Country Policy and Information Note
Iraq: Security situation

Version 1.0

November 2022

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the Introduction section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note - that is information in the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw - by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies**:**

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm

- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules / Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules

- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)

- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory

- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and

- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the Common EU [European Union] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information (COI), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a terms of reference which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source

- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used

- the currency and detail of information

- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the bibliography.

Feedback

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the Country Policy and Information Team.

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

> **Independent Advisory Group on Country Information**
> Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration
> 5th Floor
> Globe House
> 89 Eccleston Square
> London, SW1V 1PN
> Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the gov.uk website.

Contents

Assessment

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 That the security situation in Iraq is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict, as per paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules.

_____

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants).

2.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding a person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis).

2.2 Exclusion

2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).

2.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33(2) of the Refugee Convention, Humanitarian Protection and the instruction on Restricted Leave.

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

2.3 Convention reason(s)

2.3.1 A state of civil conflict and/or where law and order has broken down, which might exist in some places outside of government control, do not of themselves give rise to a well-founded fear of persecution for a Refugee Convention reason.

2.3.2 In the absence of a link to one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds necessary to be recognised as a refugee, the question to address is whether the person will face a real risk of serious harm in order to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).

2.3.3 However, before considering whether a person requires protection because of the security situation, decision makers must consider if the person faces persecution for a Refugee Convention reason. Where the person qualifies for protection under the Refugee Convention, decision makers do not need to consider if there are substantial grounds for believing the person faces a real risk of serious harm meriting a grant of HP.

2.3.4 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

2.4 Risk

2.4.1 In general a person is not likely to face a serious and individual threat of serious harm as a result of indiscriminate violence across Iraq with exception of the mountainous area north of Baiji in Sahal al-Din governate. However, whether a person is returning to areas formerly contested by Daesh - the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewah and Salah Al-Din - faces serious harm will require a fact sensitive, sliding scale assessment taking into account a number of factors. All cases must be considered on their facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate a risk of serious harm.

2.4.2   Paragraphs 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules - which set out that a real risk of serious harm as a serious and individual threat by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict - only apply to civilians who must be non-combatants. This could include former combatants who have genuinely and permanently renounced armed activity.

2.4.3   The Country Guidance case of [SMO, KSP & IM (Article 15(c); identity documents) CG Iraq [2019] UKUT 400 (IAC)](link) heard on 24-26 June 2019 and promulgated on 20 December 2019, looked at the levels of indiscriminate violence and the humanitarian situation across Iraq, identity documents and internal relocation. In relation to the security situation, the court considered whether return would expose an individual to a risk contrary to Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive. The court concluded that the situation did not generally give rise to such a risk although a fact-specific, 'sliding-scale' assessment will be necessary in all cases

2.4.4   In the subsequent the country guidance case of [SMO & KSP (Civil Status documentation; article 15) Iraq CG [2022] UKUT 110 (IAC) (16 March 2022)](link) (hereafter referred to as SMO2) heard on 4-5 October 2021 and promulgated on 16 March 2022, the Upper Tribunal (UT) held:

'There continues to be an internal armed conflict in certain parts of Iraq, involving government forces, various militia and the remnants of [Daesh] ISIL. Following the military defeat of ISIL at the end of 2017 and the resulting reduction in levels of direct and indirect violence, the intensity of the internal armed conflict is not such that, as a general matter, there are substantial grounds for believing that any civilian returned to Iraq, solely on account of his presence there, faces a real risk of being subjected to indiscriminate violence amounting to serious harm within the scope of Article 15(c) QD.

'The only exception to the general conclusion above is the small mountainous area north of Baiji in Sahal al-Din governerate. ISIL continues to exercise doctrinal control in the area and the risk of indiscriminate violence is at a level which would engage Article 15(c) as a general matter' (paragraph 144 (1-2))

2.4.5   As of the date of publication of this report there continue to be regular security incidents across Iraq, carried out by a wide range of actors. Daesh, while not the force they once were, continue to carry out attacks against security forces in Iraq, as well as targeting community leaders, civilians who they deem as having collaborated with Iraqi authorities and the trucks of Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the counter Daesh coalition. Iraqi security forces, including the Popular Mobilisation Units/Forces, carry out regular counter-Daesh operations (see [Security events and fatalities](link)).

2.4.6   Various unidentified militias regularly carry out rocket strikes on a range of government targets including airbases, oil refineries and other infrastructure. In the north of Iraq, in particular Duhok governorate, Turkish military forces conduct regular airstrikes and shelling campaigns against members and fighters of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) (see [Security events and fatalities](link)).

2.4.7   However, while the number of security incidents documented by Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), including battles, remote explosions, protests, riots and violence against civilians generally, have increased in 2022 compared to 2021 (2,753 events) - with highest number in the northern governorates of Duhok, Nineveh and Erbil as well as Baghdad compared to 2021 - they remain far below the numbers experienced in 2016 and 2017 (see Security events and fatalities).

There also continue to be civilian fatalities in all governorates – a proxy for general levels of indiscriminate violence - with numbers highest in Baghdad, Diyala, Ninewa and Maysan. However, ACLED data indicates similar levels in 2021, at 537 for the year, compared to January to July of 2022 (213). The number of fatalities remain a very small proportion of the total population and significantly lower than during the period of intense conflict between government forces and Daesh during 2014 and 2017 (see Security events and fatalities).

2.4.8   While violence levels across Iraq have increased since the promulgation of SMO2 particularly in relation to the ongoing conflict between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the north of Iraq, the levels and intensity of the armed conflict are not such that, as a general matter, there are substantial grounds for believing that any civilian returned to Iraq, solely on account of his presence there, faces a real risk of being subjected to indiscriminate violence amounting to serious harm leading to a breach of immigration rules 339C and 339CA(iv) . Nor is there evidence in the sources consulted in this note that the factors identified by UT in SMO2 that may elevate risk for an individual returning to a formerly contested area have significantly changed. As such, there are **not** 'very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence' to depart from the UT's findings in SMO2.

2.4.9   The Upper Tribunal in SMO2, also held that whether or not the return of an individual to one of the formerly contested areas (the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewah and Salah Al-Din) would be contrary to Article 15(c) requires a fact-sensitive, 'sliding scale' assessment. This assessment, alongside particular reference to the extent of ongoing Daesh activity and the behaviour of the security actors in control of that area, must take into account the following factors and characteristics:

- Opposition to or criticism of the Government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government or local security actors;

- Membership of a national, ethnic or religious group which is either in the minority in the area in question, or not in de facto control of that area;

- LGBTI individuals, those not conforming to Islamic mores and wealthy or Westernised individuals;

- Humanitarian or medical staff and those associated with Western organisations or security forces;

- Women and children without genuine family support; and

- Individuals with disabilities (paragraph 144 (3 and 5))

2.4.10　Decision makers should however take a holistic view of all the circumstances relating to a person's claim and not view the factors listed above in isolation. See also other Iraqi Country Policy and Information Notes covering some possible refugee convention grounds listed above. Decision makers should be mindful that in some cases, a grant of refugee status may be more appropriate than a grant of humanitarian protection.

2.4.11　The UT also held that 'Those with an actual or perceived association with ISIL are likely to be at enhanced risk throughout Iraq. In those areas in which ISIL retains an active presence, those who have a current personal association with local or national government or the security apparatus are likely to be at enhanced risk' (para 144 (4).

2.4.12　Even where there is not in general a real risk of serious harm by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of armed conflict, decision makers must consider whether there are particular factors relevant to the person's circumstances which might nevertheless place them at risk. The more a person is able to show that they are specifically affected by factors particular to their personal circumstances, the lower the level of indiscriminate violence required for them to be at a real risk of serious harm.

2.4.13　Therefore, a person may still face a real risk of serious harm even where generally there is not such a risk, if they are able to show that there are specific reasons over and above simply being a civilian for being affected by the indiscriminate violence.

2.4.14　For guidance on considering serious harm where there is a situation of indiscriminate violence in an armed conflict, including consideration of the sliding scale and enhanced risk factors, see the Asylum Instruction, Granting humanitarian protection. For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

Back to Contents

2.5　Protection

Individuals who are seeking protection must show that state protection is not available to them, and that they could not reasonably be expected to relocate internally.

A serious threat to life or person from indiscriminate violence from armed conflict does in itself tend to show that state protection is not available. Please see the CPIN on Iraq: Actors of Protection for more information on the availability of state protection in Iraq.

Back to Contents

2.6　Internal relocation

2.6.1　Internal relocation may be possible for an individual depending on their circumstances and what civil documentation they possess. See Iraq: Internal relocation, civil documentation and returns for more information.

2.6.2　For further guidance on considering internal relocation and factors to be taken into account, see the Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status.

2.7   Certification

2.7.1   Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

2.7.2   For further guidance on certification, see Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 (clearly unfounded claims).

