



## **Iraq – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 16 October 2014**

### **Information regarding indiscriminate violence in Iraq.**

Research revealed numerous reports on recent sectarian violence in Iraq, of which the following is a representative sample.

A Voice of America News report states:

“Gunmen stormed an apartment building in a Baghdad neighborhood Saturday, killing at least 29 people, mostly women. Iraqi police report finding bodies scattered throughout the building and blood streaming down the stairs. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack and the motive is also unknown.” (Voice of America News (12 July 2014) *Gunmen Kill 29 in Baghdad Apartment*)

A Human Rights Watch report states:

“Government-backed militias have been kidnapping and killing Sunni civilians throughout Iraq’s Baghdad, Diyala, and Hilla provinces over the past five months. The killings and abductions mark a serious escalation in sectarian violence at a time when the armed conflict between government forces and Sunni insurgents is intensifying. Human Rights Watch documented the killings of 61 Sunni men between June 1 and July 9, 2014, and the killing of at least 48 Sunni men in March and April in villages and towns around Baghdad, an area known as the “Baghdad Belt.” Witnesses and medical and government sources said that militias were responsible in each case. In many cases, witnesses identified the militia as Asa’ib Ahl al-Haqq (League of the Righteous), commonly referred to as Asa’ib.” (Human Rights Watch (31 July 2014) *Iraq: Pro-Government Militias’ Trail of Death*)

See also section of this report headed “Rise of Militias as Security Forces Collapse” which states:

“The forensic pathologists told Human Rights Watch of numerous other killings they believe militias had carried out. Human Rights Watch was unable to confirm the identities or affiliations of those responsible. During the week of June 30, they said, the morgue received the bodies of 23 Sunnis from Muqdadiyah, a town south of Baghdad in the ‘Baghdad Belt’ area where there has been considerable sectarian conflict. ‘It appeared to be a mass execution of tribal sheikhs, because they were all killed at the same time during a meeting,’ said one doctor. The doctor said the killings matched a pattern of killings in the area that began in March. ‘Many times the bodies don’t come here, because their families are too scared,’ he said. ‘But when they do, it’s always the same – groups of Sunni men shot in the head.’ On June 22, the morgue received the bodies of three Sunni men from Hay al-`Amal, a butcher, his son, and an engineer, the forensic doctors said. ‘They were tortured,’ said

one doctor, 'and there were hematomas all over their bodies. The butcher's family told me that the militia that took them asked them for ransom and the family paid it, but they shot them anyway.' Forensic doctors said that many of the bodies of Sunnis shot to death that arrive in the morgue come from Saidiyya, Dora, Ghazaliyya, Shoa'la, Washash, and Mansour, areas throughout Baghdad that are 'under the control of Asa'ib.' 'The bodies are shot the same way, found the same way,' the doctors said. 'The militias have become so strong they don't care about hiding their executions anymore. Many of the bodies stay here for weeks because their families are too scared to come pick them up, since Asa'ib watches this neighborhood.'" (ibid)

A Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report states:

"A wave of bombings has struck Baghdad and southern Iraq, killing at least 54 people amid heightened sectarian tensions. One of the deadliest of the August 25 bombings targeted a Shi'ite place of worship in eastern Baghdad, killing 11 people. Police say a suicide bomber moved into a crowd of worshippers attending noon prayers in the capital's New Baghdad area. Two car bombs killed another 11 people in a mainly Shi'ite district. In Baghdad's predominantly Sunni southern Dora district, a roadside bomb exploded near a police patrol, but instead hit a civilian car, killing three. Two other civilians were killed when a bomb exploded in an outdoor market in northern Baghdad's largely Sunni Shaab neighborhood. Meanwhile, two bombs hit the Shi'ite shrine city of Karbala. The Associated Press (AP) news agency reported 12 people killed in those attacks, but the death toll could not immediately be confirmed. One bomb exploded near the headquarters building of the governorate, the other exploded near a mosque full of refugees. Two car bombs also exploded in Hillah, south of Karbala, killing 11 people according to AP. One of the bombs exploded in a public square in the center of the city. The other exploded at a parking area in the heart of the city. The attacks come three days after suspected Shi'ite militiamen killed 70 Sunni worshippers at a mosque northeast of Baghdad." (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (25 August 2014) *Wave Of Bombings Hits Baghdad, Southern Iraq*)

See also Los Angeles Times article on these bombings which states:

"A wave of bombings struck majority Shiite Muslim areas of Baghdad and two other Iraqi cities Monday, killing at least four dozen people in an apparently worsening spiral of sectarian bloodletting. In the deadliest incident, a suicide bomber set off his explosives in a mosque, killing 11 people and wounding more than 30 in a poor, predominantly Shiite section of the capital known as New Baghdad. The Sunni Muslim extremist group Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, which it said was in revenge for a mass shooting Friday of Sunni worshippers at a mosque in Diyala province, east of Baghdad, that left 73 people dead. Four other car bombs exploded in neighborhoods across Baghdad, killing 21 people, while deadly blasts also shook the Shiite holy city of Karbala and the majority Shiite city of Hillah, south of Baghdad." (Los Angeles Times (25 August 2014) *Bombings in Iraq target Shiites, kill dozens*)

An article from UK newspaper The Times states:

