



# Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Iraq – January to June 2022

01 July 2022

03 January 2022

Hostilities against ISIS

In a review of months from January to November 2021, the KRG's Peshmerga Ministry reported that in the first eleven months of last year, ISIS was responsible for 229 attacks in the disputed areas; 356 people died (ISIS casualties are often uncertain and not counted), 480 people were wounded, and 33 were abducted. Overall, there was an increase in ISIS activity in the disputed areas throughout 2021.

Election

On 27.12.21, the results of the election were finally confirmed by the Constitutional Court of Iraq. Various objections, mainly from the pro-Iranian Fatah Alliance, were unsuccessful. The election results remained essentially unchanged from the preliminary election results.

At least 20 people killed in shooting in Babil

On 30.12.21, twenty members of the same family died in Babil province under unexplained circumstances. The sequence of events and causes are completely unclear. The narrative of the security forces and the family members differ greatly. Security forces say they were called to a family residence which they surrounded before coming under fire; after forcibly entering the house, they say they found the dead bodies of several family members. They say these persons had been shot dead by a family member for whom a search warrant had already been issued. The perpetrator allegedly then killed himself. In addition, there are reports in the media, citing security circles, that the perpetrator had links to ISIS, although the arrest warrant did not make any reference to terrorist allegations. Family members, on the other hand, portray the situation as a police operation that got out of hand. They claim the family home was attacked with heavy weapons. A considerable number of children are among the dead.

10 January 2022

Aftermath of the massacre in Babil on 30.12.21

The events in Babil on 30.12.21 (cf. BN of 03.12.22) have strongly dominated the public debate in Iraq. After doubts arose over the security forces' version of events shortly after the event, various arrests were made around the turn of the year and in the first week of January after a detailed inquiry was launched. At least 14 people are currently in custody on suspicion of having deliberately passed on false information that triggered the operation, possibly for personal reasons. At present, it seems certain that the security forces acting on the basis of this information had wrongly assumed that the operation was a highly dangerous counter-terrorism operation; the wanted person, who had been accused of killing his family members in initial reports, does not appear to have been involved in the killing in any way. Several supervisors responsible for carrying out the operation have been suspended and their role is

currently under investigation. The leaders of the local police force and intelligence services have been temporarily removed from their posts.

#### Attack in Baghdad

On 06.01.22, unknown individuals attacked the house of a member of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) in Baghdad, killing five members of his family and injuring him. The background is unclear.

#### 17 January 2022

##### Missile attack on Green Zone in Baghdad

On 13.01.22, several missiles were fired at the fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, damaging the US Embassy and a school. At least two civilians were injured. Iraqi authorities have not named any suspects so far. The incident occurred a few days after the election of the now-suspended speaker of parliament, Mohammed Halbousi, who pro-Iranian groups are opposed to.

##### Attacks against Sunni parties in Baghdad

On 14.01.22, unknown perpetrators threw hand grenades at both the headquarters of the Taqaddum Party and that of the Azm Alliance in Baghdad, causing damage to property. The two parties are the most influential Sunni groups in Iraq; the now suspended parliamentary speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi also belongs to the Taqaddum Party.

##### Disputed territories: hundreds killed and wounded in ISIS attacks in 2021

In the territories disputed between the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the central Iraqi government, 387 people were killed by ISIS in 2021, according to the Kurdish government, and 518 others were injured. The provinces of Kirkuk, Salah al-Din and Diyala were hit particularly hard. It has been announced that joint units of Kurdish and central Iraqi troops will be created in the disputed areas in 2022 in a bid to stabilise the security situation there.

#### 24 January 2022

##### ISIS attack against Iraqi forces in Diyala

In the early hours of 21.01.22, ISIS fighters broke into a barracks of the Iraqi military and killed eleven soldiers. The incident occurred in the al-Azm district in Diyala province and is the deadliest attack to have been carried out against Iraqi forces in months. ISIS has claimed responsibility for the attack. The Iraqi military carried out air strikes against ISIS targets in Nineveh Governorate on 23.01.22, killing three suspected ISIS fighters.

#### 31 January 2022

##### Hostilities against ISIS

On 13.01.22, several missiles were fired at the fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, damaging the US Embassy and a school. At least two civilians were injured. Iraqi authorities have not named any suspects so far. The incident occurred a few days after the election of the now-suspended speaker of parliament, Mohammed Halbousi, who pro-Iranian groups are opposed to.