Country information
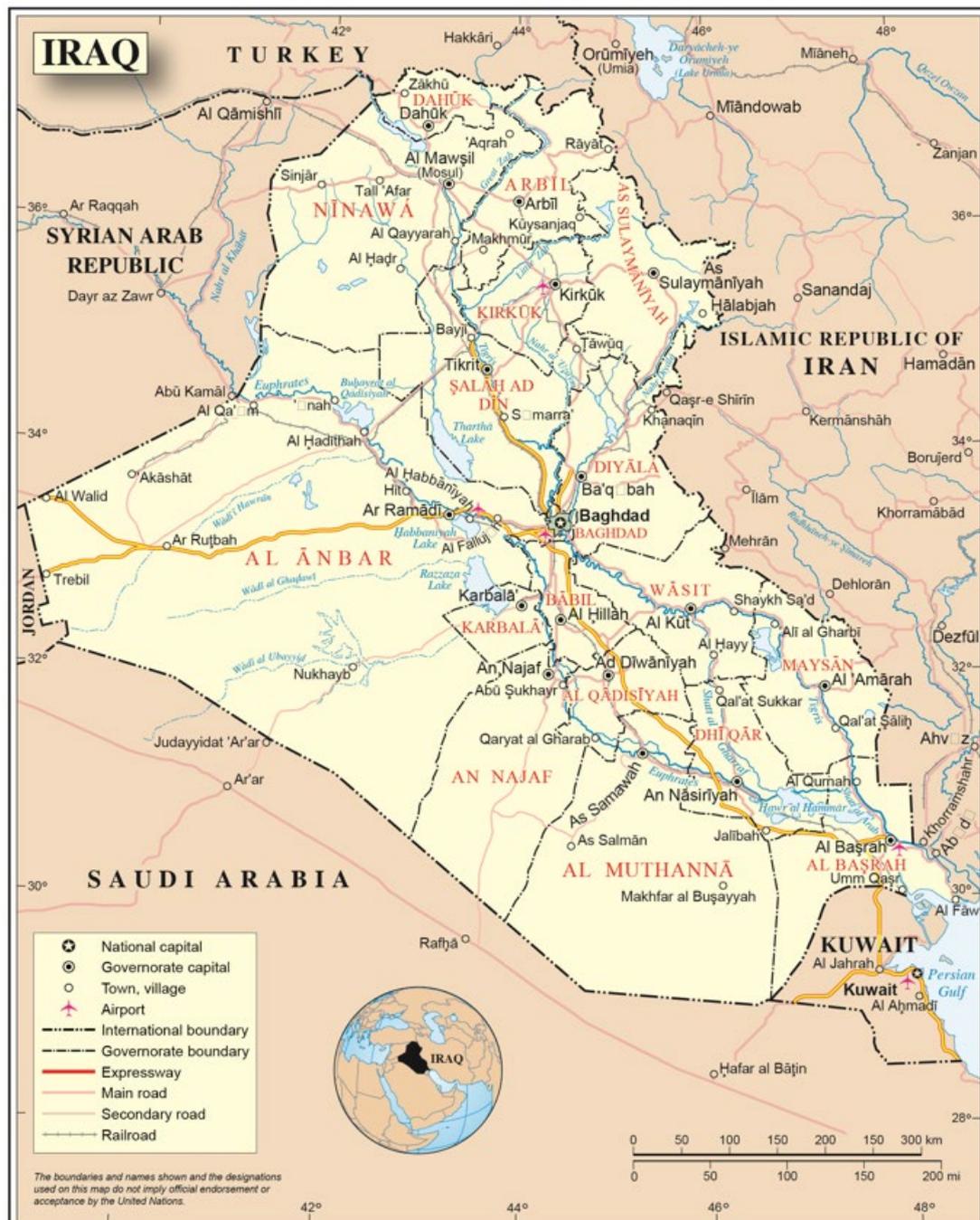
3. Background

3.1 Map

1

---

[1] United Nations Geospatial, 'Iraq', 1 July 2014

3.2   Demography

3.2.1   Estimates of Iraq's population vary according to different sources. According to the United Nations Population Fund, Iraq's population in 2022 is 42,200,000 people[2]. According to the CIA World Factbook Iraq has an estimated population of 40,462,701 in 2022[3].

3.2.2   On 9 September 2020 MapAction published the below map showing the population density of Iraq[4]:

---
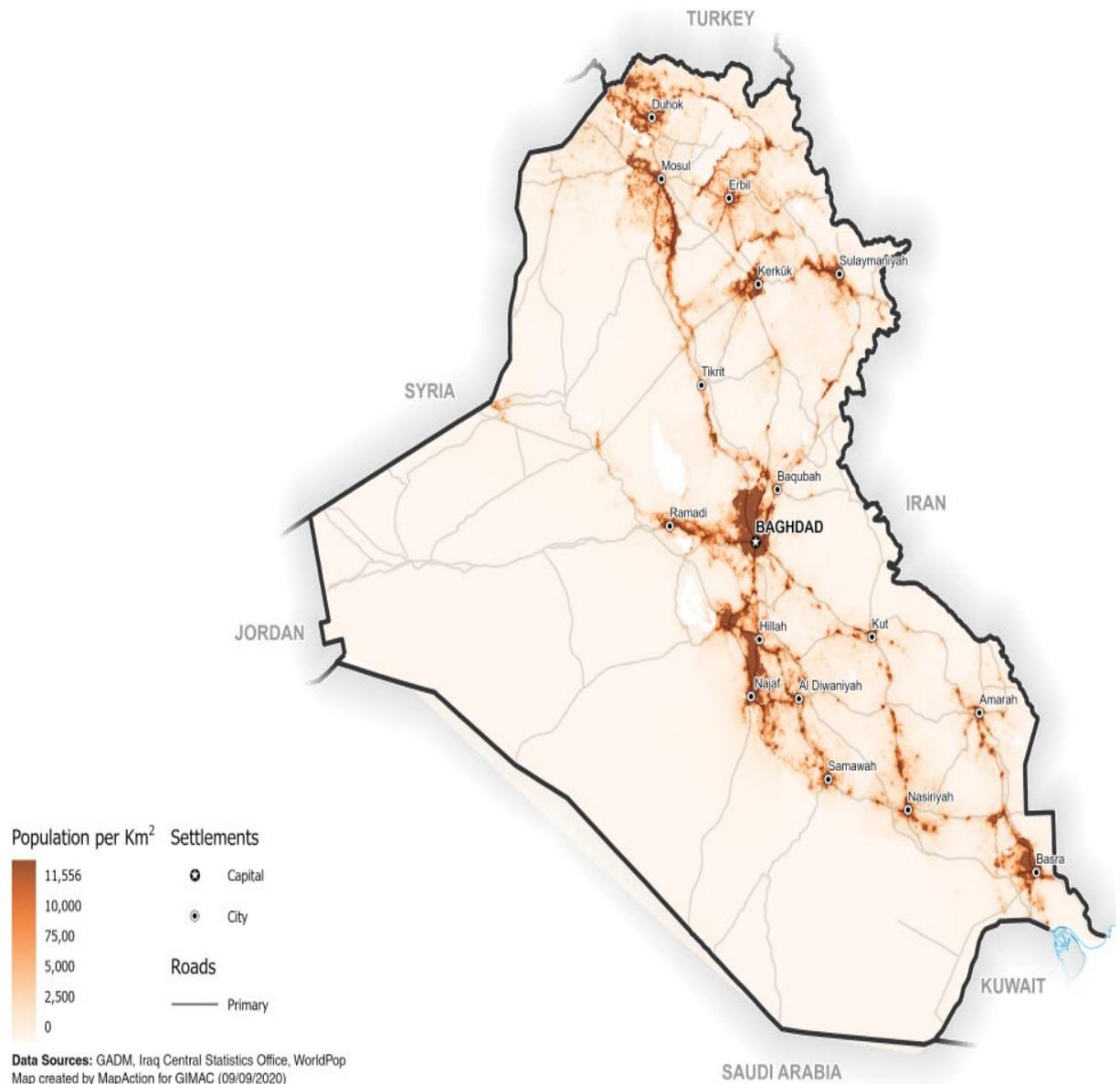
[2] United Nations Population Fund, 'World Population Dashboard Iraq', no date
[3] CIA World Factbook, 'Iraq – People and Society', last updated 1 July 2022
[4] MapAction, 'Iraq – Population density (2020)', 9 September 2020

3.2.3   Below is a table showing the top 10 cities in Iraq with the highest populations according to World Population Review, based on data sourced from the GeoNames geographical database[5]:

Name	Population
Baghdad	7,216,000
Basrah	2,600,000
Al Mawsil al Jadidah	2,065,597
Al Basrah al Qadimah	2,015,483
Mosul	1,739,800
Erbil	932,800
Abu Ghurayb	900,000
As Sulaymaniyah	723,170
Kirkuk	601,433
Najaf	482,576

This section was updated on 3 October 2022

4.   History of recent conflicts in Iraq

4.1.1   For information on the conflicts that have taken place in Iraq since 2003 see the timeline published by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP)[6].

This section was updated on 3 October 2022

5.   Armed actors

5.1   Daesh

5.1.1   The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) report of January 2022, based on a range of sources, stated the following regarding the presence, capacity and activity, tactics and targets of Daesh:

'Raed Al-Hamid indicated that the UN estimated the number of ISIL fighters in Iraq and Syria at 10,000 in August 2020, an estimation that matches that of the KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] in late 2019 which estimated the number of fighters at 4,000 – 5,000 and the rest to be supporters and sleeper cells. Iraqi intelligence sources estimate the number of ISIL fighters at a range of 2,000 – 3,000.

'ISIL cells were reportedly present in the desert and remote areas of Iraq and carried out hit-and-run operations according to UN reporting from July 2021. Based on statements by Iraqi security officials, the group "relies on remote bases deep in the desert in Anbar, Ninewa, mountain ranges, valleys, and orchards in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Diyala to house its fighters and establish monitoring and control points to secure supply routes. It also

---

[5] World Population Review, 'Iraq', last updated 13 July 2022
[6] USIP, 'Iraq Timeline: Since the 2003 war', 29 May 2020

uses these bases to establish command centers and small camps for training, digging tunnels, and exploiting caves in mountainous areas."

