Peshmerga unit early in the Sinjar crisis.

Qassem Shesho's Peshmerga forces vehemently oppose PKK affiliates, including the YBS. The US supported both the Peshmerga and the YBS (as well as the YPG/YPJ) in the fight against ISIS, despite the fact that it regards the PKK as a terrorist organisation.

NATO member Turkey, meanwhile, is allied with the (US-backed) Peshmerga against (US-backed) PKK affiliates in Iraq. Since November 2015, the YBS has received funds through the same Iraqi central government agency that pays the salaries of Hashd alShaabi fighters. Earlier this year, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan warned that his country would conduct an all-out offensive in Sinjar to combat PKK affiliates there, a threat Baghdad saw off with a rapid deployment of troops to the area. The Turkish air force has struck pro-PKK fighters in Sinjar – most recently, Zaki Shengali, a prominent Yazidi commander who it killed in mid-August. The hundreds of YBS fighters, both men and women, who stood in formation during Shengali's funeral on 18 August in the beige dust of Mount Sinjar were all in their teens or early twenties. They mourned alongside a few carloads of PKK members from Syria who the authorities had permitted to enter Iraq. Stationed at a border post various Kurdish forces once controlled, Iraqi army troops denied entry to most of the Syria-based, pro-PKK group that travelled to attend the funeral – a move Qassem Shesho applauded. The Peshmerga commander wants Baghdad to stamp its authority on the border.

For Qassem Shesho, negotiating a security agreement between Baghdad and Erbil is the first step to securing the kind of calm in the area that will encourage displaced families to return home. "They will find an agreement – they must, because if they don't they will both lose," he said. "We are Peshmerga, soldiers, and politics is not our business, but neither [Kurdistan] nor the central government will succeed here if they don't reach an agreement. We are all Iraqis."

However, many Yazidis have little faith in either Baghdad or Erbil to ensure their safety, given that both the Peshmerga and the Iraqi military initially crumbled as ISIS stormed across Ninewa province in summer 2014. Instead, they want international protection – or the capacity to protect themselves with minimal interference from stronger patrons. Among some Yazidis, there is deep enmity towards the KDP for abandoning Sinjar in 2014, and for its one-party governance of the area since 2003 – factors that drove some of them to join the YBS or the Hashd al-Shaabi. Ali Serhan Eissa, also known as Khan Ali, commands the Lalish Brigade of the Yazidi Hashd al-Shaabi. He wants Yazidis to protect Yazidis: "after 2003, the Americans handed us over to the KDP. The Iraqi state hasn't considered us first-class citizens since 2003, and Kurdistan sells us every few years for [KDP] interests based on what's happening between it and Baghdad. We are a political football caught between them," he says. "We want to protect ourselves because the central government and the Kurds failed in the past to protect us, and we paid the price." **He fears that the plethora of competing forces in Sinjar threatens its stability. But if every group feels it must protect its own people – its co-religionists or ethnic kin – then what of Iraqi nationalism and the sense of broader statehood? [...]**

Established in Dohuk province in November 2014, the Sharya camp for the displaced is home to more than 16,000 Yazidis from Sinjar and surrounding areas. **There are three key rea-**

sons why some residents say they cannot go home: insecurity, given the multitude of armed factions there; a lack of services, and of compensation for destroyed homes; and anger at, and fear of, their Arab neighbours. Many express a desire to emigrate, and for Arab tribes to remain exiled from Sinjar. “If we return, we fear that in a few years the same thing will happen again. If you live surrounded by enemies, it’s difficult,” a Yazidi man in his forties said. “When the government is weak, we will be attacked again.”

*Khider Domle – a Yazidi member of the peacebuilding centre at the University of Dohuk, and of NGO Sanad for Peacebuilding – says that **many Yazidis consider it premature to talk about reconciliation and return while some of their persecutors are at large and the fate of thousands of kidnapped Yazidis remains unknown.** He thinks that, in focusing on reconstruction and restoring services, the Iraqi government has its priorities backwards: “for people, what does that mean, ‘rebuilding’? That I will rebuild your house, but that Arab guy who participated in killing your father, killing your brothers, raping your sister – he’s 500 metres away and has returned and is living as if nothing has happened? Would you go back? Justice first.” **For Yazidis, the sorest spot is the issue of kidnapped and still-missing women and children. The Office of the Kidnapped in Dohuk is one of several organisations trying to rescue female captives of ISIS, sometimes paying ransoms for their release.** For those who have been freed, the Dohuk Survivors’ Centre, in collaboration with the Dohuk Health Ministry, provides free physical and psychological support – but community leaders say more is needed. » Source: European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), When the weapons fall silent: Reconciliation in Sinjar after ISIS, octobre 2018, p.18-25: www.ecfr.eu/page/-/when_the_weapons_fall_silent_reconciliation_in_sinjar_after_isisFINAL.pdf.*

FP, 23 novembre 2018 :

« Iraq’s strategically located town of Sinjar, now empty of civilians and devoid of life, lies buried beneath rubble. Although it was liberated from the Islamic State three years ago, the city remains in ruins—and has become rife with proxy militias vying for regional control.