##### Attacks on Speaker of Parliament and Baghdad airport

On 25.01.22, three missiles were fired at the house of the Speaker of Parliament Mohammed al-Habousi in his home province of Anbar, injuring two civilians. On 28.01.22 at least six missiles were fired at Baghdad airport. A parked Iraqi Airways aircraft was damaged. So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, even though the action bears all the hallmarks of numerous similar attacks carried out by pro-Iranian militias.

#### 07 February 2022

##### Turkish air strikes near Makhmour refugee camp

On 01.02.22, the Turkish military carried out air strikes in the immediate vicinity of the Makhmour refugee camp south-west of Erbil and PKK positions in Sinjar. Eight people were killed and 17 others were injured, including

civilians. The Turkish Defence Ministry confirmed the air strikes and described them as the launch of a new security operation against the PKK in Iraq and Syria.

#### Transgender woman murdered

On 31.01.22, the body of Doski Azad, a transgender woman, was recovered in a village near Dohuk after a relative notified the police. The alleged perpetrator is the victim's brother, who is said to be living in Germany. He reportedly had travelled to Iraq for a brief stay and has since left the country for Turkey. Azad is said to have received threats from her family and tribe for some time because she had been living as a woman. So-called honour killings based on gender identity are not uncommon in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan either and perpetrators are rarely prosecuted.

### 14 January 2022

#### Air strikes against ISIS targets

On 13.02.22, the Iraqi Air Force conducted air strikes against a suspected ISIS hideout in the Zghitun Valley (West Kirkuk). The Iraqi Air Force had already shelled a cave in Hatra (Ninevah) on 08.02.22, killing seven suspected ISIS supporters. The cave was being used as a command centre by ISIS, according to Iraqi military sources. Central Iraqi troops and Peshmerga soldiers foiled an ISIS attack in Kirkuk in a joint security operation delivered on 08.02.22. A security vacuum has emerged in the disputed areas between Baghdad and Erbil in Diyala, Kirkuk and Salahaddin that can be used as hideouts by ISIS.

### 21 February 2022

#### Aftermath of the massacre in Babil on 30.12.21

After 20 people were killed in a massacre in Babil (cf. BN of 03.01.22 and 10.01.22), the first verdicts in the case were handed down by the court of first instance on 13.02.22. Security forces had opened fire on an apartment complex after an informant had claimed that two wanted terrorists were in the building. It transpired shortly afterwards that the informant was involved in a family feud and for this reason provided false information to the security forces. He and one of the officers responsible have now been sentenced to death by hanging in Babil. The sentence is not yet final.

### 28 February 2022

#### Violence against women

On 20.02.22, the Iraqi Supreme Court rejected the Iraqi Women's League's complaint to classify Article 41 of the Iraqi Criminal Code as incompatible with the Iraqi Constitution. Article 41 gives husbands the right to physically punish their wives. The court based its decision on the fact that Article 41 does not promote domestic violence, but only allows punishments within certain limits prescribed by law.

On 23.02.22, a 21-year-old woman died of her injuries in Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan Autonomous Region (KRI) after her husband doused her with petrol and set her on fire following an argument a few days earlier. High-ranking politicians from KR-I had condemned the murder, the husband was arrested. Since the beginning of the year, nine women have died as a result of so-called "honour crimes" in KR-I alone. A law against domestic violence was adopted in 2011, but violence against women is still widespread.

### 07 March 2022

#### Return of Iraqi refugees

Iraq again repatriated a large number of Iraqis from Syria on 03.03.22. Their number was estimated to be in the region of about 800. This time it seems to be mainly people who had fled ISIS to regions along the Syrian border and not predominantly families from the al-Hol camp, where about 55,000 people associated with ISIS are still being held captive.

At the same time, it was the anniversary of the adoption of the law on the compensation of Yazidi victims of the genocide. Even though an authority has been established, the law has not yet been applied in practice. It is supposed

to provide for compensation payments, medical and psychological assistance, help in finding relatives as well as their ransom and, if necessary, land distributions; however, so far there is no way people can apply for these aids. Economic problems and security concerns continue to deter many internally displaced persons in Iraq from returning home.

#### Impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Iraq imports a significant proportion of its demand for wheat from Ukraine and the Russian Federation, with the bulk of imports coming from Ukraine. Even though the spike in oil prices is economically beneficial for Iraq's federal budget, there is grave concern about food security, which is why several cabinet meetings have been held and decisions taken. Controlled prices for domestically produced wheat have been reduced significantly to balance the market for the time being and to guarantee security of supply in the short term. The price of imported wheat as well as the quantity increased by about US\$ 50 per tonne within a week, the price of sunflower oil has doubled. Both are ingredients used in the bread that is popular in the region.