'… Reporting in July 2021, a report to the UN Security Council by the Al Qaida/ISIL Sanctions Monitoring Team stated that ISIL in Iraq remains active, although "under constant counter-terrorism pressure". Al-Hamid also observed that ISIL in Iraq "remains very weak" despite its "sufficient combat capabilities to threaten security and stability"

'ISIL's current focus is on maintaining and expanding its rural areas of support which would allow the group to conduct training and "mitigate threats" posed by the ISF [Iraqi Security Forces]. According to ISW [Institute for the Study of War] "ISIS maintains small, rural support zones from which it resists Iraqi Security Forces' activity, including occasional Counter-terrorism Service (CTS) clearing operations and minimal Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and Iraqi Army operations"… In urban areas, the group seems to be re-organising its fighters "in small 'mobile' subgroups in order to cope with the restrictions to which it has been subjected since its defeat".

'…According to a report of the UN Security Council published on 21 July 2021, the group's strategic goal is "to undermine critical infrastructure projects, inflame sectarian divisions and grievances and sustain media coverage and relevance"… OSAC [U.S. Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council] observed, in September 2021, that ISIL militants used bombings, indirect fire, IEDs [Improvised Explosive Device], and ambushes as methods of attack.'[7]

5.1.2. A report on the current threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security, published by the United Nations Security Council on the 26 July 2022 noted:

'…In Iraq, counter-terrorism operations against Da'esh continued to result in arrests and enhanced security. However, active Da'esh cells remain in remote areas, and the group continued to mount attacks on infrastructure and cultivated areas, including in Diyala, Salah al-Din and Kirkuk Governorates. On 21 January, an assault on an Iraqi army base in Diyala Governorate resulted in the death of 11 soldiers. On 23 May, Da'esh killed 12 civilians in two operations in Kirkuk and Diyala Governorates, where farmers were targeted while harvesting crops. One Member State noted that some Da'esh members involved in recent attacks in those areas may be escapees from detention facilities across the Syrian border. Attacks also occurred in Anbar and Ninawa Governorates, where Da'esh operates mainly in small, mobile cells' [8].

5.2   Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

5.2.1   The EUAA report stated:'According to OSAC report of 2 September 2021, the ISF are largely present in most of the major urban areas and have "a

---

[7] EUAA, 'Iraq – Security Situation', (page 31-33), January 2022
[8] UN Security Council 'Fifteenth report on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) (para 29), July 2022,

limited ability to respond to security incidents, terrorist attacks, and criminal activities".

5.2.2   It added '… Attempts to "curb militia influence" render the ISF, or the Iraqi government in general, "vulnerable to intimidation and attacks by the militias". GardaWorld stated that "Militias increasingly appear to be targeting Iraqi security forces perceived as loyal to the prime minister; state security forces are unlikely to confront militias, however, mitigating the risk of civil war".'[9]

5.2.3   For more information on the ISF see the CPIN Iraq: Actors of Protection.

5.3   Popular Mobilisation Units/Forces (PMU/PMF)

5.3.1   The EUAA report stated:

'The PMU (also known as the Popular Mobilisation Forces, PMF) are "an umbrella of Iraqi state-sponsored armed groups and militias under the command of Iraq's prime minister"; some of the prominent militias overtly oppose the US presence in Iraq and "answer to Iran despite being part of the Iraqi state's security apparatus".

'The total manpower of the PMU is 164,000 members, of whom 110,000 are Shia, 45,000 Sunni, and 10,000 minorities. Of the Shiite factions, around 70,000 are loyalists to the Islamic Republican Guard Corps (IRGC) of Iran, while the rest are affiliated with other religious authorities, including the Iraqi cleric, Muqtada Al-Sadr.

'… The PMU maintain a large margin of autonomy and have independent military, legal, and economic structures. Moreover, those groups have staged military parades in Baghdad, e.g., in March 2021 by Rab'Allah and in June 2021 when PMF factions flooded Baghdad's Green Zone following the arrest by the ISF of PMF leader Qassim Musleh… Iranian-backed militias in Iraq have caches of "short-range ballistic missiles, armed drones, and smaller-scale rockets" and produce Iranian weaponry under Iranian supervision and transport Iranian weapons to Syria through Iraq.

'… The withdrawal of US troops from Iraq has influenced the presence and expansion of Iranian-backed militias in different provinces. The departure of the US from the Iraqi-Syrian border in Anbar in March 2020, for example, has led to the expansion of Iranian-backed militias, including Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH), at Al-Qaim border crossing. Additionally, Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH), which has been present in the northern Baghdad Belts, in the vicinity of Balad in Salah Al-Din province, has benefitted from the transfer of the Balad Air Base from the US to the ISF in order to fill the security gap. According to ISW, such militias are likely in control of checkpoints and road traffic around the base.

'… Iranian-backed militias shifted their tactics towards targeting Coalition logistical convoys which are manned by Iraqi nationals and do not contain coalition personnel. This new tactic is considered as a "safer space" for militias as they do not invite retaliation by the US or the Coalition forces… In

---

[9] EUAA, 'Iraq – Security Situation', (page 37), January 2022

addition to rocket attacks and attacks that target Coalition logistical convoys, the Washington Institute observed that, as of 7 March 2021, KH [Kata'ib Hezbollah] was shifting its tactics "to a new phase of conflict with U.S. forces in Iraq", namely by the use of "drone attacks".'[10]

5.3.2   For more information on the PMU/PMF, see [Iraq: Actors of Protection](#).

5.4   Kurdish Peshmerga

5.4.1   The EUAA report stated:

'The Kurdistan security forces, which operate primarily in the Kurdish Regional Government area, are divided into 3 groups:

- Forces of the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs which include 18 regional guard brigades, two independent Shingal battalions, and 1st and 2nd Support Force Commands;

- Forces of the Kurdish Ministry of Interior which comprise the Zeravani forces (KDP [Kurdistan Democratic Party] affiliated) and the Emergency Response Force (PUK [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan] affiliated); and

- Other KRG forces which include Parastin and the Counter Terrorism Division which are KDP affiliated, and the Zanyari forces and the Counter Terrorism Group which are PUK affiliated. Asayish forces fall within this category and both the KDP and PUK have Asayish forces [the intelligence agency of the KRG] affiliated with them.'[11]

5.4.2   For more information on the Kurdish Peshmerga (as well as the Asayish and the police), see the CPIN [Iraq: Actors of Protection](#).

5.5   Other actors

5.5.1   For information on other armed actors in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and international forces such as those of the United States, Iran, Turkey and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), see the full [EUAA security situation report](#) (pages 43 to 47).

This section was updated on 3 October 2022

6.   Overview of the security situation

6.1.1   In January 2022 the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), formally known as the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), published a report entitled 'Iraq – Security Situation' (the EUAA report). The report, citing various sources, provided an overview of recent developments in the security situation for the period August 2020 – October 2021) and the multiple armed conflicts that are taking place in the country:

---

[10] EUAA, '[Iraq – Security Situation](#)', (page 38-41), January 2022
[11] EUAA, '[Iraq – Security Situation](#)', (page 43), January 2022

'**Conflict with ISIL** [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant also known as Daesh]

'After its territorial defeat in Iraq in 2017, ISIL shifted from semi-conventional combat to guerrilla warfare… Raed Al-Hamid, independent Iraqi researcher specializing in armed groups, reported in May 2021 that ISIL operations had increased significantly in the past year, after it reorganized its fighters in small "mobile groups", which it used to carry out operations in different areas. Al-Hamid further added that the organization used bases located in remote areas to carry out operations.

'… The Iraqi government conducted counter operations in areas where ISIL carried out attacks, primarily in the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din…

'**Conflict in Iraq between Iran and the US**

'Al Jazeera reported on 6 July 2021 that "Iraq is increasingly becoming a theatre of conflict between the United States and Iran". A "shadow war between the US and Iran on Iraqi soil", according to BBC, "has shifted gear" following the US assassination of the Iranian general Soleimani and PMF leader Al-Muhandis.

'…The attack on the two leaders has since triggered a wave of retaliatory counter attacks from various Iranian-backed militias, aiming to manifest their strength and, at the same time, undermine the Iraqi government's authority…

'**Protests and riots**

'From October 2019, Baghdad and central and southern governorates witnessed protests demanding more job opportunities, an end to corruption, as well as the change of the political system. The protest movement - known as Thawrat Tishrin (or Tishreen) (October Revolution) - ended in March/April of 2020 as the country went into lockdown following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In May and June 2020, new protests took place, with fewer participants. In October 2020, protestors took again to the streets to commemorate the protests of 2019, in which over 600 unarmed demonstrators were killed.

'… During the reference period of this report (1 August 2020 – 31 October 2021), ACLED [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, a 'disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project'[12]] registered 2,134 incidents coded as "protests". The governorate with the highest number of protests events was Basrah (431), followed by Thi-Qar (354), Muthanna (232), Qadissiya (200), and Baghdad (198). Also, during the reference period of this report, ACLED data registered 368 incidents coded as "riots". The governorates with the highest numbers of riots events were Thi-Qar (163), Sulaymaniyah (36), Baghdad (26), Basrah (24) and Wassit (20).'[13]

6.1.2   On 19 April 2022, VOA [Voice of America] published an article which stated:

---

[12] ACLED, 'About ACLED', no date
[13] EUAA, 'Iraq – Security Situation', (page 19-24), January 2022

'Turkey announced the start of a new ground and air campaign in northern Iraq Monday, targeting the armed rebels of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

'Dubbed Operation Claw-Lock, the Ankara government says the offensive is a pre-emptive measure to prevent the PKK from using Iraq as a base to carry out attacks in Turkey.