Situated about 20 miles from the Syrian border, the town lies south of the Sinjar Mountains, a range that has always held geographic importance. Former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein reportedly used the mountains, which have a high point of 4,800 feet, to launch missiles into Israel during the Gulf War in the 1990s.

In recent years, Sinjar, home to the Yazidis, an ethno-religious minority, was the site of an Islamic State-led genocidal campaign. On Aug. 3, 2014, the terrorist group mercilessly attacked the town, slaughtering thousands of civilians and abducting women and girls who were then taken to Syria and sold or given as sex slaves to Islamic State fighters. Those who could make it sought refuge atop Sinjar’s rugged mountains. While under the jihadi group’s control, Sinjar provided a land corridor and supply route linking Islamic State strongholds in Syria and Iraq.

Since Sinjar’s liberation in late 2015, a slew of militias have poured in, creating a leadership vacuum that threatens the region’s stability. “Despite having been freed from ISIS presence ... the region de facto remains an occupied district where competing Iraqi and foreign agendas play out by coopting Yazidis into rival armed groups,” Maria

Fantappie, the senior advisor on Iraq at the International Crisis Group, told Foreign Policy. The continued presence of groups in the area is preventing reconstruction, demining, and the safe return of Yazidis to their homes, she added.

Four factions currently occupy Sinjar and its surrounding areas, none of which has full control: Iraqi government forces, the predominantly Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units; the Popular Mobilization Units (), an Iraqi government-sanctioned paramilitary force backed by Iran; and the Ezidixan Protection Force, a local Yazidi militia of 3,000 troops. Flags change at each checkpoint in and around the town as each party attempts to assert dominance.

Distrust is endemic, especially toward the Iranian-backed militia. "There is no security in Sinjar; it's not safe because of the (PMU)," said Edo Hayder Murad, deputy commander of the Yazidi Ezidixan forces in Sinjar town. "They want to use this area to control the top of the mountain, they want to control Israel, they want to control everything," he said, referring to Saddam's use of the mountain to fire missiles at Israel during the Gulf War.

He's calling on the international community to create an armed force based in Sinjar to protect the Yazidis. But talks with the Americans and Europeans have so far yielded few results. Cmdr. Murad even requested a one-on-one meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump but says he's yet to receive a response. He worries if the predominantly Shiite PMU takes over, his people will be even worse off than under the Islamic State.

According to a report by the International Crisis Group published in February, there's reason to worry. Since October 2017, the PMU has had the political and military upper hand in Sinjar and is providing a corridor for Iran to gain access to Syria, through territory the militia wrested from the Islamic State. In the past year, the PMU has also seized additional areas along the Syrian border. External forces will continue to fight for strategic control of Sinjar as long as the Iraqi government remains weak.

The PMU dismisses the notion that it's trying to gain regional power. "If we wanted to use Sinjar Mountain to control Israel or for any other purpose it would be something to be discussed in the future," Khala Ali, a PMU commander told FP. He acknowledged that Iran had directed the group to have a stronger presence in the region but refused to elaborate.

The Iraqi Army, meanwhile, has assured civilians that the area is safe, telling FP that the only reason Sinjar isn't fully under its control is because of a lack of troops, said Maj. Gen. Najim Abdullah al-Jubouri, the Nineveh Operations commander.

Meanwhile, thousands of Yazidis who fled their homes four years ago remain wary and unconvinced, as painful memories of being abandoned and left to die by the Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces when the Islamic State attacked, remains singed in their minds.

More than 3,000 people are still sheltering on the side of the picturesque mountain range, preferring to brace for another cold winter in tattered tents than return to their homes. On a visit to Sinjar in October, more than a dozen Yazidis said they don't trust any of the armed groups at the base of the mountain.

"If they don't bring us an international force we won't go back," said Baraket Hudeda Castle. The 38-year-old Yazidi, a former officer in the Iraqi Army, was once a captive of the Islamic State and has been living on the mountainside since his family paid the jihadi group \$60,000 for his release in the summer of 2014. "They told me they were going to cut off my head and mail it to my relatives," he said, cringing as he recounted the month he spent as a captive in Syria.

Herto Hamrash Minut, 74, was kidnapped by Islamic State fighters in his village near Sinjar four years ago and held for more than eight months. "They'd starve us; it was like living in hell," he said, hanging his head. Crouched outside his tent on the mountain surrounded by his two wives and 12 children, the frail old man traced his fingers over his ears. He lost most of his hearing during his time in captivity when his captors would hit him over the head. Minut's family has been living on the mountain for more than a year with no plans to leave; they don't even know who is responsible for their safety.