“The latest round of blood-letting followed an attack on a Sunni mosque in Diyala, where 70 people died when gunmen opened fire on Friday. Daily revenge attacks in Baghdad have claimed the lives of at least 73 people since then, and 33 more have been killed by car bombs in Karbala and Hillah, south of the city. Sunnis have blamed Iraq's Shia militias, who are helping the army in the fight against Islamic State jihadists. Shias have blamed Islamic State and the country's hardline Sunni politicians who, they say, have fomented sectarian hatred.” (The Times (29 August 2014) *Suicide bombers return to wreak havoc in Baghdad*)

A BBC News report states:

“Suicide bombs and mortar fire have killed at least 15 people in a Shia district of Baghdad, Iraqi officials say. The attacks took place in the northern Kadhimiya area of the capital, the site of a major Shia shrine. At least 30 people were wounded in the evening assault, police reported. Earlier attacks in and around the capital killed 15 people, the Associated Press news agency says. In Kadhimiya, police officers say a suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden car into a security checkpoint. Minutes later, mortar shells landed in different parts of the district, hitting houses and a bus station. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks, but Sunni militants, including members of the Islamic State (IS) group, often target Iraq's Shia majority, whom they regard as heretics.” (BBC News (19 September 2014) *Baghdad blasts hit Shia district*)

An Agence France Presse report states:

“A car bomb exploded near a market in the Shiite neighbourhood of Sadr City in Baghdad on Tuesday, killing at least 14 people, Iraqi police and medical sources said. “The car was parked near a market, there are at least 14 killed,” a police colonel told AFP. A medical source in the capital confirmed the death toll said at least 37 were also wounded. Iraqi forces backed by US and French warplanes are battling fighters from the Islamic State jihadist group on several fronts across the country. The militants stopped their advance several dozen kilometres (miles) from Baghdad but the city has continued to be plagued by daily violence, including car bombs mainly targeting Shiite areas. Abductions and executions mostly targeting Sunnis are also frequent.” (Agence France Presse (23 September 2014) *Baghdad car bomb kills at least 14*)

A Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report states:

“Iraqi police and medical officials say at least 25 people were killed in car bomb and mortar attacks in mainly Shi'ite Muslim districts of Baghdad on September 30. Authorities say two car bombs exploded on busy streets in the al-Horreyya district of the Iraqi capital, killing at least 20 people and wounding 35.” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (30 September 2014) *Car Bombs, Mortars Kill 25 In Baghdad*)

An Agence France Presse report states:

“A car bomb blast on a busy street of Baghdad's largest Shiite neighbourhood killed at least 12 people, Iraqi police and medical sources said Thursday. The bomb, which exploded near a cafe in Sadr City late Wednesday, also left at

least 33 people wounded, the sources said. The sprawling northeastern district is hit by suicide, roadside and other bombs almost every week.” (Agence France Presse (9 October 2014) *Car bomb kills 12 in Shiite neighbourhood of Baghdad*)

The Introduction to an Amnesty International report states:

“In recent months, Shi’a militias have been abducting and killing Sunni civilian men in Baghdad and around the country. These militias, often armed and backed by the government of Iraq, continue to operate with varying degrees of cooperation from government forces – ranging from tacit consent to coordinated, or even joint, operations. For these reasons, Amnesty International holds the government of Iraq largely responsible for the serious human rights abuses, including war crimes, committed by these militias. The victims were abducted from their homes, workplace or from checkpoints. Many were later found dead, usually handcuffed and shot in the back of the head. Reports by families of the victims and witnesses have been corroborated by Ministry of Health workers, who told Amnesty International that in recent months they have received scores of bodies of unidentified men with gunshot wounds to the head and often with their hands bound together with metal or plastic handcuffs, rope or cloth. Photographs of several bodies shown to Amnesty International by victims’ relatives and others viewed at Baghdad’s morgue, reveal a consistent pattern of deliberate, execution-style killings.” (Amnesty International (14 October 2014) *Absolute impunity: Militia rule in Iraq*, p.4)

An article from UK newspaper The Independent states:

“Iraq is descending into savage sectarian warfare as government-backed Shia militias kill, torture and hold for ransom any Sunni whom they detain. Isis is notorious for its mass killings of Shia, but retaliation by Shia militiamen means that Iraq is returning to the levels of sectarian slaughter last seen in the Sunni-Shia civil war of 2006-07 when tens of thousands were murdered.” (The Independent (14 October 2014) *Iraq descends into anarchy: Shia militias 'abducting and killing Sunni civilians in revenge for Isis attacks'*)

This article also states:

“In addition to sectarian motives, militias such as Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, the Badr Brigades, Kata’ib Hezbollah and Saraya al-Salam are thoroughly criminalised. One mother said: 'I begged friends and acquaintances to lend me the ransom money to save my son, but after I paid they killed him and now I have no way to pay back the money I borrowed, as my son was the only one working in the family.' Moving on the roads has become lethally dangerous for Sunni even before Isis launched its summer offensive. On the afternoon of 30 May two cousins, Majed, a 31-year-old ministry of education employee and father of three, and Nayef, an engineer, were abducted at a checkpoint when they went to Tikrit from Baghdad to pick up furniture. A \$90,000 (£56,000) ransom was demanded and paid but they were later found handcuffed and shot in the head. A Sunni businessman called Salem, 43, was kidnapped from his factory at al-Taji and, though a ransom was paid, his body was later found with his head smashed in either by a large calibre bullet or some form of club.” (ibid)

Reports of violence in the city of Al Nasiriyah were not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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