'… The Turkish military has carried out several operations against the PKK in recent years, both inside Turkey and in northern Iraq.'[14]

6.1.3 On 30 May 2022, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) (also known as the German Institute for International and Security Affairs) published a research article entitled 'Turkey's Military Operations in Syria and Iraq' which stated:

'Unlike Syria, where PKK affiliates have never targeted Turkey, Northern Iraq has been the PKK's launching pad for decades. Thus, Turkey has a long history of cross-border operations inside Iraqi territory that goes back to the 1990s.

'… As of 2019, Turkey had changed strategy and started to seek area control with operations named Claw, Claw-Tiger, and Claw-Eagle. Since then, Turkey has maintained a permanent military presence in Northern Iraq that is sustained by a much larger chain of military bases and smaller forward-operation posts along the Iraqi-Turkish border. While numbers are hard to verify, open sources indicate that Turkey has a permanent deployment of 5,000–10,000 soldiers in Iraqi territory.

'Unlike in Syria, Turkish area control in Iraq does not amount to the invasion of large territories and the creation of proto state structures. But through these bases, Turkey has created a de facto secure zone and managed to move the armed struggle forward onto Iraqi soil. Turkey is now even building roads in Iraqi territory to connect its military bases in order to achieve more effective area control.

'The current Claw-Lock operation is the latest stage of this development. Already its name suggests continuity with the previous operations and the aim to establish long-lasting area control. So, instead of several different military operations, we are witnessing a single, continuous, and long-term military operation interrupted only by winter conditions. The declared aim of Claw-Lock is to maintain area control in the Zap region in the central part of Northern Iraq so as to seal the Iraqi-Turkish border completely.'[15]

6.1.4 ACLED's dashboard documented a range of security incidents between 1 January 2016 and September 2022, filtered for battles, violence against civilians, explosions/remote violence, riots and protests produced the graph below illustrating trends in violence over this period[16]:

[14] VOA News, 'Turkey Launches New Offensive Against PKK Rebels in Northern Iraq', 19 April 2022
[15] Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 'Turkey's Military Operations in Syria and Iraq', 30 May 2022
[16] ACLED, Dashboard (Iraq), no date
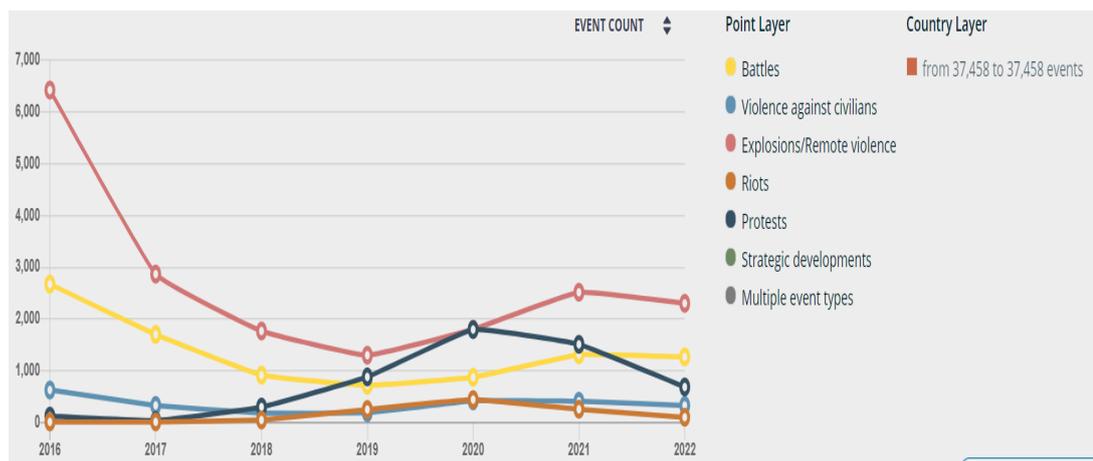
This section was updated on 3 October 2022

7. Security events and fatalities

7.1 Key events in 2021

7.1.1 On 4 May 2021 the UN Security Council published a report looking at the key developments in Iraq between February 2021 and May 2021. The report stated the following regarding security related incidents during the reference period:

'Attacks by ISIL continued, primarily in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. In response, the Iraqi security forces continued their counter-terrorism operations.

'On 15 February, rockets landed in the vicinity of Erbil international airport, where international counter-ISIL coalition troops are co-located. The coalition's spokesperson subsequently reported that 14 rockets had been launched and that three had struck the base, killing one civilian contractor. A further eight contractors and one United States of America service member were reported injured. A group calling itself the "Guardians of Blood Brigades" claimed responsibility for the attack.

'… On 20 February, rockets struck Balad airbase, north of Baghdad. On 22 February, the Security Media Cell under the Office of the Prime Minister reported that two rockets had landed within the former International Zone in Baghdad, without casualties. From 17 February to 21 March, reportedly, more than 30 attacks with improvised explosive devices targeted trucks contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-ISIL coalition, in Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Basrah, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Qadisiyah and Salah al-Din Governorates. On 15 March, the Security Media Cell reported that two rockets had fallen outside of Balad airbase, causing damage to nearby houses.

'… The Ministry of National Defence of Turkey reported continued operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in northern Iraq.'[17]

7.1.2 On 3 August 2021 the UN Security Council published a report looking at the key developments in Iraq between May 2021 and August 2021. The report

---

[17] UN Security Council, '… Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/426]', (page 4-5), 4 May 2021

stated the following regarding security related incidents during the reference period:

'Attacks conducted by Da'esh continued, primarily in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salih al-Din Governorates. Iraqi security forces continued their counter-terrorism operations in response.

'On 24 May, the Security Media Cell reported that one rocket had been launched against the Ayn al-Asad airbase in Anbar Governorate. The spokesperson for the international counter-Da'esh coalition noted, on the same day, that there had been no casualties and that the incident was under investigation. No claims of responsibility were made. On 6 June, the spokesperson for the coalition reported that one rocket had struck near a diplomatic facility of the United States within Baghdad International Airport, causing no casualties. The coalition spokesperson stated that the attack was under investigation by the Iraqi authorities. On the same day, the Cell reported that two unmanned aerial vehicles had been shot down above the Ayn al-Asad airbase. On 9 June, the Cell reported that three rockets had targeted the Balcad airbase, north of Baghdad, without casualties. The following day, it reported that Baghdad International Airport had also been targeted on 9 June by three unmanned aerial vehicles, one of which had been shot down. The next day, the coalition spokesperson confirmed the attack at Baghdad International Airport on 9 June. On 20 June, the Cell reported that a rocket had been fired towards the Ayn al-Asad airbase but had not exploded, adding that security forces were investigating the incident.

'On 26 June, the counter-terrorism services of the Kurdistan Regional Government reported that, on the same day, three unmanned aerial vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices had targeted locations north-east of Erbil, causing material damage.

'… From 11 May to 30 June, more than 29 attacks involving improvised explosive devices were reported to have targeted trucks of Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the coalition, in Anbar, Baghdad, Babil, Basrah, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Qadisiyah and Salah al-Din Governorates.

'The Ministry of National Defence of Turkey reported ongoing operations against targets of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq. On 17 May, the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, reported the death of a senior PKK leader during a Turkish operation in northern Iraq. PKK refuted the death of its leader in a statement published on 18 May.

'On 5 June, a Turkish air strike took place near Makhmur, south-east of Mosul. On 6 June, Mr. Erdoğan indirectly referred to the attack on social media and stated that the "senior manager of the PKK terrorist organization and general manager of Makhmour was neutralised".'[18]

7.1.3   The same source further stated:

'In a statement issued on 5 June [2021], the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government reported that an attack in northern Iraq had "resulted in the death of five Peshmerga soldiers and wounded four others", attributing the attack to PKK. The same day, the Presidency of the

---

[18] UN Security Council, '…Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/700]', (page 4-5), 3 August 2021

Kurdistan Regional Government condemned the attack by highlighting the need to end the "PKK's aggression against the Kurdistan Region".

'On 27 June, the Press Secretary of the United States Department of Defense announced that United States forces had conducted "defensive precision airstrikes" against facilities that, it reported, had been used to launch "unmanned aerial vehicle attacks against US personnel and facilities in Iraq" and that the air strikes constituted an "unambiguous deterrent message".

'… On 5 July, the coalition spokesperson reported that three rockets targeting the Ayn al-Asad airbase had landed on its perimeter without causing injuries. On 6 July, the spokesperson reported that one unmanned aerial vehicle had struck in the vicinity of Erbil airbase. He stated that initial reports indicated no casualties or damage. On 7 July, the spokesperson reported that 14 rockets had landed on and within the perimeter of the Ayn al-Asad airbase and that "force protection defensive measures" had been activated. He later confirmed that two personnel had sustained "minor injuries", adding that a damage assessment was under way. Responsibility for the strike was claimed by a group calling itself the "Revenge for Muhandis".'[19]

7.1.4   On 11 November 2021 the UN Security Council published a report looking at the key developments in Iraq between August 2021 and November 2021. The report stated the following regarding security related incidents during the reference period:

'Da'esh continued to conduct asymmetric attacks during the reporting period, primarily in Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. From 25 August to 9 October, a total of 157 attacks against security forces in Iraq were attributed to Da'esh. Da'esh also continued to target off-duty security personnel, community leaders and civilians who were accused by Da'esh of collaborating with Iraqi authorities. In addition, four improvised explosive device attacks targeting power infrastructure in Diyala, Kirkuk and Salah al-Din governorates were attributable to Da'esh.