Most Yazidis on the mountain are pinning their hopes for a new future on one of their own. This year's Nobel Peace Prize co-winner, Nadia Murad, is from Sinjar district, and was recognized for her efforts to end sexual violence as a weapon of war. This year's Nobel Peace Prize co-winner, Nadia Murad, is from Sinjar district, and was recognized for her efforts to end sexual violence as a weapon of war. Murad was one of an estimated 6,500 Yazidi women and girls abducted and sold into sexual slavery when the Islamic State attacked in 2014. She managed to escape and make her way to Germany, where she now lives as a refugee and runs Nadia's Initiative, an advocacy organization.

"We suffered but didn't give up. We were not helped and rescued when ISIS attacked, but I hope this recognition means that the international community will help us recover from this genocide and will prevent such attacks against other communities like us in the future," Murad told FP.

The 25-year-old is donating all her prize money to the organization and hopes the award will convince the Iraqi government as well as other countries to form a special task force to rescue the estimated 3,000 remaining Yazidi women and girls still held captive. Her organization is concerned that if real steps aren't taken to help the community recover from the genocide that the Yazidis will forever disappear from the region.

"She was the first person to speak out and be courageous and talk about what happened to us. The most important thing she can help us do now is to bring back the Yazidi prisoners and help clean our land," said Morat Alias, a Yazidi living on the mountain.

*In October, the United States announced it was giving more than \$178 million to support vulnerable communities in Iraq, specifically focusing on religious minorities, bringing the total amount of U.S assistance for vulnerable communities to nearly \$300 million since the 2017 fiscal year, according to the State Department. **But despite such shows of support, reconstruction in Sinjar is sluggish and a deeply skeptical Yazidi community is still too terrified to return, nervous that they'll be targeted again.***

Littered throughout the city's dilapidated streets, remnants of the Islamic State's brutal reign linger while fresh pledges of allegiance continue to surface posing a constant reminder that nearby sleeper cells lurk in the dark. Scribbled on the side of a house

read the words, “ISIS will stay forever,” written in August by a 12-year-old boy, according to a neighbor.

“I think one day ISIS will come back,” said Qasim Morat, a local living in Sinjar. “It’s an ideology and you can’t get rid of them by killing.” » Source: Foreign Policy, ISIS May Be Gone, But Iraq’s Yazidis Are Still Suffering, 23 novembre 2018: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/23/isis-may-be-gone-but-iraqs-yazidis-are-still-suffering-sinjar-ezidixan-pmu-nadia-murad/>.

GPC, mars 2018 :

« The security situation in Sinjar remains complex, fuelling anxiety, in particular among displaced Sinjar Yazidis. Reports from a humanitarian safety source indicate that at least 20 different security incidents were recorded in Sinjar in the month of March. Physical safety and security remain key concerns for the population. Returnees in Sinjar indicated their intention to return to their previous areas of displacement in KR-I should new fighting erupt. However, population movements from Sinjar to Dohuk remain minimal for the moment.

Small-scale returns to Sinjar have been reported. According to the DTM figures, a total of 8,197 families returned to Sinjar district by the end of March, indicating that 20 families returned this month. According to the information collected through protection assessments conducted in Sinjar City, an indicative number of 3,000 households have reportedly returned to the area by the end of March. The majority of the assessed returnees are reportedly in a situation of secondary displacement as the majority have not been able to return to their village of origin. The lack of livelihood opportunities in the areas of displacement is reportedly among the main push factors to consider to return to the areas of origin. » Source: Global Protection Cluster (GPC), Ninewa Returnees Profile - March 2018, mars 2018: www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1434539/1930_1528451749_returnees-profile-ninewa-march-2018.pdf.

Guardian, 25 juillet 2017:

« Attention has now moved from Iraq to the presence of Isis in Syria, and the battle for Raqqa. As Iraq’s politicians and their military patrons prepare to congratulate themselves, the Yazidi community looks on from displacement camps, rented homes or forced asylum overseas. Almost two years after it was cleared of Isis by Kurdish forces, Sinjar town remains in ruins. A new wave of fighting for Sinjar district is under way, with Turkey eyeing a violent incursion after bombing the area in April. The idea that this represents “liberation” is seen by Yazidis as a bad joke. The UN and others have tried to recognise and document the genocide, but justice looks a long way off. Meanwhile, the battle for survival of the women and girls who were taken by Isis continues long after their return.

Sinjar was recaptured from Isis by Kurdish forces, led by the peshmerga, in November 2015. Since then the peshmerga and other Kurdish armed groups have been in a hostile standoff with each other, with rival groups providing arms, training and patronage to local Yazidis. Brightly coloured flags of the various groups flutter above their respec-

tive checkpoints, which are sometimes only metres apart along roads that were recently controlled by Isis.

Yazidis now fear renewed attacks not just from Isis, but also from their Kurdish liberators. Yazidis themselves are not politically homogenous, and many distrust the rival Kurdish groups. By May 2016, despite the liberation, only 3,220 families had returned to Sinjar district.

While the infighting goes on, Isis stands only to gain. Yazidis are stuck in a complex series of client-patron relationships with Kurdish leaders, in which ethnic identification is used in exchange for promises of safety. Meanwhile, the Yazidis remain unable to define their future, militarily or politically. While military clashes continue, any political settlement to the rivalry between liberating forces looks a long way off. » Source: Guardian, Slaves of Isis: the long walk of the Yazidi women, 25 juillet 2017: www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/25/slaves-of-isis-the-long-walk-of-the-yazidi-women.