#### 14 March 2022

##### Iran's missile strike against a target in Erbil

On 13.03.22, several missiles fired by Iran struck a private residential compound in Erbil close to the U.S. consulate. Both Iran and the U.S. said later in the day that the attack had not targeted the U.S. The residential compound belongs to an influential figure in Iraq's oil sector. Iran said it was a secret base of Israel in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, which had been attacked in retaliation for the killing of two Iranian officers in Syria. Unlike Iraq as a whole, the Kurdistan Autonomous Region maintains friendly relations with Israel, albeit no official diplomatic relations. Cautious statements were issued by the overall Iraqi and Kurdish political leadership, saying they would investigate the allegation of Israeli presence. Iraq and Israel still see each other as hostile states.

##### Impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Sharply and rapidly rising prices for cooking oil and wheat flour are fuelling protests in many cities in Iraq but so far they have remained by and large peaceful. There have only been isolated reports of injuries. There is great understanding among politicians for the expressions of discontent. A series of countermeasures were announced on 08.03.22, including temporary special payments for pensioners and low-income public employees, and a twomonth suspension of customs regulations for certain groups of goods. Several people have been arrested for alleged price manipulation.

#### 21 March 2022

##### Missile attack on Balad air base

On 17.03.22, four rockets fell in open areas near the Balad air base in Salah ad Din Governorate. The air base had been used by U.S. forces in the past but is now being fully operated by Iraqi forces again. There were no casualties and there was no damage to property. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

##### Consequences of the war against ISIS

**On 15.03.22, UNICEF published a survey of children's deaths due to landmines in Iraq. Six children were reportedly killed and 10 others were injured by land mines and improvised explosive devices in February. Mines remain uncleared in large parts of Iraq not just in former ISIS areas. Landmines remain a major obstacle to repatriation. On 20.03.22 it was announced that parts of 85 bodies had so far been recovered from a mass grave of ISIS fighters and their relatives in Mosul, though it is suspected that the grave contains many more bodies. Iraq continues to discover mass graves not only from the ISIS period but also from the regime of former dictator Saddam Hussein.**

#### 28 March 2022

##### Presidential election failed again

On 26.03.22, a new president was to be elected by parliament. In Iraq, the new president is the head of state, but not the head of government, even though he exercises several important functions, such as ratifying the death

sentence. According to the Iraqi constitution, the position is reserved to a member of Iraq's Kurdish population. The parliamentary session failed to meet the necessary quorum, with several parties abstaining, so a new ballot is planned for 30.03.22. After the failed election, an emergency food assistance package was passed to mitigate the effects of the war in Ukraine on the Iraqi population.

## 04 April 2022

### Presidential election failed

On 30.03.22, a new attempt to elect a new president failed in parliament. Subsequently Muqtada al-Sadr, the leader of the largest parliamentary bloc, announced that he was now giving his political rivals one month to form a government without him.

### Missile attack on Turkish base in Iraq

On the evening of 29.03.22, five Katyusha rockets hit near the Zilkhan military base in Nineveh province. The base houses 150 Turkish soldiers and 20 vehicles who were deployed there during the war against the Islamic State in 2015 and have remained since. So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Zilkhan has been targeted several times before, mostly in retaliation for Turkish airstrikes in the region (which, official Turkish reports say, are meant to target the PKK).

## 11 April 2022

### Rocket attack on refinery in Erbil

On the evening of 06.04.22, three rockets hit near an oil refinery close to Erbil. There were no reports of personal injury or property damage. According to information provided by the Iraqi authorities, the rockets were fired from the al-Hamdaniya district in Nineveh province where the so-called Popular Mobilisation Units with close ties to Iran have a strong presence. The refinery belongs to Baz Karim Barzinji, whose private house had been destroyed in March by Iran firing missiles at what it claimed to be an Israeli "strategic centre".

### At least 519 children killed or injured by landmines

According to UNICEF and the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), at least 519 children have been killed or injured by landmines in Iraq in the last five years. Around 80 percent of the children affected are boys, as they are frequently grazing animals or collecting scrap metal to sell.

## 25 April 2022

### Combat operations against the Islamic State

With the beginning of the fasting month of Ramadan on 1 April, IS militants have started their annual Ramadan offensive, but with little success so far, as the group has lost a lot of support.

On 19.04.22, a skirmish occurred in Diyala province with a Sunni tribal unit of the Hashd al-Ashayiri tribal militia, which is incorporated into the Iraqi armed forces. Three defenders died; the same day also saw attacks against an Iraqi army unit and against the Shiite Hashd Ash-Shaabi (PMU), but no casualties were recorded. On 21.04.22, an Iraqi F-16 attacked an IS position in Salah-ad-Din. According to the Iraqi defence ministry, four IS insurgents were killed in the operation.