'On 5 September, the Security Media Cell of the Office of the Prime Minister reported that a Da'esh attack to the south-west of Kirkuk had led to the death of several police officers. It was later confirmed that 13 police officers had died as a result of the attack.

'… On 11 September, the spokesperson for the international counter-Da'esh coalition reported via social media that "Coalition forces at Erbil airbase were attacked by two unmanned aircraft systems". The coalition spokesperson added that "force protection counter-measures were used to defeat the drones" and that there had been no injuries. No claims of responsibility were made.

'… From 25 August to 12 October, 12 attacks involving improvised explosive devices were reported to have targeted trucks of Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the counter-Da'esh coalition, in Babil, Dhi Qar and Qadisiyah Governorates.

---

[19] UN Security Council, '…Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/700]', (page 4-5), 3 August 2021

'… During the reporting period, the Ministry of National Defence of Turkey reported ongoing operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in northern Iraq.'[20]

7.1.5 On 10 February 2022 the UN Security Council published a report looking at the key developments in Iraq between November 2021 and February 2022. The report stated the following regarding security related incidents during the reference period:

'Da'esh continued to conduct asymmetric attacks during the reporting period, primarily in Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. From 23 November 2021 to 5 January 2022, 123 attacks targeting security forces were attributed to Da'esh, in addition to the continued targeting of community leaders, off-duty security personnel and civilians accused by Da'esh of collaborating with Iraqi authorities. Iraqi security forces continued their counter-terrorism operations in response to Da'esh activity.

'… On 3 December, the Security Media Cell reported that an overnight attack by Da'esh against the village of Khidr Jijah in the Makhmur district had led to the death of multiple civilians and members of the Peshmerga forces. The attack was condemned by the President of Iraq, Mr. Salih, the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr. Al-Kadhimi (through his military spokesperson), the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Mr. Masrour Barzani, and other officials. They all reiterated earlier calls for enhanced cooperation to combat terrorism and greater coordination between the Peshmerga and the Iraqi security forces.

'On 7 December, the Security Media Cell reported that an improvised explosive device attached to a motorcycle had detonated in the city of Basrah, leaving four civilians dead and four more injured. The same day, Mr. Salih issued a statement in which he condemned the attack and called for unity to support the State and the security services. Mr. Al-Kadhimi also issued a statement in which he ordered an investigation.

'On 30 December, the Security Media Cell reported that a number of bodies of civilians had been found in Jablah, Babil Governorate, following a security operation against suspected terrorists.

'… From 25 November 2021 to 5 January 2022, 44 attacks were reported against trucks belonging to Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-Da'esh coalition, in Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Basrah, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Qadisiyah and Salah al-Din Governorates. Responsibility was claimed by five different armed groups for 38 of those attacks. No casualties were reported.

'… During the reporting period, the Ministry of Defence of Turkey reported ongoing operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in northern Iraq.'[21]

---

[20] UN Security Council, '… Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/946]', (page 4-5), 11 Nov 2021
[21] UN Security Council, '… Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/946]', (page 4-6), 10 Feb 2022

7.2 Key statistics from 2021

7.2.1 The below table was compiled by CPIT and shows the number of security events that took place in Iraq across 2021. The table was produced using information obtained from ACLED's data export tool[22].

Governorate	Security events
Anbar	325
Basrah	440
Muthanna	204
Najaf	55
Qadissiya	177
Sulaymaniyah	234
Babil	116
Baghdad	596
Diyala	565
Duhok	1,542
Erbil	604
Kerbala	54
Kirkuk	375
Maysan	235
Ninewa	376
Salah Al Din	308
Thi Qar	600
Wassit	127

7.2.2 Security events include battles, explosions/remote violence, protests, riots, violence against civilians and strategic developments. ALCED provided the following definitions for each of the different security events:

'**Battles** are violent clashes between at least two armed groups. Battle types are distinguished by whether control of a location is unchanged as a consequence of the event; whether a non-state group has assumed control of a location, or whether a government has resumed control of that location.

'**Explosions/Remote violence** refers to events where an explosion, bomb or other explosive device was used to engage in conflict. They include one-sided violent events in which the tool for engaging in conflict creates asymmetry by taking away the ability of the target to engage or defend themselves and their location.

---

[22] ACLED, 'Data Export Tool - Iraq: 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021', 8 July 2022

'**Strategic developments** include incidences of looting, peace-talks, high profile arrests, non-violent transfers of territory, recruitment into non-state groups etc.

'**Protests** are non-violent demonstrations, involving typically unorganized action by members of society

'**Riots** are a violent demonstration, often involving a spontaneous action by unorganized, unaffiliated members of society.

'**Violence against civilians** involves violent attacks on unarmed civilians.'[23]

7.2.3   For definitions of the different sub-events associated which each security events see the document entitled 'Event Definitions'.

7.2.4   The below map was published by World Population Review[24] with the numbers and governorate names being added by CPIT to indicate the rank each governorate is in terms of numbers of security events that took place across 2021 based on the ACLED data above (1 = highest number of security events, 18 = lowest number of security events).
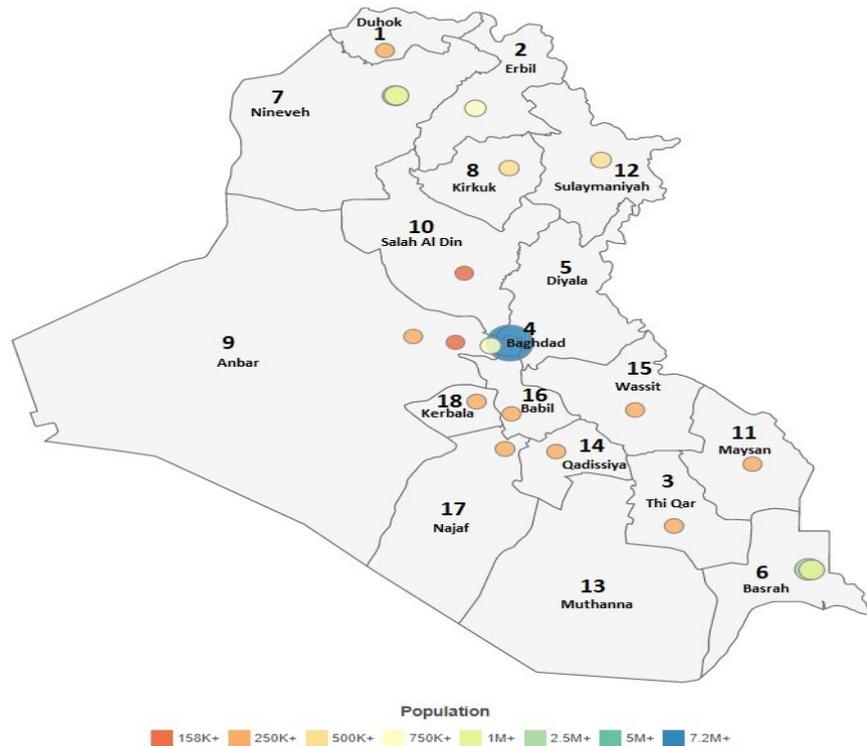
7.2.5   The below table was compiled by CPIT and shows the number of security events with at least one fatality and the total number of fatalities across each governorate in Iraq during 2021. The table was produced using information obtained from ACLED's data export tool[25] (Note: Fatalities include both combatants and civilians):

---

[23] ACLED, 'Event Definitions', (page 1-4), no date
[24] World Population Review, 'Iraq', last updated 13 July 2022
[25] ACLED, 'Data Export Tool - Iraq: 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021', 8 July 2022

Governorate	Security events with at least 1 fatality	Total number of fatalities
Anbar	66	159
Basrah	45	58
Muthanna	11	16
Najaf	7	7
Qadissiya	3	4
Sulaymaniyah	26	43
Babil	13	25
Baghdad	104	228
Diyala	186	362
Duhok	195	554
Erbil	125	372
Kerbala	3	3
Kirkuk	135	338
Maysan	40	58
Ninewa	66	127
Salah Al Din	101	317
Thi Qar	50	70
Wassit	6	12
Total	1,182	2,753

7.2.6   On 30 May 2022, the Austrian Centre for County of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) published a report which looked at conflict related incidents across Iraq in 2021. The report contained the below map showing the number of civilian and combatant fatalities across the different provinces across Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) (see page 3 of the report for information regarding ACCORD's methodology):