ICG, 20 février 2018:

*« Seized by Islamic State (ISIS) militants in August 2014, Sinjar, a majority-Yazidi district on Iraq's north-western border with Syria, has been the scene of tragedy: a genocidal campaign of killings, rape, abductions and enslavement, and the surviving community's exodus to safer-ground camps in the adjacent Kurdish region. **Incremental efforts to drive ISIS out of Sinjar, starting in November 2015, have brought peace but no political or economic recovery. The district's occupation by a succession of Iraqi and non-Iraqi sub-state actors has militarised the population, fragmented the elites and prevented the return of the displaced. Only the effective re-entry of the Iraqi state, mediating between factions and reinstating local governance, can fully stabilise Sinjar, lay the ground-work for reconstruction, allow the displaced to return and end foreign interference.***

The problems in Sinjar have their origin in the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and removal of the Saddam Hussein regime. Dysfunctional governance and sectarian strife reduced the role of both the federal government and the administration of Ninewa governorate, in which Sinjar is located, to a symbolic one. Real power was exercised by the party that took advantage of the administrative and security vacuum, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The KDP co-opted local elites to perform the routine tasks of rule. Yet it won little popularity. It treated the Yazidis, a distinct ethno-religious minority group, as Kurds, which many resent, and as secondclass Kurds at that – which they resent even more. Moreover, it barely disguised its ambition, opposed by many Yazidis, to annex Sinjar to the Kurdish region.

*The KDP made itself still more unpopular by withdrawing its forces from Sinjar ahead of the ISIS assault, leaving the population to the jihadists' mercy. **Affiliates of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish guerrilla movement in Turkey, stepped into the breach, rescuing ISIS's surviving Yazidi victims with the help of U.S. airpower and, over time, pushing back ISIS without, however, restoring local government. These groups then ruled parts of Sinjar, with the KDP controlling others, each recruiting local fighters into their rival militias but neglecting to serve the interests of the Sinjar population, most of whom remained displaced. The standoff between the PKK affiliates and the Turkey-backed KDP kept the area contested and unsafe.***

The escalating U.S.-supported battle against ISIS in 2017 saw the return of Iraqi state security forces to northern Iraq, accompanied by Iran-backed Shiite militias, the Hashd al-Shaabi, known in English as Popular Mobilisation Units (PMUs). First, they defeated ISIS in Mosul, and then, in mid-October, following an independence referendum organised by the Kurdistan regional government (KRG) that backfired, the PMUs went further. Supported by the government of Prime Minister Haider alAbadi, encouraged by Iran and given a green light by Turkey, they drove the KDP out of Sinjar and marginalised the PKK affiliates – Turkey's target. (Turkey, along with the U.S. and the European Union, designates the PKK as a terrorist organisation.) The skeletal, KDP-leaning district council and administrative bodies, mainly composed of Yazidis, fled to the Iraqi Kurdish region, joining their Yazidi constituents. Rather than jumpstarting reconstruction and governance, PMU rule since October 2017 has further dispersed the Yazidi community.