On 22.04.22, a civilian vehicle hit an improvised explosive device in Khanaqin district of Diyala province; at least two people were killed in the explosion. The trap appears to have been set up by IS insurgents.

### Turkish attacks against the PKK in northern Iraq

Since 18.04.22, the Turkish military has again been carrying out air strikes and military operations against the PKK in northern Iraq. According to the Turkish defence ministry, four Turkish soldiers have been killed in the fighting so far, and 45 PKK members are reported to have been killed. The operation appears to aim at closing a land corridor used by the PKK. Iraq has repeatedly protested against the Turkish incursion into its territory.

02 May 2022

Operations against the IS

On 25.02.22, units of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) destroyed a total of seven IS hideouts in Anbar province by. Further hideouts were destroyed in Salah-ad-Din.

On 26.02.22, an IS suicide bomber killed two Iraqi soldiers north of Baghdad. Another IS insurgent was killed before he could set off his bomb.

Turkish attacks on the PKK in northern Iraq

On 26.02.22, a PKK rocket attack against a Turkish unit north of Dohuk killed three Turkish soldiers.

On 01.05.22, the Turkish defence ministry confirmed the death of two more soldiers in connection with the ongoing military operation against the PKK. This brings to 13 the number of soldiers killed in action and confirmed by the Turkish government. The PKK, for its part, has stated to have lost 11 fighters so far.

Rocket attacks

On 01.05.22, a refinery in Erbil was attacked again with a total of six Katyusha rockets from Nineveh province. No group has claimed responsibility so far; however, the region is controlled by a militia with links to Iran. The Iranian side has frequently claimed that there is a secret Israeli base in the area.

On 30.04.22, a military base used by US troops in Anbar province (Ain al-Assad) was attacked with a Katyusha missile; however, the missile hit the ground several kilometres away from the presumed target.

09 May 2022

Situation in Sinjar

On 08.05.22, the Iraqi army informed that it had now taken over about 20 checkpoints in the region from the PKK-affiliated Yazidi Sinjar Resistance Units. Since the defeat of IS, parts of the region have been controlled by these units. One Iraqi soldier and one militiaman had died in fighting between the Iraqi army and the militia; both sides had made great efforts to avoid further escalations afterwards. In the course of the fighting, at least 4,000 civilians had fled the region, most of them were internally displaced people who had returned home. The first rallies against the presence of both the army and the militia were held on 07.05.22, with protesters demanding that the Iraqi Federal Police provide security for the region and that armies and militias withdraw.

Clashes in Maysan

On 04.05.22, eight people were killed in clashes over farmland in Maysan province. Initial reports say that part of an extended family had been using state land, with another part of the family claiming a share, which led to an armed confrontation. An intensive search for the perpetrators is currently underway.

16 May 2022

Iranian Revolutionary Guards: Attack on Erbil

On 11.05.22, the Revolutionary Guards from neighbouring Iran carried out airstrikes on areas in Erbil, with no casualties reported. The Revolutionary Guards have claimed that this was an anti-terrorist operation. Already in March and April, Iran had attacked the private residence of a Kurdish businessman and an oil refinery in Erbil, claiming that the sites were "strategic centres" of Israel (cf. BN of 11.04.22).

Sinjar: Return of around 300 families

After the fighting that broke out in Sinjar at the beginning of May and displaced more than 700 families (approx. 10,200 people, see BN 09.05.22), about 300 of these families have returned to Sinjar. The remaining families are still staying in refugee camps in Dohuk.

23 May 2022

Fight against the IS

On 17.05.22, two members of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) were killed in clashes with IS fighters in Salah al-Din. The Iraqi Air Force carried out air strikes against IS targets in Makhmour on 16.05.22, killing six suspected IS supporters. Already on 15.05.22, Iraqi forces and Peshmerga fighters conducted a joint anti-IS operation near Makhmour, killing two suspected IS terrorists. Makhmour is located in disputed areas between the Iraqi central government and the Kurdish Regional Government; the resulting security vacuum has strengthened the IS presence in the area.

Missile attack against PMF

In the night of 20.05.22, PMF positions near Tuz Khurmatu (Salah al-Din province) were attacked with Katyusha rockets; no personal injuries were reported. So far, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, but similar incidents are mostly attributed to pro-Iranian militias.

PKK conflict: Attack on Turkish military base

On 15.05.22, PKK fighters attacked a Turkish military base in the Sidakan district of Erbil; at least four PKK supporters were killed in the incident. Due to the ongoing conflict between the PKK and Turkey, 212 villages in Erbil alone have been abandoned in the last 30 years, according to local authorities.