Number of reported fatalities
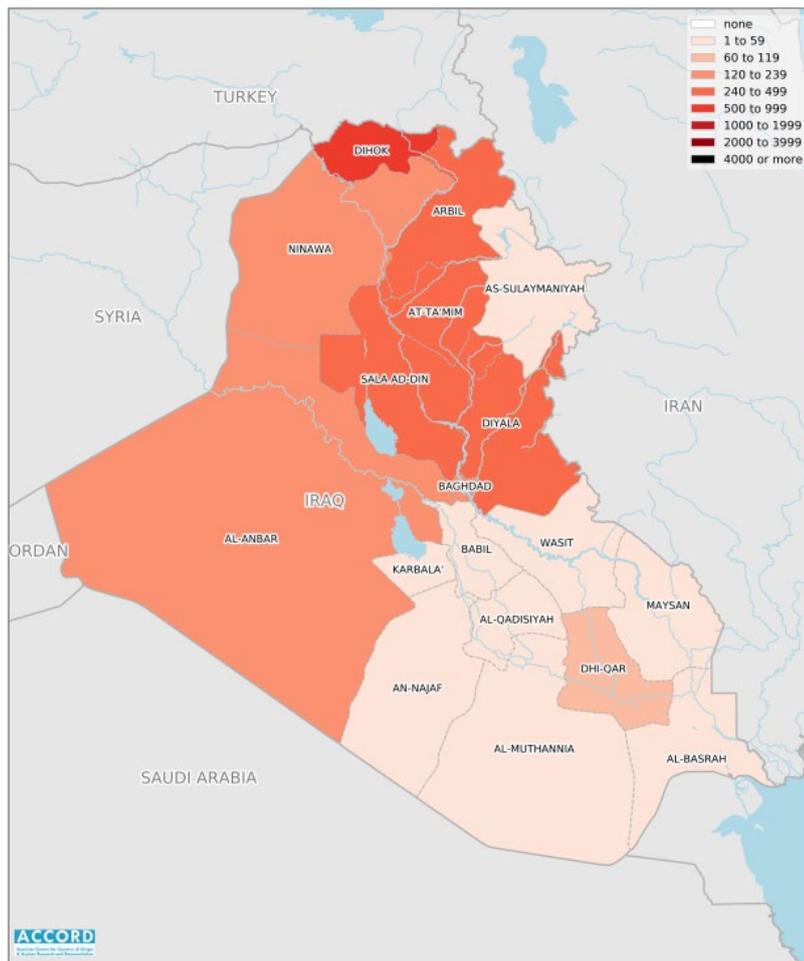
7.2.7   The below table and graph show the number of civilian fatalities across each governorate of Iraq between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2021. The table was produced using information from ACLED's data export tool:

Governorate	Civilian fatalities
Anbar	29
Basrah	30
Muthanna	8
Najaf	5
Qadissiya	0
Sulaymaniyah	17
Babil	4
Baghdad	133
Diyala	103

[26] ACCORD, 'Iraq, Year 2021: Update on incidents according to… (ACLED)', (page 1,4), 30 May 2022

Duhok	26
Erbil	11
Kerbala	3
Kirkuk	18
Maysan	24
Ninewa	51
Salah Al Din	42
Thi Qar	23
Wassit	10
Total civilian fatalities	537

Civilian fatalities across Iraq between 1 Jan - 31 Dec 2021

27
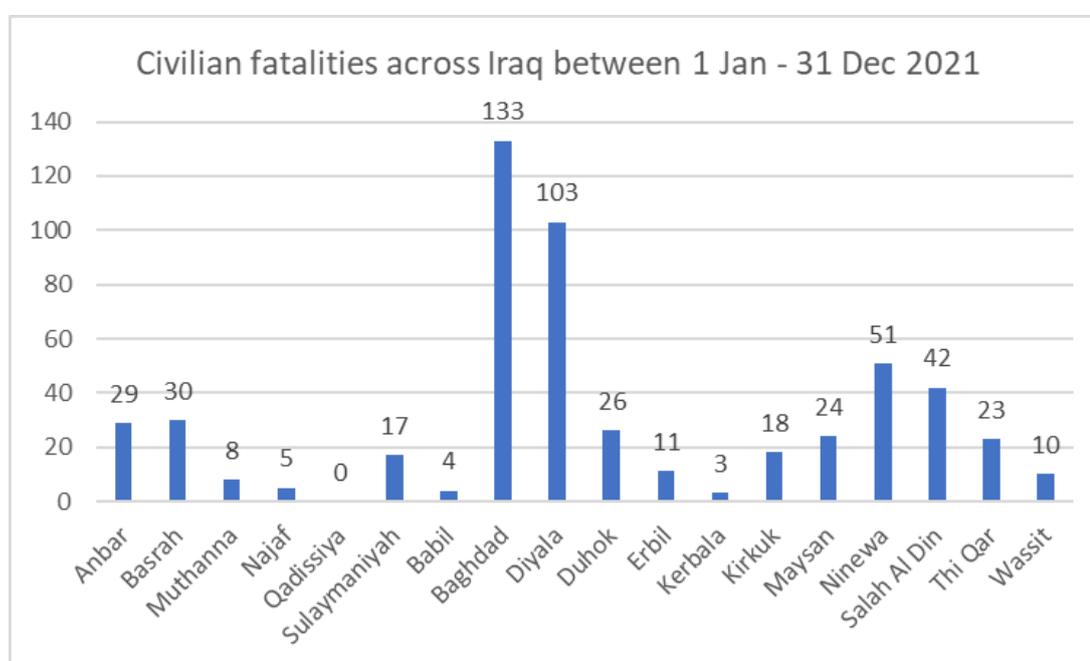
7.3   Key events in 2022

7.3.1   The UN Security Council report published on 10 February 2022 stated:

'On 3 January 2022, the spokesperson for the Commander-in-Chief informed the media that air defence systems had destroyed two uncrewed aerial vehicles targeting a military facility in the vicinity of Baghdad International Airport. On 5 January, the Security Media Cell reported that a rocket had landed in the same area. Responsibility for both attacks was claimed by a group calling itself "Saraya Ababil". In addition, the Security Media Cell reported that Ayn al-Asad airbase in Anbar Governorate had been targeted by two uncrewed aerial vehicles, on 4 January, both of which had been

[27] ACLED, 'Data Export Tool - Iraq: 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021', 8 July 2022

intercepted; five rockets, on 5 January, all of which had landed outside the airbase perimeter; and one uncrewed aerial vehicle, on 6 January, which had also been also intercepted. The rocket attack of 5 January was claimed by a group calling itself "Qassim al-Jabbarin". In response to the latest attacks, the international counter-Da'esh coalition described such attacks as a "dangerous distraction" from its current mission and a threat to the Iraqi people. For his part, on 5 January, Mr. Al-Kadhimi informed the Cabinet that attacks on Iraqi bases were "irresponsible" and were designed to "disturb security and stability in the country".'[28]

7.3.2   On 29 April 2022 the UN Security Council published a report looking at the key developments in Iraq between February 2022 and April 2022. The report stated the following regarding security related incidents that took place during the reported period:

'Da'esh continued to conduct asymmetric attacks, primarily in Anbar, Baghdad, Babil, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din Governorates. From 24 February to 2 April 2022, 69 attacks, mostly targeting security forces, were attributed to Da'esh. Iraqi security forces continued their counter-terrorism operations in response to Da'esh activity.

'On 13 March, the Ministry of the Interior of the Kurdistan Regional Government reported that "at least 12 ballistic missiles" had targeted "civilians residency are as" located "around the new US Consulate compound in Erbil". According to the report, there was material damage, one civilian had been "lightly wounded" and an investigation had been opened. Later the same day, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of the Islamic Republic of Iran claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that it had "targeted" an Israeli "strategic centre" in Erbil with "precision-guided missiles".

'… From 24 February to 2 April, 13 attacks were reported against trucks belonging to Iraqi companies contracted to carry supplies for the international counter-Da'esh coalition, in Anbar, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Qadisiyah and Salah al-Din Governorates. No casualties were reported, and no claims of responsibility were made.

'… On 17 March, the Security Media Cell reported that four rockets had struck Balad airbase in Salah al-Din Governorate. No casualties or damage were reported, and no claims of responsibility were made.

'… On 6 April, the Security Media Cell reported that three rockets had landed in an area close to the Kawergosk oil refinery in Erbil Governorate. No casualties or damage were reported, and no claims of responsibility were made.

'… The Ministry of Defence of Turkey reported ongoing operations against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets in northern Iraq during the reporting period.'[29]

---

[28] UN Security Council, '… Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/946]', (page 6), 10 Feb 2022
[29] UN Security Council, '… Report of the Secretary-General [S/2022/368]', (page 5), 29 April 2022

7.3.3   On 14 April 2022, ACLED published a regional overview of the Middle East looking at incidents that took place between 2 and 8 April 2022. The report stated:

'Iraqi forces deployed reinforcements, set up checkpoints, and established patrols in religious and public places across the country amid concerns of increased IS attacks during Ramadan. IS expanded its activity last week with attacks in Diyala and Al Anbar provinces. IS militants also detonated suicide vests during separate clashes with state forces south of Mosul city and at Jabal Nuwaykit mountain in Ninewa.