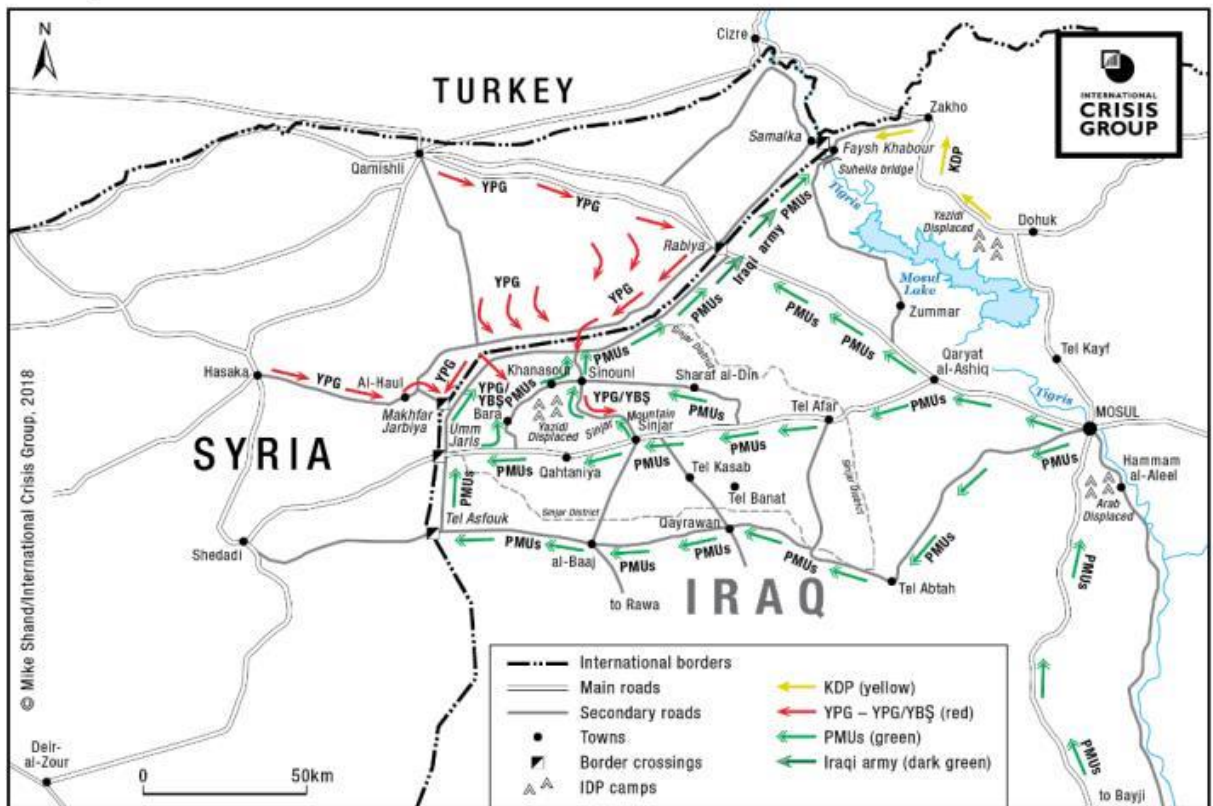
As long as the Iraqi government remains weak, Sinjar will be fought over by external forces because of its strategic location close to the borders with Syria and Turkey. ISIS's military defeat now provides an opportunity for the Abadi government, keen to regain sovereignty over all of Iraq ahead of national elections in May 2018, to set things right. Abadi should incorporate fighters of competing militias into a unified police force and restore governance via administrative institutions that open their doors to skilled local personnel regardless of which outside actor they aligned themselves with in the recent past.

Whether Abadi is capable of such an approach is an open question. The problems in Sinjar reflect the broader challenge of demobilising militias and integrating their fighters into state security forces, lest they undermine central authority and prevent the emergence of functioning state institutions. What happens in Sinjar may thus point to the prime minister's political fate and the country's general direction. One potent enemy may have been defeated, but the battle for Iraq's political soul is far from over. [...]

Liberated from ISIS fighters intent on annihilating the Yazidi minority and freed of the KDP and PUK bent on annexing Sinjar to the Kurdish region, Sinjar nonetheless remains a disputed district. Yazidis displaced in the Kurdish region may see their temporary exile turn permanent, as most of the district remains off limits to them due to militia control and lack of reconstruction and development. Yazidi elites have been increasingly fragmented and disempowered by a decade-long competition between the Kurdish region and Baghdad, an intra-Kurdish feud between the KDP and PKK/YPG/YBŞ, and, most recently, the military and financial tutelage of the PMUs.

Baghdad's continued absence from Sinjar will have negative repercussions for both the Abadi government and the Yazidis seeking to return to a normal life. The most viable way forward for Baghdad would be to leverage what its rival, the KDP, has built over the last decade: a local administrative elite that will formally remain in power until elections in May 2018. Even though this elite largely comprises personnel who either support the KDP or have proved willing to work with it, they possess the skills needed for the restoration of functioning governance institutions in Sinjar. With the KDP militarily excluded from the area, this elite could proffer its administrative and technocratic know-how without the KDP imposing political restrictions on the allocation of reconstruction funds based on loyalty. [...]