Six killed in drone attack

On 21.05.22 at least six people, among them three civilians, were killed in drone attacks on Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq. This was reported by local authorities who blame Turkey for the assault. Turkey regularly carries out attacks in northern Iraq, where the PKK maintains bases and training camps. The latest drone attacks targeted the mountainous regions of the Chamchamal district west of the city of Sulaymaniyah and the Makhmur refugee camp.

30 May 2022

Twelve dead in IS attacks

Two separate attacks in Sami Asi (Kirkuk) and Gulala (Diyala) on 23.05.22 killed a total of 12 civilians and three Iraqi police officers. The civilians were local farmers working in their fields. Both assaults are attributed to IS militants who have publicly claimed responsibility for the attack in Kirkuk.

Turkey-PKK conflict: Several dead

The Turkish defence ministry has informed that on 24.05.22, five Turkish soldiers were killed and two others injured in an anti-PKK military operation in the north-western border area with Turkey. On the same day, Turkish warplanes apparently carried out airstrikes on the village of Shinye in Dohuk; no personal injuries were reported. Shinye is one of the many abandoned villages in the region, but the local population still farms there. In further fighting between the Turkish military and the PKK on 26.05.22, two children were killed in the village of Zewa (Dohuk).

Criminalisation of relations with Israel

On 26.05.22, the Iraqi parliament passed a law that makes it a crime to normalize ties with Israel; violations can be punishable by a death sentence or life imprisonment. The bill was introduced by Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, presumably to curb claims that he was making coalitions with Sunni and Kurdish groups who may have ties with Israel.

13 June 2022

Repatriations from Al-Hol

On 01.06.22, another 50 Iraqi prisoners were handed over to the Iraqi authorities from the al-Hol camp in Syria. Iraqis are the largest group of prisoners in this camp. Repatriations are very slow and highly controversial in Iraq.

### Drone attack in Erbil

On 08.06.22, a drone carrying explosives attacked Erbil Pirmam Street in Erbil, injuring three people and damaging several vehicles and a restaurant. Kurdish security forces blame an Iranian-allied militia; the drone was apparently launched from Kirkuk province. Pro-Iranian internet sources claim that the drone targeted a Mossad agent; both Israeli and the Kurdish authorities have rejected the allegations as unfounded.

### IS

On 06.06.22, several members of the IS command were arrested. In the corresponding raids, the KRG and the federal security forces had collaborated. This cooperation was strongly highlighted in the media coverage.

### Missile attack on the Turkish Zilkan base

On 09.06.22, two rockets, apparently fired from near Mosul, hit near the Turkish base of Zilkan. The base has been used by Turkish units in Nineveh province for several years; it is located near the village of Baashiqa and has been the target of similar attacks several times in the past.

## 20 June 2022

### Turkish intervention

On 12.06.22 four more Turkish soldiers were reportedly killed in fighting with the PKK in Dohuk province. On 17.06.22, a Turkish drone attacked a vehicle with four passengers in Sulaymaniyah province and killed all the people inside who were allegedly PKK members. On the same day, a Turkish unit machine-gunned a village in Dohuk for about half an hour, injuring two villagers. The context of the incident is unclear.

### Sinjar

On 14.06.22, the Iraqi cabinet decided to allocate an additional USD 1 million to federal-level security forces in the Sinjar region to stabilise the area. The region remains insecure due to the presence of many armed groups and the poor implementation of the regional security agreement; also, essential basic services are not guaranteed. The majority of residents have not returned after 2014. In early May 2022, new fighting triggered a new wave of displacement. In addition, the region is disputed between the Kurdistan Autonomous Region (KRG) and the Iraqi central government.

## 27 June 2022

### Attack on Turkish military base Zilkan

On 24.06.22, at least two rockets fell near the Turkish Armed Forces' Zilkan base in Nineveh. There were no casualties. The base is a regular target of similar attacks; however, so far no group has claimed responsibility for any of the assaults.

### Attacks on the Khor Mor gas field

From 22.06. to 25.06.22 a total of three rocket attacks were launched on the Khor Mor gas field in the Sulaimaniyya region in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan (KRG). The operating company has suspended work on the expansion of the gas field for the time being. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

### Repatriations

On 21.06.22, the administration of the Nineveh region announced that another 150 Iraqi families, a total of about 600 people, would be repatriated from the al-Hol camp in Syria in the first week of July. They will first be transferred to the al-Jada-1 camp, which is intended to allow Iraqis associated with IS to gradually return to civilian life. At the same time, it was announced that 89 families would be released from the al-Jada camp.