'Meanwhile, Turkish airstrike events more than tripled last week in northern Iraq, resulting in the most active week of Turkish airstrikes in Iraq since the start of the spring fighting season. The airstrikes were mostly concentrated in Barwari Bala, Nerwa Rekan, and Amadiya districts in Duhok province. These airstrikes contribute to the 113% increase in violence in Ninewa over the past week relative to the past month, as flagged by ACLED's Subnational Surge Tracker.'[30]

7.3.4   On 19 May 2022, ACLED published a regional overview of the Middle East looking at incidents that took place between 7 and 13 May 2022. The report stated:

'Turkish airstrikes also increased in northern Iraq last week, particularly in the Barwari Bala and Nerwa Rekan districts of Duhok. These trends contribute to the 183% increase in violence in Duhok last month relative to the past year as flagged by ACLED's Subnational Threat Tracker, which first warned of increased violence to come in Duhok in the past month. Violence in Duhok is both common and highly volatile…

'Meanwhile, Iraqi forces continued counter-Islamic State (IS) operations, resulting in a significant increase in clashes and airstrike events targeting IS militants in Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salah Al Din, and Anbar provinces. In contrast, IS attacks decreased by over 80% last week compared to the week prior after a surge of violence during Ramadan.'[31]

7.3.5   On 1 June 2022, ACLED published a regional overview of the Middle East looking at incidents that took place between 21 and 27 May 2022. The report stated: 'In Iraq, overall levels of violence decreased last week, with fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK slightly declining for the second consecutive week. Despite this decrease, Turkey's Operation Claw Lock, which mainly targets Dohuk province, continued to contribute to the 200% increase in violence in Duhok last month relative to the past year…'[32]

7.3.6   On 16 June 2022, ACLED published a regional overview of the Middle East looking at incidents that took place between 4 and 10 June 2022. The report stated:

'[F]ighting between Turkish forces and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) slightly declined for the fourth consecutive week last week. Despite the

[30] ACLED, 'Regional Overview: Middle East 2-8 April 2022', 14 April 2022
[31] ACLED, 'Regional Overview: Middle East 7-13 May 2022', 19 May 2022
[32] ACLED, 'Regional Overview: Middle East 21-27 May 2022', 1 June 2022

continuous decrease in fighting, Operation Claw Lock in northern Iraq continues to be a significant driver of violence in Iraq.

'… Meanwhile, unknown militants targeted the car of an Iraqi counter-narcotics policeman with an IED in Maysan province. Iraqi police successfully defused another IED planted near a notary office in Amara city. Violence in Maysan has been volatile and has become increasingly common…'[33]

7.3.7   On 23 June 2022, ACLED published a regional overview of the Middle East looking at incidents that took place between 11 and 17 June 2022. The report stated:

'Iraqi state forces, including the Popular Mobilization Forces, increased operations against IS militants in Iraq last week. Iraqi forces conducted airstrikes against IS in Kirkuk and Salah Al Din and destroyed IS hideouts in Anbar and Diyala provinces. This violence contributed to the 64% increase in violence in Iraq in the past month relative to the past year… Violence targeting civilians also increased. Unidentified militants shot and killed three civilians in separate attacks in Baghdad city, while attacks targeting civilians also took place in Kerbala, Qadissiya, Najaf, Duhok, and Thi Qar provinces. Attacks in Duhok and Thi Qar, including an IED attack targeting a government bank employee in the latter, contribute to the 189% and the 180% increases, respectively, in violence in both provinces last week relative to the past month.

'Meanwhile, in northern Iraq, Turkey escalated its air campaign against the PKK last week, reversing a four-week trend of declining fighting between the two… Meanwhile, in northern Iraq, Turkey escalated its air campaign against the PKK last week, reversing a four-week trend of declining fighting between the two.'[34]

7.3.8   On 30 June 2022, ACLED published a regional overview of the Middle East looking at incidents that took place between 18 and 24 June 2022. The report stated:

'In Iraq, clashes between tribal militia groups significantly increased last week, with clashes reported in Al Basrah, Baghdad, Wassit, and Maysan. The increase was most pronounced in Al Basrah province, where rival groups clashed near the Maysan provincial border. Six people were killed in the clash, including one member of the Iraqi police who intervened to stop the clash.

'… Elsewhere, fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK last week fell to its lowest levels since the beginning of Turkey's Operation Claw Lock in April. Turkish airstrike events last week halved compared to the week prior, but the number of shelling events increased by one-third. Despite the decrease, dozens of fighters were killed during fighting between Turkish forces and the PKK. Notably, on 20 June, PKK militants attacked Turkish soldiers in the Al Amadiya district of Duhok, killing 29 Turkish soldiers.'[35]

[33] ACLED, 'Regional Overview: Middle East 4-10 June 2022', 16 June 2022
[34] ACLED, 'Regional Overview: Middle East 11-17 June 2022', 23 June 2022
[35] ACLED, 'Regional Overview: Middle East 18-24 June 2022', 30 June 2022

7.3.9   On 14 July 2022, ACLED published a regional overview of the Middle East looking at incidents that took place between 2 and 8 July 2022. The report stated:

'In Iraq, Islamic State (IS) militants and other armed groups conducted more than twice as many IED attacks last week compared to the week prior. On 5 July, IS militants detonated a roadside IED, injuring seven explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) experts on a bus in Tilkaif district in Ninewa province. Similarly, IS militants conducted an IED attack against Iraqi forces in Sharwain village of Diyala province, killing two fighters. The next day, IS militants also detonated an IED targeting a funeral for the victims of the attack, and another IED targeting Iraqi reinforcements arriving in the village.

'… Meanwhile, airstrike events2 increased significantly last week compared to the week prior. The trend was driven by an increase in Turkish airstrikes targeting the PKK in Ninewa and Duhok provinces as part of Operation Claw Lock. Last week had one of the highest number of airstrike events since the start of Operation Claw Lock in April…'[36]

7.3.10 On 21 July 2022, ACLED published a regional overview of the Middle East looking at incidents that took place between 9 and 15 July 2022. The report stated:

'In Iraq, overall levels of violence decreased last week compared to the week prior. This decrease coincided with the Muslim Eid Al Adha festival on 8 July and Moqtada Al Sadr's annual mass prayer event in Baghdad city on 15 July. Both the festival period and the mass prayer witnessed extensive security deployments. Despite the overall decline in violence, clashes between tribal militias slightly increased countrywide…

'Meanwhile, unidentified militants attacked the house of a Patriotic Union Party (PUK) leader in Erbil city on 10 July, injuring his guard. This is the first attack on a member of a political party in Erbil city since the killing of the leader of the Iranian branch of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in August 2021.

'Meanwhile, fighting between the PKK and Turkish forces declined last week following a spike of activity the week prior, driven by a significant drop in Turkish airstrike events. Despite this decrease in activity, Turkey's Operation Claw Lock continues to be a key driver of violence…'[37]

7.4   Key statistics from 2022

7.4.1   The below table was compiled by CPIT and shows the number of security events that took place in Iraq between 1 January 2022 and 8 July 2022 (the latest data available at the time of writing). The table was produced using information obtained from ACLED's data export tool[38]. See paragraph 7.1.6 for definitions of the different security events.

---

[36] ACLED, 'Regional Overview: Middle East 2-8 July 2022', 14 July 2022
[37] ACLED, 'Regional Overview: Middle East 9-15 July 2022', 21 July 2022
[38] ACLED, 'Data Export Tool - Iraq: 1 January 2022 – 8 July 2022', 8 July 2022

Governorate	Security events
Anbar	107
Basrah	164
Muthanna	111
Najaf	25
Qadissiya	20
Sulaymaniyah	90
Babil	42
Baghdad	232
Diyala	188
Duhok	1,536
Erbil	215
Kerbala	15
Kirkuk	109
Maysan	131
Ninewa	219
Salah Al Din	129
Thi Qar	190
Wassit	47

7.4.2   The below map was published by World Population Review with the numbers and governorate names being added by CPIT to indicate the rank each governorate is in terms of numbers of security events that took place across 2021 based on the ACLED data above (1 = highest number of security events, 18 = lowest number of security events).

Population

| 158K+ | 250K+ | 500K+ | 750K+ | 1M+ | 2.5M+ | 5M+ | 7.2M+ |
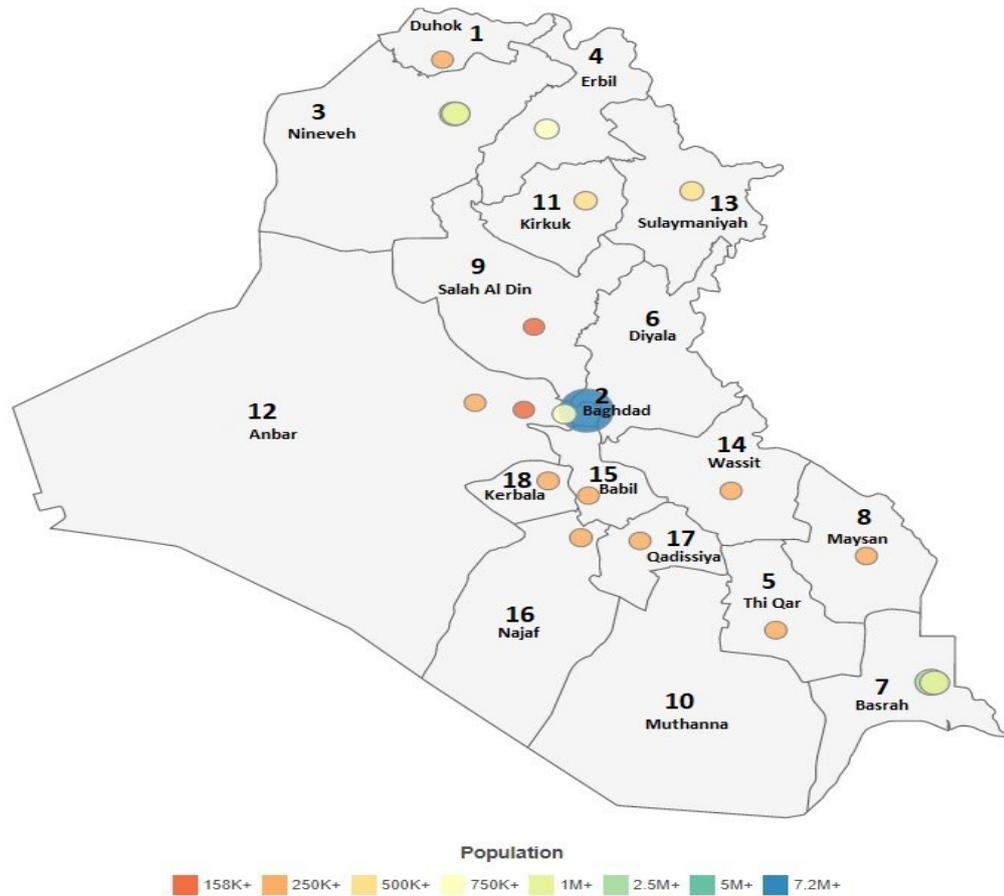
7.4.3   The below table was compiled by CPIT and shows the number of security events with at least one fatality and the total number of fatalities across each governorate in Iraq between 1 January 2022 and 8 July 2022 (the latest data available at the time of writing). The table was produced using information obtained from ACLED's data export tool[39] (Note: Fatalities include both combatants and civilians):