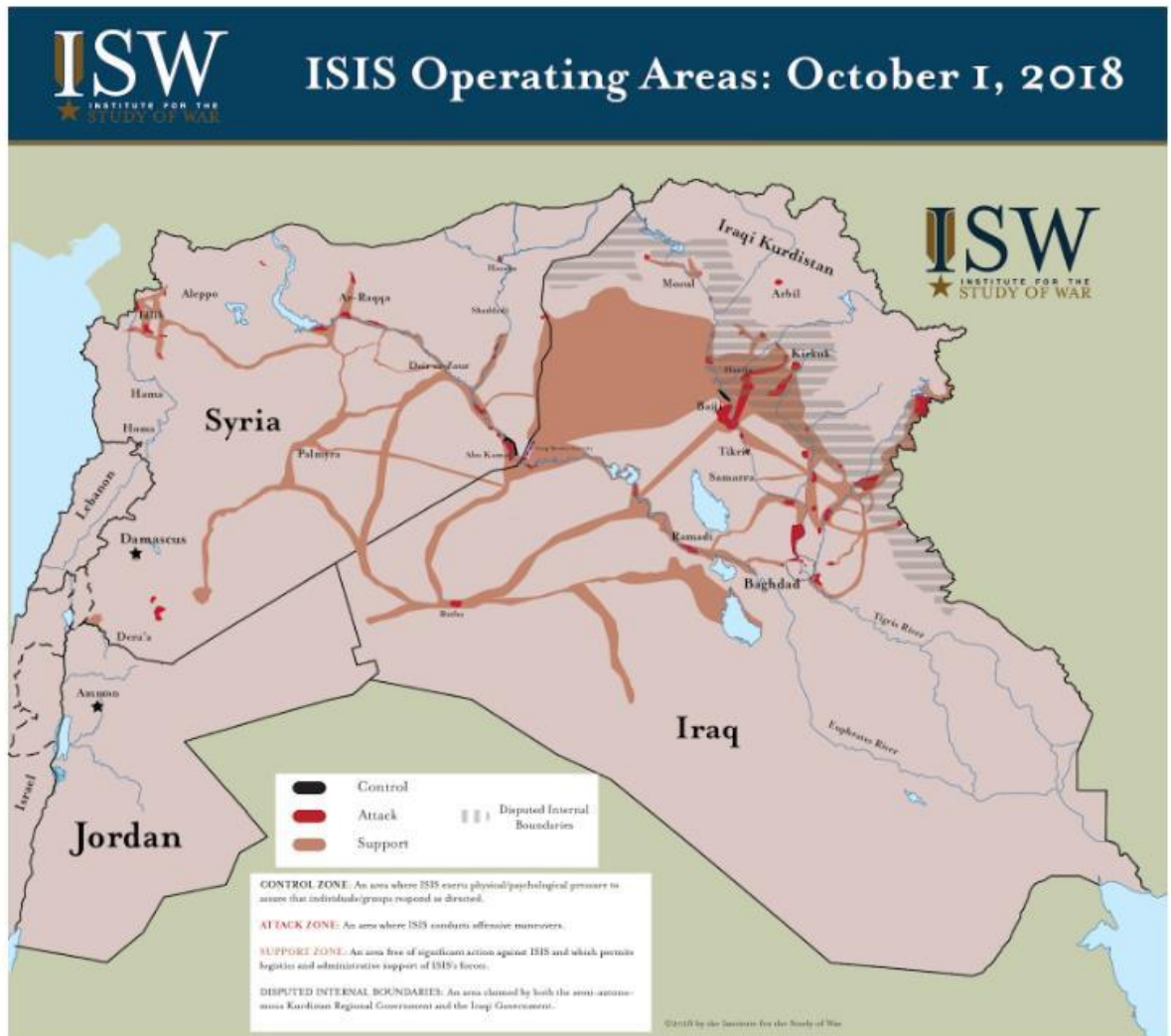
January 2018



» Source: International Crisis Group (ICG), Winning the Post-ISIS Battle for Iraq in Sinjar, 20 février 2018, p. i-ii; 24: https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/183-winning-the-post-isis-battle-for-iraq-in-sinjar_0.pdf.

ISW, 2 octobre 2018:

« *The Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS) is reconstituting a capable insurgent force in Iraq and Syria despite efforts to prevent its recovery by the U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition. The U.S. Department of Defense stated in August 2018 that ISIS retains nearly 30,000 fighters across Iraq and Syria and is “more capable” than Al-Qaeda in Iraq - ISIS’s predecessor - at its peak in 2006 - 2007. ISIS is waging an effective campaign to reestablish durable support zones while raising funds and rebuilding command-and-control over its remnant forces. On its current trajectory, ISIS could regain sufficient strength to mount a renewed insurgency that once again threatens to overmatch local security forces in both Iraq and Syria. The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) is issuing a map update depicting ISIS’s current operating areas based on an analysis of its activity from January 1, 2018 to October 1, 2018.*



Note: This map depicts ISIS's operating areas in Iraq and Syria as of October 1, 2018. The graphic presents an assessment of ISIS's control, support, and attack zones based on openly available reporting from January 1, 2018 to October 1, 2018. ISW's rigorous methodology conforms to the doctrinal definitions used by the U.S. Armed Forces. Control zones are areas in which ISIS controls and governs civilian populations. Support zones are areas in which ISIS retains the ability to conduct logistics and administrative support functions. Attack zones are areas in which ISIS conducts kinetic attacks against civilians, infrastructure, and local security forces. ISW will publish updates to this assessment as appropriate.

The U.S. Anti-ISIS Campaign has not eliminated the global threat posed by ISIS despite largely accomplishing its stated objectives in Iraq and Syria. The campaign aimed to destroy ISIS's physical caliphate and "drive down [its] capability" to the point where local forces could maintain security with limited international support. **In Iraq, the U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition accomplished this mission by April 2018 after finishing the last urban clearing operations in Anbar Province in Western Iraq. The Coalition scaled down its operations to a Building Partner Capacity (BPC) effort aimed at enabling Iraqis to "independently manage" a continued insurgency by ISIS.** In Syria, the U.S. and its local partner forces are now attacking a final ISIS territorial stronghold near the Syrian-Iraqi border. ISIS has nonetheless already restructured its operations to return to a regional insurgency. The Pentagon stated in August 2018 that ISIS retains nearly 30,000 fighters across Iraq and Syria and is "more ca-

pable” than Al-Qaeda in Iraq - ISIS’s predecessor - at its peak in 2006 - 2007. ISIS is now waging an effective campaign to reestablish durable support zones while raising funds and rebuilding command-and-control over its remnant forces. On its current trajectory, ISIS could regain sufficient strength to mount a renewed insurgency that once again threatens to overmatch local security forces in both Iraq and Syria despite support from the Coalition.

ISIS is waging an effective campaign to reestablish durable support zones across Iraq and deny the rehabilitation of communities liberated by the U.S. Anti-ISIS Campaign. **ISIS retains a small control zone where it continues to govern a local population north of Baiji in Northern Iraq. It also retains established support zones in areas south of Kirkuk City including Daquq, Hawija, Riyadh, and Rashad Districts as well as rural areas around Lake Hamrin in the Diyala River Valley. ISIS possesses the ability to move freely across this terrain at night and is actively waging attacks to expand its freedom of movement during the day. Its activities have thus far been limited to small arms attacks, targeted assassinations, and suicide vests (SVESTs). ISIS is steadily scaling up the rate of these attacks, conducting as many as four assassinations per week across Northern and Central Iraq. This violence has expelled civilians from small villages in Diyala and Kirkuk Provinces. ISIS also retains a durable support zone in the Hamrin Mountains, where it appears to base some of its leadership. Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) regularly claim to kill senior militants during clearing operations in the area.[3] In Baghdad, ISIS’s attack pattern indicates that it is likely reconstituting support and logistical networks throughout the Baghdad Belts, replicating its safe havens in 2006 - 2007. ISIS has not yet returned to the systematic use of vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs), which were a hallmark of its resurgence in 2011 - 2013. ISIS may cross this threshold soon. The Iraqi Ministry of Interior claimed to disrupt an ISIS VBIED cell north of Baghdad on September 6.**

ISIS has also established a support zone along the Iraqi-Iranian border that it is using to project capability into Iran. ISIS remnants (including Kurdish Salafi-Jihadist group Ansar al-Islam) have maintained a support zone in the Halabja Mountains in Iraqi Kurdistan since late 2016. Ansar al-Islam pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2014 but remained a distinct unit within its command structure. ISIS fighters from Ansar al-Islam conducted the major spectacular attack in Tehran during Ramadan in June 2017. A similar cell later deployed into Iran and clashed with the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in January 2018. A senior leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Peshmerga stated in February 2018 that Ansar al-Islam is leveraging its cross-border links and local knowledge to facilitate infiltration into Iran.[5] ISIS is expanding its support base in Iraqi Kurdistan beyond the Halabja Mountains. Local Kurdish forces have detained numerous alleged cells in Sulaymaniyah Province in Northern Iraq since January 2018. [...]

ISIS’s resurgence will likely accelerate as the Anti-ISIS Campaign falls down the priority list of the Government of Iraq. Iraq shifted its focus towards Iraqi Kurdistan in October 2017 after the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) held a contested independence referendum in September 2017, triggering a military response from both Iraq and Iran in the contested city of Kirkuk. The subsequent military standoff between the Government of Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan disrupted operations against ISIS and created opportunities for ISIS to expand in the Disputed Internal Boundaries (DIBs) with Iraqi Kurdistan.

Iraq’s May 2018 Parliamentary Elections and subsequent political developments have further disrupted the ability of the Government of Iraq to prioritize the Anti-ISIS Campaign. A grow-

ing protest movement in Southern Iraq divided the government and disrupted clearing operations against ISIS. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi redeployed part of the elite Iraqi Counterterrorism Services (CTS) to secure government installations in Southern Iraq on July 13. The CTS is the preeminent force against ISIS in Iraq and works closely with the U.S. Anti-ISIS Coalition. Abadi similarly redeployed part of the Iraqi Emergency Response Division from the DIBs to Southern Iraq on September 9, further degrading security in Northern Iraq. » Source: Institute for the Study of War (ISW), ISIS's Second Resurgence, 2 octobre 2018: <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2018/10/isiss-second-resurgence.html>.

NRC, 8 novembre 2018:

« **Three years since Sinjar was retaken from Islamic State group, more than 200,000 people, mostly Yazidis, remain displaced in northern Iraq and abroad, with no homes to return to. While the plight of Yazidi victims was highlighted last month through the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Yazidi survivor Nadia Murad, the city remains largely uninhabitable. Unlike elsewhere in Iraq where reconstruction is slowly happening, in Sinjar it never even started. Meanwhile Sunni Muslim neighbours are afraid to return, fearing reprisals from community members or local security forces.**

The Norwegian Refugee Council is releasing interviews with Yazidi survivors from Sinjar.

“Three years since the retaking of Sinjar from Islamic State group, this place is still a ghost town,” said NRC’s media coordinator in Iraq, Tom Peyre-Costa, who collected the interviews. “Streets are empty, you barely see anyone. Hundreds of thousands of Yazidis are still displaced across the country and **cannot come back because of security issues and also because of the lack of basic services such as water and electricity.** There is an urgent need to rebuild schools and hospitals otherwise this place is going to stay empty.”