Governorate	Security events with at least 1 fatality	Total number of fatalities
Anbar	26	52
Basrah	19	35
Muthanna	8	11
Najaf	9	10
Qadissiya	1	2
Sulaymaniyah	9	18
Babil	5	8
Baghdad	45	63
Diyala	57	128

[39] ACLED, 'Data Export Tool - Iraq: 1 January 2022 – 8 July 2022', 8 July 2022

Duhok	327	1,296
Erbil	42	122
Kerbala	3	3
Kirkuk	36	75
Maysan	40	59
Ninewa	49	105
Salah Al Din	53	115
Thi Qar	22	25
Wassit	11	13
Total	762	2,140

7.4.4 The below table and graph show the number of civilian fatalities across each governorate of Iraq between 1 January 2022 and 8 July 2022. The table was produced using information from ACLED's data export tool[40]:

Governorate	Civilian fatalities
Anbar	4
Basrah	24
Muthanna	6
Najaf	7
Qadissiya	2
Sulaymaniyah	3
Babil	6
Baghdad	30
Diyala	28
Duhok	5
Erbil	3
Kerbala	1
Kirkuk	14
Maysan	24
Ninewa	25
Salah Al Din	13
Thi Qar	10
Wassit	8

---

[40] ACLED, 'Data Export Tool - Iraq: 1 January 2022 – 8 July 2022', 8 July 2022

Total civilian fatalities	213
Percentage of the population	0.000005%

Civilian fatalities across Iraq between 1 Jan - 8 July 2022

Anbar: 4
Basrah: 24
Muthanna: 6
Najaf: 7
Qadissiya: 2
Sulaymaniyah: 3
Babil: 6
Baghdad: 30
Diyala: 28
Duhok: 5
Erbil: 3
Kerbala: 1
Kirkuk: 14
Maysan: 24
Ninewa: 25
Salah Al Din: 13
Thi Qar: 10
Wassit: 8
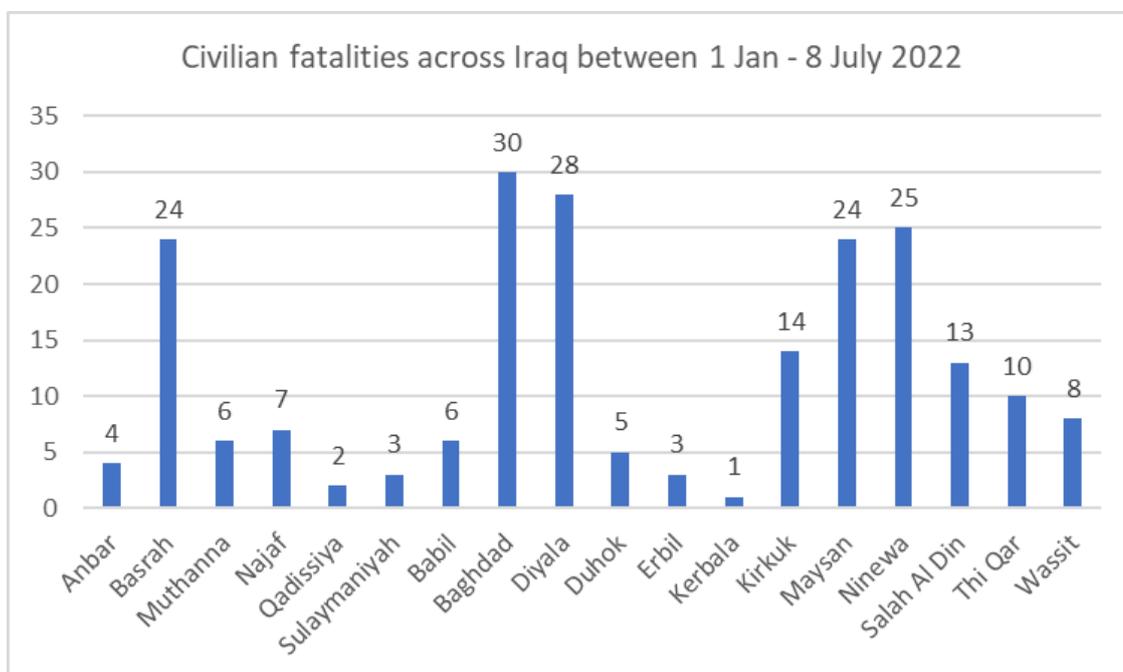
Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Security situation
    - actors in conflict – number, size, intent and capacity
    - geographical scope of conflict
    - nature of violence - methods and tactics, including targeting of groups
    - number of security incidents
        - frequency and density in relation to local population
        - variation by place, time and groups affected
    - number of civilian casualties, including
        - fatalities and injuries (also as a proportion of total population)
        - variation by place, time and group

Bibliography

Sources cited

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED),

'About ACLED', no date. Last accessed: 30 June 2022

'Event Definitions', no date. Last accessed: 14 July 2022

'Data Export Tool - Iraq: 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021', 8 July 2022. Last accessed: 13 July 2022

'Data Export Tool - Iraq: 1 January 2022 – 8 July 2022', 8 July 2022. Last accessed: 13 July 2022

'Regional Overview: Middle East 2-8 April 2022', 14 April 2022. Last accessed: 25 July 2022

'Regional Overview: Middle East 7-13 May 2022', 19 May 2022. Last accessed: 25 July 2022

'Regional Overview: Middle East 21-27 May 2022', 1 June 2022. Last accessed: 26 July 2022

'Regional Overview: Middle East 4-10 June 2022', 16 June 2022. Last accessed: 26 July 2022

'Regional Overview: Middle East 11-17 June 2022', 23 June 2022. Last accessed: 26 July 2022

'Regional Overview: Middle East 18-24 June 2022', 30 June 2022. Last accessed: 27 July 2022

'Regional Overview: Middle East 2-8 July 2022', 14 July 2022. Last accessed: 27 July 2022

'Regional Overview: Middle East 9-15 July 2022', 21 July 2022. Last accessed: 27 July 2022

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), 'Iraq, Year 2021: Update on incidents according to the Armed Conflict & Event Data Project (ACLED)', 30 May 2022. Last accessed: 29 June 2022

CIA World Factbook, 'Iraq – People and Society', last updated 1 Iraq 2022. Last accessed: 13 July 2022

European Union Agency for Asylum, 'Iraq – Security Situation', January 2022. Last accessed: 17 August 2022

MapAction, 'Iraq – Population density (2020)', 9 September 2020. Last accessed: 13 July 2022

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 'Turkey's Military Operations in Syria and Iraq', 30 May 2022. Last accessed: 15 July 2022

United Nations Geospatial, 'Iraq', 1 July 2014. Last accessed: 1 July 2022

United Nations Security Council,

'Implementation of resolution 2522 (2020); Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/426]', 4 May 2021. Last accessed: 18 July 2022

'Implementation of resolution 2576 (2021); Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/700]', 3 August 2021. Last accessed: 18 July 2022

'Implementation of resolution 2576 (2021); Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/946]', 11 November 2021. Last accessed: 18 July 2022

'Implementation of resolution 2576 (2021); Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/946]', 10 February 2022. Last accessed: 20 July 2022

'Implementation of resolution 2576 (2021); Report of the Secretary-General [S/2022/368]', 29 April 2022. Last accessed: 20 July 2022

'Fifteenth report on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security', 26 July 2022. Last accessed: 17 August 2022

United States Institute of Peace, 'Iraq Timeline: Since the 2003 war', 29 May 2020. Last accessed: 29 June 2022

United Nations Population Fund, 'World Population Dashboard Iraq', no date. Last accessed: 6 July 2022

VOA News, 'Turkey Launches New Offensive Against PKK Rebels in Northern Iraq', 19 April 2022. Last accessed: 15 July 2022

World Population Review, 'Iraq', last updated 13 July 2022. Last accessed: 14 July 2022

Back to Contents

Sources consulted but not cited

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 'Regional Overview: Middle East 14-20 May 2022', 26 May 2022. Last accessed: 25 July 2022

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), 'Iraq, First Quarter 2022: Update on incidents according to the Armed Conflict & Event Data Project (ACLED)', 30 May 2022. Last accessed: 30 June 2022

Council on Foreign Relations, 'The Iraq War – 2003 – 2011', no date. Last accessed: 1 July 2022

Institute for the Study of War, 'Iraq 2021-2022: A Forecast', June 2021. Last accessed: 7 July 2022

United Nations Security Council, 'Implementation of resolution 2522 (2020); Report of the Secretary-General [S/2021/120]', 8 February 2021. Last accessed: 18 July 2022

Back to Contents

Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **09 November 2022**

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

Changes from last version of this note

New COI focusing on the security situation.