NRC’s needs assessment in Sinjar found that it urgently lacks health centres, schools and security. People who fled from Sinjar also report high levels of psychological distress requiring long term psychosocial support. » Source: Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Sinjar: Three years on, Yazidis have nowhere to return, 8 novembre 2018: www.nrc.no/news/2018/november/sinjar-three-years-on-yazidis-have-nowhere-to-return/.

Rudaw, 15 août 2018:

« **Turkish war planes struck YBS-held areas of Shingal on Wednesday, killing local PKK head Zaki Shingali.**

Khal Ali, a former YBS commander and a current Hashd al-Shaabi official, confirmed the killing of Zaki Shingali, the leader of all PKK forces in Shingal.

He added four YBS fighters were killed and Haval Mazlum, the general commander of YBS in Shingal was wounded.

The Turkish military confirmed a joint operation between it and national intelligence carried out a joint operation on Wednesday in Shingal against the PKK and KCK, killing Ismail Ozden, also known as Zaki Shingali.

Acting Snune Mayor Khudaida Chuke told Rudaw that the jets targeted checkpoints of the Shingal Protection Units (YBS).

Qasim Shasho, a Peshmerga commander in Shingal, told Rudaw Turkish forces targeted a convoy of four YBS vehicles.

A Yezidi activist group tweeted they were "very worried" about "more than five explosions."

The YBS, with ties to the PKK, has previously said it would only incorporate locals.

Snune is a sub-district of Shingal, located in northwestern Iraq in the Kurdistan Region. The Shingal region is the Yezidi homeland.

A Yezidi organization's executive director, Yazda co-founder Murad Ismael, tweeted that ISIS survivors were in the southern Shingal town of Kocho to mourn four years after the genocide.

The YBS convoy had returned from the fourth anniversary of the Yezidis massacre in Kocho village while they were targeted in the Sikne area near Snune, according to Shasho.

The bombing came a day after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi visited Ankara where he met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Abadi had said in his meeting with Erodgan that Iraq would not allow any group to threaten neighboring Turkey using Iraq's territory. » Source: Rudaw, Turkey strikes YBS vehicles in Shingal, killing local PKK leader, 15 août 2018: www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/150820182.

UNHCR, 16 novembre 2016 :

« In areas retaken from ISIS, forces affiliated with the PMUs, tribal groups and Kurdish security forces have reportedly engaged in widespread reprisal acts against Sunni Arab and Turkmen inhabitants and returnees on account of their real or perceived support for or affiliation with ISIS. Reported abuses include arbitrary arrest and abduction, forced disappearance, extra-judicial killing, forced displacement and the looting and deliberate burning and destruction of homes, shops and mosques, and, in some cases, the deliberate destruction of whole villages.

In Sinjar District (Ninewa), Yazidi self-defence groups have reportedly also been implicated in retaliatory attacks against Sunni Arab civilians, including women and children. Areas retaken from ISIS reportedly see instances of inter- and intra-tribal violence as some Sunni Arab tribes, or parts of them, may have sided with ISIS while others stayed on the side-lines or fought against the group. Members of Sunni Arab families or tribes known or perceived to have cooperated with ISIS have reportedly been subjected to extra-judicial forms of justice by tribes or families opposing ISIS.

According to reports, local authorities, security forces and tribes in several areas ordered the eviction and expulsion of whole families from their home areas on account of their or other family members' real or perceived ISIS affiliation. Furthermore, individuals, families or tribes suspected of having been affiliated with ISIS have been prevented from returning to their areas of origin. In some instances, Kurdish security forces and forces affiliated with the PMU have also been accused of deliberately destroying Sunni Arab and Sunni Turkmen villages in reprisal acts and/or to prevent returns in order to consolidate control over an area. For example, the entire population of the Sunni Arab town of Jurf Al-Sakhr (Babel Governorate, estimated population of 70,000 to 80,000) has reportedly been barred from returning by the ISF and forces affiliated with the PMUs. Militiamen were also reportedly seen burning down homes in the town after it was retaken from ISIS in late October 2014. Local authorities and tribes have reportedly also banned the return of families or tribes identified as having been associated with ISIS. » Source: UNHCR, UNHCR position on returns to Iraq, 14 novembre 2016, p.11-12: www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1100836/90_1479283205_2016-11-14-unhcr-position-iraq-returns.pdf.

L'OSAR est l'association faîtière nationale des organisations suisses d'aide aux réfugiés. Neutre sur le plan politique et confessionnel, elle s'engage pour que la Suisse respecte ses engagements en matière de protection contre les persécutions conformément à la Convention de Genève relative au statut des réfugiés. Les activités de l'OSAR sont financées par des mandats de la Confédération et par des dons de particuliers, de fondations, de communes et de cantons.

Vous trouverez les publications de l'Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés OSAR sur l'Irak ainsi que sur d'autres pays d'origine de requérant-e-s d'asile sous www.osar.ch/pays-dorigine.

La newsletter de l'OSAR vous informe des nouvelles publications. Inscription sous www.osar.ch/newsletter.